

The journey

Early in 1994 we embarked on a journey which was to take us through the whole ambit of BIGGA's structure and activities at national, regional and section level by means of a review which has resulted in the completed "Towards 2000" document. This journey will end in Harrogate at our forthcoming AGM when members will be asked to approve the document and most importantly implement the resulting amendments proposed to the Constitution and Rules of the Association.

Looking back, the exercise over the past two years has seen the democratic processes of the Association at their best. All members with an interest in commenting on the review should have had the opportunity to do so through their sections. At regional level there has been a proper and considered consultation on the proposed changes and representations made to the Board of Management for consideration. Over and above this a Review Body was established which in addition to the Headquarters Management Team, included our Chairman and representatives from each of the regions. This Review Body was instrumental in progressing the "Towards 2000" document and I would like to thank those member representatives who gave freely of their time - Barry Heaney, Gordon Child, Ian Holoran, Harry Diamond, Clive Osgood and Richard Barker.

So we come to the AGM with the review document having broad based support from the sections of the Association and the five regional boards. The focus is now on the proposed amendments to the Constitution and Rules and space will not allow me to comment in detail in the course of this article. I will, however, make mention of two key aspects of the changes. One relates to membership of the Association and seeks to give a clearer definition of the entitlement to full membership of BIGGA. This, in future, if accepted, will be limited to "any person employed in the keeping of the green at a golfing establishment" together with Life Members duly elected by the Association in General Meeting. Other membership categories will continue with the introduction also of a "Student Member" category. Existing members who feel they may no longer meet the criteria for full member-



BIGGA in focus

BY NEIL THOMAS

ship have no need for concern as a separate clause allows for those persons in paid up membership of the Association at the time of implementation of the revised Constitution by the membership in General Meeting and who do not meet the new criteria for membership as laid down in that Constitution to continue in membership at the discretion of the appropriate section committee.

A second key aspect of the changes relates to the Board of Management which, on acceptance of the proposals, will henceforth comprise of five members being one member from each region, together with a Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Past Chairman. An important change is that the Chairman and Vice-Chairman can be appointed by the Board from within the full membership of the Association. Should the Board appoint from within the five regional members then the region in question shall be entitled to elect an additional representative. So the Board of Management will be restricted to eight members. The introduction of a clause allowing the Board to appoint a Chairman and Vice-Chairman from within the full membership rather than restricting those appointments to members of the board as currently applies is important. It will allow a much greater degree of flexibility and should ensure that those taking on the positions in future can give freely of their time and commit themselves wholly to positions where the demands are ever-increasing.

I hope I have given you just a brief insight to the changes being proposed and that members attending the AGM will see fit to vote in these amendments to our Constitution and Rules. Looking

A BIGGA Thank you



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towards 2000 and beyond, I believe that they will increase the standing and effectiveness of the Association as we look to meet the many challenges that lie ahead.

A welcome for new Golden and Silver Key members

BIGGA'S Education and Development Fund was established in January 1992 and is now entering its fifth year. Its achievements are well documented and it has been particularly successful on two fronts. First in providing education and training opportunities for our members which otherwise would not have been possible and secondly in bringing together, through a common programme, those companies within the industry who wish to support greenkeepers in their quest to enhance their knowledge and learning opportunities and to take forward the status of the profession. 1995 saw the publication of "A Practical Guide to the Ecological Management of the Golf Course" as well as a new training video on "Golf Course Preparation". Both were made possible through the resources of the Fund as were the Regional Management Training Courses which will continue across the country and in Southern Ireland during the coming spring. A number of projects for 1996 are being planned and during the BTME in Harrogate we will be launching another new video on the 'Reconstruction of a Green'. The Fund has therefore become a keystone of our progress as an Association and within this magazine we recognise and thank those companies as Golden and Silver Key Members who will be supporting the Fund in 1996. A mention also for those individuals who choose to support the Fund and become Golden or Silver Key members of the Association. This is a very real commitment to the education and training of greenkeepers and I thank them for their support.

A special welcome for our new Golden Key company members - Hepworth Minerals and Chemicals Ltd, Pattison, Mommersteeg, Levington, Superturf and Ocmis. A welcome too for Rolawn as a Silver Key member. I feel sure that their decisions to support the Fund will be fully justified and I look forward to their playing a full part in the consultative processes through which the Fund and the projects emanating from it have prospered.

NEWS

End of an era

At the end of a year in which he prepared his fourth Open Championship course Walter Woods, Links Superintendent at St Andrews, begins his well earned retirement - although the pipe, slippers and SAGA holiday brochures may have to wait a while before they are put to good use because he has no intention of saying farewell to the profession he loves.

Walter will remain as a consultant to St Andrews Links and will expand his consultancy work to share his vast experience with others.

"I go into clubs where the greenkeeper is suffering stress and without the resources to do the job properly and try to provide him with support. I find that the committee listens to me and I can usually improve the situation for the greenkeeper within a couple of months," he explained. As the first Chairman of BIGGA in 1987 Walter has seen the Association grow and been a major influence in what it has done for the profession.

"I see a different type of greenkeeper coming through. One who has a responsible job, is in charge of budgeting and who has a more managerial role. The Association is largely responsible for this and is keen to promote the job of the greenkeeper and point the way



Fond farewell: Barry Heaney, left, presents Walter Woods with a retirement gift from BIGGA

forward for the profession."

He also gave credit to the Association for improving the image of the greenkeeper.

"It used to be that greenkeepers wore overalls and a 'bunnet' but now you see young men who still wear overalls while out on the course but who dress in their BIGGA blazer, collar and tie when they have meetings. That has done a lot for the image of greenkeeping and the Association has been responsible for that."

One thing which does annoy him, however, is the Association's current membership level.

"We have moved up from

1,000 members when we first started to 6,000 now but we should have 12,000 members.

"Every greenkeeper should be a member of BIGGA and it is down to the clubs to learn that the course won't succeed without a good greenkeeper and that a good greenkeeper should be a member of the Association to tap into all the expertise and educational opportunities it has to offer."

If there is one thing which has surprised and delighted Walter since the birth of BIGGA it is the education which is now on offer.

"I didn't think it would ever happen that many greenkeepers would be better educated than the secretaries but it has because the Association not only educates on greenkeeping matters but offers courses in management as well."

After 21 years at St Andrews Walter will miss preparing the courses for Championships.

"Not just the Opens but the other professional events and the top amateur championships. I got a real buzz out of that," he recalls.

Walter was invited to the Board's Christmas Dinner just before Christmas and presented with a token of appreciation from all in the Association by current BIGGA Chairman Barry Heaney.

Going Dutch...



A party of greenkeepers and Course Managers visited the Barenbrug Headquarters and Research and Testing Establishment in Holland. The trip was organised by Barenbrug, Europe's largest grass breeder and producer of amenity grasses and Jamie Bennett of Grass Roots, and the party predominately comprising greenkeepers from the Home Counties, toured the company's Headquarters in the morning and was given a talk on the work that was being carried out done. After lunch they travelled to see some of the research work in progress and the extensive testing grounds.