

## Communication: making it work

**B**ack in November I took two sessions with delegates on years three and four of our annual Management Courses. Essentially these sessions were about our Association and in the form of open discussion. As a feedback from the 'grassroots', if you'll excuse the expression, these sessions were invaluable from my personal viewpoint and I hope of benefit to the delegates involved. One area of much discussion was the perennial subject of communication with the membership. There was a very definite emphasis on the need to communicate through the magazine, this quite rightly being seen as the prime means of communication. So the idea of this column was born from a concerted view of the delegates that I should write regularly in the magazine on matters of interest and concern to the membership as well as on future plans and developments. At the beginning of a new year there would seem no better time to start – so here goes!

Having begun on the subject of communication it would seem a good idea to continue with the theme in this first column. This is a subject where the Association is at all levels often prone to criticism. I do not think this is altogether surprising. Communication, to a greater or lesser degree, is a problem in all large organisations and one which must be constantly worked at through all levels of the Association to ensure that information is disseminated and understood and to see that the decision making processes work for the benefit of our members.

In the past communication with the membership was more difficult than it is now. It is often forgotten that it was as recently as 1987 that we operated from one small office within the Sports Turf Research Institute at Bingley. The Association employed just myself and Car-



**Neil Thomas, Executive Director of BIGGA, starts his new regular column**

oline and we continued that way for some eighteen months until David was appointed as Education Officer and Debbie took on membership services with Samantha replacing Caroline as my personal assistant. This coincided with our move in May of 1989 to Aldwark Manor. In those early days we were busy laying the solid foundations on which members and staff in partnership have built the progressive and professional Association we enjoy today. Let's be honest and say that in those early days with limited personnel and resources, whilst the importance of communication was always recognised it did not enjoy the priority it does today. I can well understand from those early days members criticising Headquarters over lack of communication, criticism which at times was justified and at others not so. It is a criticism which continues even now in varying degrees within the structure of our Association. In defence of Headquarters I really do believe that we have had a particular awareness of this problem area in

the past year and have done much to implement improvements. In this regard the continued development of our public relations function, long recognised as a neglected aspect of the Association's development, is surely contributing to improved communication.

The democratic structure of the Association from Board of Management through Regional Boards to Section Committees will continue to be utilised by Headquarters for the benefit of good communication but the point needs to be made that communication must be upwards as well as downwards from Aldwark Manor. That I regret is not always the case. Again I have spent much time in recent months with limited success to date in encouraging members with queries or concerns to communicate directly with Headquarters whether by letter, telephone or fax. Communication second and third hand can often be frustrating and counter-productive. Your staff are here to help and the systems are now in place to provide information and deal with problems promptly and efficiently. By all means complain if the level of service you are entitled to expect is not forthcoming. Our aim is to set high standards for the benefit of our members and where we are found wanting improvements will be made.

Constructive criticism of any kind is always welcomed in the interests of taking the Association forward. A valid criticism I feel is the need for staff at Headquarters to have more direct contact at 'grassroots' level and during 1994 our senior management team of Bill, John, Debbie and myself will seek to allocate more of our time 'out in the country' communicating directly with greenkeepers at all levels. It is also high time that we put faces to names and voices and in the coming months, through the pages of 'Greenkeeper International', we will be distinguishing between Sam and Sami and letting you know who your staff are and what they do.

I'll sign off this month with some words written over 400 years ago, but so true today – "The pleasure of criticising takes away from us the pleasure of being moved by some very fine things". Food for thought perhaps.



### BIGGA SUBSCRIPTION RATES FOR 1994

**PAY EARLY – AND PAY LESS!**

These are the prices to pay if you want to join BIGGA without linking your membership to the Education and Development Fund. To join the Fund, set up to help secure the future of greenkeeper, golf club and game, or for more information, complete the pre-paid card facing Page 62.

	New Members In 1994	Current Members if paying before 31 Jan. 94
Course Manager/Head Greenkeeper	£58.00	£52.00
Deputy Course Manager/ Deputy Head Greenkeeper	£50.00	£45.00
First Assistant/Assistant Greenkeeper	£43.00	£40.00
20 years of age or under	£29.00	£26.00
Associate/Company (including one year's subscription to 'Greenkeeper International')	£50.00	
Associate/Company without magazine	£25.00	
Corporate	£560.00	
International	£50.00	

### THE BIGGA RECOMMENDED MINIMUM SALARY/WAGE SCALE, 1994

The Association has updated its recommended minimum salary/wages scale, although actual figures remain the subject of negotiation between the Golf Club and Greenkeeping staff. Quoted rates apply from 1 January, 1994.

	18 Holes	27 Holes	36 Holes
<b>Course Manager/Head Greenkeeper</b>	<b>£18,550</b>	<b>£20,220</b>	<b>£22,630</b>
<b>Deputy Course Manager/Deputy Head Greenkeeper</b>	<b>£13,390</b>	<b>£14,590</b>	<b>£16,320</b>
<b>First Assistant</b>	<b>£222.80 pw</b>	<b>£222.80 pw</b>	<b>£222.80 pw</b>
<b>Assistant Greenkeeper</b>	<b>£209.60 pw</b>	<b>£209.60 pw</b>	<b>£209.60 pw</b>
<b>Apprentice Greenkeeper (all courses) Age 16/17: £104.80 pw; Age 18: £131.00 pw; Age 19: £157.20 pw; Age 20: £183.40 pw; Age 21+: £209.60 pw.</b>			

NB: Where appropriate these rates should be increased to reflect Regional variations up to a maximum of 24% in the South East Region.

The First Assistant is a post designed to recognise a third-in-charge where appropriate to the size of the Club. In cases where the First Assistant is the recognised Deputy, the appropriate Deputy Course Manager/Deputy Head Greenkeeper salary scale should apply.

Staff in possession of recognised qualifications should have this reflected in an addition to basic salary.