



Who's who in BIGGA



HARRY DIAMOND

The epitome of a true Scot, Harry Diamond is a ruddy faced and exceedingly jovial character (I use the term unreservedly, for he is a character) who nevertheless has about him a serious side. Not for him the chasing of rainbows to the ends of the world, as so many of his countrymen are apt to do, for Harry has found his niche in greenkeeping in his home location of Ayr, where for the past 21 years he has worked for Kyle and Carrick D.C., currently

as head greenkeeper, Belleisle and Seafield GC.

His record speaks volumes for location longevity for in all his long career – he is 61 – he has maintained a record that is one for the books; beginning with 11 years at Glasgow Gailes followed by 13 years at Bogside, 11 of those as head greenkeeper. His proud claim is that this first promotion made him the youngest ever head greenkeeper in Scotland at that time.

The bug must have bitten early, for Harry worked on a course during school holidays, 'far better than compulsory potato picking' he recalled, before promptly moving into the business proper when schooling was over. Glasgow Gailes was his launching pad and he vividly remembers their kindness. As an example, during National Service in Malaya he saw a 'plane overhead dropping a wee parachute which missed the target and landed in a river. Scrambling in fully clothed, Harry discovered the pack contained a soggy 'fiver' – an unexpected Christmas bonus from Glasgow Gailes and a fond reminder of happier days back home. 'What do you do with a soggy 'fiver' in Malaya?', I asked, 'dry the bloody thing and take it home' he chortled, 'it was the most welcome bonus I've ever had'.

Like most people who hold office Harry is a busy man. He still plays golf to a handicap of four (he was scratch for 30 years) and seemingly thrives on a diet of committee work that includes chairmanship of the Scottish section, working closely with the Ayrshire section and contributing years of wisdom and understanding to the Liaison Committee of Ayr College. Like most elder statesmen in his profession, Harry applauds the strides being made in greenkeeper education and although he didn't exactly spell it out, I formed the impression he's just a mite sorry the generation gap precluded him from such educational opportunities.

For the future, again not surprisingly, his enthusiasm is tempered by realism in acknowledging that the Association's main goal must be to attract more members. How to achieve this is another matter but his views are firm and unyielding. 'Greenkeeper International plays a vital part – indeed, *the* vital part – and its credibility is our strong and lasting link', he said. 'We owe it to members and prospective members to continue demonstrating our effectiveness and to show the world our position as the heartbeat and conscience of the profession'.

As a serving member of the magazine sub-committee Harry speaks from a platform of authority and it was on this subject that I felt I touched a raw nerve. 'I've only a year to run before retiring from the board and committee and, of course, have no way of knowing who will take my place, or indeed other places on the committee. As an Association we have much the same board and committee structure as that of most golf Clubs and I feel we are in danger of perpetuating the same mistakes. If we were to be really courageous we should follow the dictum of "The Way Forward" and

Prompted by an idea spawned in committee and properly brought into youthful bloom at The Open Championship, where an air of relaxed informality creates just the right atmosphere for taped interviews, your editor talked with members of the executive and regional administration, set on taking them from what may perhaps be seen as local parochialism into the national eye of the Association. I began by talking and listening to Harry Diamond and Barry Heaney

establish a more lasting structure with longevity as the key.' I asked if he preferred the statement to be "off record" but learned that his view was a passionate one, indeed one that he expressed most vehemently. 'It's what I believe' he insisted, 'and I'm sure that my views are echoed by others on the board'.

Perhaps my lasting impression is that Harry will make his remaining term a meaningful one, for as they say in politics 'even a week is a long time'.

BARRY HEANEY

If Harry Diamond is the elder statesman, the ever youthful Barry Heaney appears as the young pretender. I'd known Barry as a fine golfer but realised little of the big contribution he has made, and continues to make, as a member of the Board of Management. His appearance belies his age and one might be forgiven for disbelieving that he is 55 years old.

Barry began by giving the Greenkeeper International team a little pat on the back for achievements attained in our brief reign, echoing previously expressed views, but I was not to be easily led down this path, wanting to learn more about Heaney the man. Is he going to be reluctant to 'spill the beans' was one thought that crossed my mind.

Not so, for here is a man in love with his profession and he enthuses over it like a teenager over his first motor car. Like many fine greenkeepers, Barry has found his perfect patch, Wortley Golf Club, where he has happily worked as head greenkeeper for over 19 years. 'It's such a good place to work that I plan to remain until my retirement' he said, 'they are as understanding as any Club could be and are totally supportive. They are like good friends'.

Quite apart from thoroughly enjoying his chosen career, Barry has enjoyed a long lasting love affair with the game of golf itself and is its most enthusiastic exponent. 'I first took to the game about 30 years ago', he grinned, 'though as any good Yorkshireman should, I was 'blooded' into cricket first and enjoyed a few good seasons before taking up the sticks'. He is, dammit, one of those for whom the game came naturally and though never once having a lesson, played to single figures within 12 months and has maintained his strength of purpose by remaining thus, playing now to a handicap of eight.

To get to his proud position of head greenkeeper – and to maintain it – Barry worked hard at educating himself in the intricacies of his craft, though his tuition was of the night school variety and he opined that the opportunities of today were just not available to him as a youngster. It was largely down to IOG courses, which were the best, indeed probably the only courses available in his time and his appetite for learning was voracious. 'If I could wave the magic wand', he said, 'I'd make college education compulsory for new incumbents to our profession, further I'll ram home the thought that burns within me: greenkeepers, get involved in everything the Association does and you'll get the best out!'

Magic wand waving just once more, Barry wished that rank and file golfers would understand that greenkeepers don't slit, hollow tine or top dress greens for amusement, but for their lasting benefit. 'How nice it would be' he concluded, 'if they appreciated the situation, rather than heaping scorn on our efforts'. And so say all of us.

