

Openness is the name of the game

In October of '89 I was asked if I would consider becoming vice-chairman, this being seen as the next step forward in my committee career in view of my position of seniority on the Board and with the logic of choosing a new chairman from the North, Ivor Scoones coming from the South West. This is an added touch of good housekeeping which prevents the election of, say, three chairmen from one particular region and avoids any feeling that a region is being neglected in any way. In that sense, I suppose I'm serving a double role in that I reside and work in the North but I'm a Scot, so both areas should feel well represented

Asked by Paddy to be vice-chairman, my first reactions were, naturally enough, both delight and apprehension; because I didn't know what the job really involved. I wanted to do the job, and recognised the honour that was being bestowed upon me but needed to be certain that the whole of my work team and my Club committee at Middlesborough Brass Castle would be solidly behind me. Thankfully I've had the whole-hearted support of them all and they couldn't be more co-operative and enthusiastic. Before actually committing myself with a positive YES I asked Paddy many questions. For example, I needed a rough idea of just how much time I would need off work.

My mind was set at rest on all counts, and I was already prepared to give up any proper holidays during the intensive two year period, something that most of the board members gladly and willingly do for the good of the Association. I'm lucky also in having my wife Marion as a strong support.

One thing I really want to do in 1991 is ensure that those 'quiet asides' that often happen in places like hotel lobbies and across the bar get an equal airing in board meetings. If a person has something to say, but will not face the board with the same whispered comment, then I have no time for that comment. I'm all for putting my cards on the table and I'll encourage others to do likewise, for we are not operating some sort of secret society – rather the opposite – and openness will be the name of the game.

With the difficulties encountered regarding the previous magazine – which became something of a destructive force in 1990 – now resolved; and with Greenkeeper International already heralded as a giant step forward in promoting the real spirit of the Association, I earnestly hope this will be an era in which we can make great progress. There's little doubt that Ivor served during a tough period and this may have made his term less than perfect. My view of the chairman's position is not seen through any rose-tinted specs., but I believe that along with responsibility there should be a time when holding office is a great joy.

Now that our consolidation is assured I envisage the Association going from strength to strength, ably supported as we are by the R. and A., who have been a tremendous help and source of encouragement. Without them we would be the poorer and whilst we hope in the distant future to be self-sufficient there is no doubt in my mind that they have been and remain true friends of BIGGA and have shown their true colours in so many ways. By way of an addendum to that statement; it is a great bonus for BIGGA that the unions and the controlling bodies of golf have 'bitten the bullet' so to speak and brought the cause of greenkeeping education – and a great many other issues vital to our cause – nearer to an ideal. The next decade under the Joint Golf Course Committee promises to be quite something.

You have asked me what I would like for the Association in the future and I can answer without hesitation. Sooner rather than later, I want to see every greenkeeper in Britain and Europe join this marvelous Association and share in our future. How to get outsiders with us is a matter that taxes us all, but I believe that as a tool of recruitment the magazine has a major role to play. It is the only continuous promotional link many of our members have with the Association, especially those who for reasons unknown choose not to join in the many extra-curriculum activities, and I would like members everywhere to offer the hand of fellowship to his neighbouring greenkeeper – along with a copy of Greenkeeper International – and an invitation to join. Nothing would please me more than to learn of a BIGGA greenkeeper visiting another course where he knows the greenkeeper is not a member and inviting him for a pint and a pep talk. The merit of increasing greenkeeper power by strength of numbers is an easy enough banner to wave and the value a member gets in the package is, without argument, the bargain of the century! That, in a nutshell, is my principal goal and perhaps in the coming years of actually seeing greenkeeper's clamouring to become members – wishful thinking? I believe not.

I'm also constantly reminded of the address given by Bobbie Gee at Harrogate and would like to see all greenkeepers take her message on board and promote themselves in a more vigorous and spirited fashion as true professionals. Without the greenkeeper the world of golf would be in a sorry state and it doesn't matter what level they may have reached, third assistant or course manager, they all play a vital part in the well-being of a hugely profitable industry and should share in the bonanza – it's really up to the individual to go out and do a bit of banner-waving for themselves and their proud profession!

It would be remiss of me not to mention education, but I will do no more than suggest the BIGGA Master Greenkeeper Certificate route as the one sure way in which individual growth will be demonstrated and the path upon which the future of our profession depends. David Golding is opening up whole new vistas in that sphere and greenkeepers everywhere have never had better educational opportunities to improve; and prosper thereby. We should never lose sight of this fact.

In conclusion, I feel that to be chairman of the Association is not unlike being a course manager. Like greenkeeping, it calls for hard work and dedication, but the whole task is greatly rewarding and the results are worthwhile beyond measure. That dedication is reflected in every board colleague and I hope every member has an appreciation of how much hard voluntary work is put in on their behalf. In addition we should not lose sight of the debt we owe to the staff at Head Office. As a final shot, perhaps it would be a bright idea for the board – or small sectors of it along with the Executive Director – to visit regional meetings for open forum. Perhaps in twelve months we shall talk again and I can give you my reflective observations. You can be sure we will not have stood still!



Elected to the lofty heights of chairmanship in April, GEORGE MALCOLM took time out to tell David White something about himself and of his aspirations for the Association in the year ahead...



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