I have just enjoyed what was my 15th Harrogate Week and, despite some apprehension leading up to it on account of the weather, it wouldn’t be stretching the truth to say that it was one of the best we’ve done since my first way back in 1996.

There were many highlights. The “2 mil Debate” was a big hit, with tickets more sought after than for Led Zeppelin at the O2, and this despite a new larger venue, brought in as numbers grew. It was fantastic to see a debate, on what was a pure greenkeeping issue, proving to be such an emotive and talked about event.

Other highlights, other than the reassuringly high decibel level of the legendary “Harrogate Buzz” in the Halls, included the Association’s Wild West Night on the Tuesday.

BIGGA had moved its official Hotel to the Old Swan, which gave a freshness to the whole week, and the Old Swan staff; Wild West Night organisers; Ransomes Jacobsen’s, who sponsored the event, and our own Sandra Raper did a superb job in created an evening that will be remembered for quite some time.

Having enjoyed a successful week, BIGGA can now look ahead and tackle the next 12 months, knowing that the tough times can all point to a Captain’s ornamental conifer on so many of the country’s golf courses. We can now look ahead and tackle the next 12 months, knowing that the tough times can all point to a Captain’s ornamental conifer on so many of the country’s golf courses. We

On the issue of golf’s problems, it has been interesting to follow the recent series “Golf Timebomb” in Scotland’s Herald newspaper, written by Douglas Lowe. Aware of the problems the game of golf is experiencing in the Home of Golf, Douglas profiled some clubs which are looking at schemes to attract or retain younger members - to counter an average member age of 54, while he also interviewed David Roy, a former prominent

BIGGA member, and now President of the Scottish Club Managers Association of Europe, and Managing Secretary of the Crail Golfing Society.

David described the pressures on Club Secretaries, with many clubs seeking to hark back to the days of the Past Captain taking on the role of Honorary Secretary.

“I’ve heard people say: ‘We managed fine with an Honorary Secretary. I don’t understand why we’re employing this guy. What does he do anyway?’” said David, adding that the workload for every club has increased markedly.

“Now there’s health and safety, employment law, licences, fire protection and insurance and child protection policies to look after…

“There can be no doubt that the practice of employing unqualified people is harming golf,” he declared.

While he was talking predominately about inside the clubhouse, we are all aware of the pressures enthusiastic amateurs – often like the proverbial sore thumb. The game is suffering from the current love affair with the game of golf. We

Fortunately it is becoming rarer but the message must still go out - if golf clubs are to get the best out of their facilities.

“Leave the professionals to get on with their jobs.”