

Who's who in BIGGA



NORMAN EXLEY

You'll be hard pushed to attend a golf meeting, seminar or indeed any form of activity where greenkeepers gather in the south east without coming face to face with Norman Exley (or his delightful wife Linda, for that matter, who is one of only a handful of BIGGA lady members and a horticultural expert of some note). The reason is plain to see, for BIGGA and the greenkeeping cause is Norman's prime reason for living. You can't

get more dedicated than that!

It's probably true to say that greenkeeping discovered Norman rather than the other way round, for after what seemed like a lifetime of charity fund-raising for the Lifeboat Institute and getting more and more 'browned off' with the London rat-race, he read of an opportunity to attend a TOPS course at Askham Bryan College and sent off his CV.

The answer was affirmative and off he set, determined to make a career in sports turf but certainly unaware that golf would snare him, along with a certain lady who is now his wife, for Linda was also taking the TOPS road at that precise moment. A year full-time at Askham Bryan, Phases I and II of Greenkeeping Management, several seminars and a multitude of lectures later and the stage was set for Normans first job in a new career, that of greenkeeping at N. Middlesex GC, this followed a year later with a head greenkeepers job at a private Club in Kent – Woodlands Manor. It was a case of what might have been, for the lure of London – or at least what is now part of London suburbia in Northwood – called him just one year on to his present job at Northwood GC, where he has been for nine years.

Talking to Norman one quickly realises that he is London's man and although he and Martin Peters ran the old EIGGA London Section almost from the start, he did run the new BIGGA region from day one, appointed Regional Administrator in '87 as the new era first dawned.

Amongst Norman's many other attributes is a burning optimism for the future of greenkeeping, almost against himself in some ways for he is witness to some pretty awful tales of secretaries in the region who think we (BIGGA) are getting altogether too big for our boots! His own goal is to spread the gospel according to Saint BIGGA and to take a stand wherever two or three chairmen of green or secretaries are gathered together. He sees it as vitally important that standards continue to rise, that BIGGA eventually has its own greenkeeper training centre and that head greenkeepers simply must positively encourage all youngsters within the ranks to join the Association.

You can't get away from the man's enthusiasm even if you try. Within minutes of the Iseki Championships finishing, in which he captained the SE Team whilst playing as a last minute stand-in, he's off into a reverie about Littlestone 92 and the National Tournament, his latest baby. He's already demonstrating signs of the minor nervous tension that is



Featuring two more of the Association's backroom boys, the men who help make BIGGA tick, taken from taped discussions and aided and abetted by a little persuasive nudge from the editor

often the badge of a good administrator, but with Norm you can be sure it'll be all right on the night – and the day will be pretty good too!

HUGH PARRY

'I know you but I don't know much about you', was my opening gambit with Hugh Parry, the quiet man of Welsh greenkeeping. 'There's not much to tell' his too modest reply. But within minutes, interspersed with his tales of how others were faring, this peaceable man began to expand, warming to my prompting and expounding upon his great passion, the continuing education of greenkeepers.

A member of the Board, Hugh told of how tickled he was to be on the Education Committee, a job he'd rather hoped he'd get and how he now intended to throw himself whole-heartedly into the promotion of the great education cause.

Hugh was always a greenkeeper, starting straight from school and serving an indentured apprenticeship with a local authority. That he liked what he did is evidenced by his remaining with them until he was 28, during which time he attended Llandaff College, successfully progressing through all City and Guilds stages I-III in Greenkeeping Management and further topping up with IOG examinations. Now his sights are set on progressing through to HND status – 'I'll never stop learning' his avowed philosophy.

Moving to more recent times, Hugh, now 34, lives in Cwmbran with his wife, 15 year old daughter and 16 year old son. Both youngsters are clearly a source of great pride to him, the youngest currently taking O levels and the boy waiting eagerly for A level results before hopefully moving on to University.

From local authority golf, where perhaps his last task was building a municipal course, Hugh moved first to Blackwood Golf Club and thence to Caerphilly. Now he has his passport stamped, ready to commute the 45 minutes across the border to Bristol and Clifton as head greenkeeper, a task he looks forward to with great relish. 'They really have their act together' he opined, 'for almost as soon as the STRI and course architect Hamilton Stutt had finished preparing a report for them prior to refurbishment, they set too and completely rebuilt the greenkeeping workshops and stores, a case of first priority and one that augers well for the future'.

Hugh is fired with enthusiasm for his future at Bristol and Clifton, a task where he knows clearly why he has been hired and where the green committee have faith in his judgement and ability. Asked what he would like to change in future, he's not unlike most other greenkeepers in wanting to see the rank and file golfer award his colleagues the prestige and standing they deserve, for as he rightly points out, 'without the tender care of the greenkeeper on their course, they would have a poor patch on which to do battle'.

