

The importance of image

The dictionary defines "image" as the "character of thing or person as perceived by the public." These are image conscious days with the media ever ready to promote and more often destroy images particularly in the field of politics, entertainment and sport. So, like it or not, we in the greenkeeping world need also to be image conscious both as a "thing" in this case BIGGA and "person", in this context read greenkeeper.

BIGGA, believe it or not, will soon be 10 years old and this is therefore a pertinent time to examine its image. Back in 1987 as a new organisation it had no image and the early years were spent in promoting BIGGA as the greenkeepers' professional body and indeed in explaining what the acronym BIGGA stood for. There was a fair degree of scepticism to overcome. Within the golfing world and particularly among those with an awareness of the internecine strife which had preceded the formation of BIGGA, many doubted the capability of greenkeepers to form and run their own organisation. Within a generally supportive industry there were those who stood back to see if BIGGA was building on a sound foundation. In the early days establishing a positive image was not easy as BIGGA was on a learning curve and there were difficult problems to overcome particularly in relation to two of our cornerstones, namely our magazine and exhibition. The Association came through the trials and tribulations of those formative years and



BIGGA in focus

BY NEIL THOMAS

today projects a positive image as a professional body representing its members for whom it provides a wide variety of services. Image has considerable significance in promoting the Association within the world of golf. Above all, and with a fair degree of success, BIGGA promotes professionalism among its members and its standing in the golfing world has advanced very significantly in recent years. That is not to deny that there remain sceptics whose image of the Association is that of a trade union. In marketing the Association we will continue to accentuate the positives in the view that eventually even the most diehard of critics will come to see that our professional image is no mirage and that behind it is an organisation enhancing the status of greenkeepers and their profession.

What then of the individual greenkeeper? Here we can look back over ten years and a marked difference in image is apparent.

Perhaps this is best exemplified when one looks at our major gathering, the BTME. So many of our members these days attending the BTME project a professional image both in appearance, in the manner in which they conduct themselves and in the demonstration of their knowledge and technical expertise. Some, of course, do not do themselves justice but the balance of the pendulum has swung as these now tend to be in the minority which perhaps was not the case ten years ago. Education and training has played a major part in the transformation which has undeniably taken place while the emphasis placed by BIGGA on professionalism has clearly brought about results. There can be no doubt that modern standards demand that the greenkeeper who is going places will need to be well groomed, articulate, knowledgeable and yes, image conscious. These attributes will become increasingly necessary in a competitive world. As I travel around the country to greenkeeper gatherings it is possible to assess the change of attitude in 10 years particularly in reference to dress code. Many more greenkeepers now proudly display the BIGGA blazer and badge appreciating its relevance in image terms both for themselves personally and in the recognition it secures for their association. Image is important for them, too, back at their golf clubs and not only in terms of their personal appearance in a club house or committee room

scenario. Do the facilities for greenkeeping staff and equipment pass muster? Are they clean, tidy and efficient? If so it can do much for the team's image. Out on the golf course a small investment in practical but professional looking working apparel can do wonders for the image with the club members out playing the golf course.

Talking of those club members what image do they hold of the greenkeeping team at your golf club? Too easy is the image of the guys who hold up play while they work on the course and invariably are responsible for every golfer's bad round when the greens were too fast or too slow and generally unplayable. Greenkeepers can all too easily become similarly negative in response. Communication with club members is important. Taking trouble to talk with them and post information on the club's notice board will prove image enhancing as will persuading the Chairman of Green and his Committee to hold meetings with club members where the Course Manager can project his staff and their work in a positive light.

So there we have it. We live in an image conscious age – like it or loathe it. Within BIGGA we recognise its importance and will continue to work at enhancing a positive image. For the individual, too, image will continue to be important. While the old maxim of "by their deeds ye shall judge them" remains very apposite, the right image is and will remain important.

Former Northern President dies at 84

It is with regret that we report the sad death of Bill Mountain, President of the Northern Section of BIGGA (and formerly BGGGA) for 36 years. He was 84.

Married to Emmie for 56 years they had three children, Alan, Susan and Andrew and five grandchildren. He was also a keen sportsman and played cricket, billiards and golf.

Bill worked at Thomas Greens in Leeds and then

started his own mower business in 1946. One of his first agencies was for Villiers Engines and he subsequently became main dealer for Ransomes, Sisis and Cushman.

He worked hard to build and develop his business and became successful and well respected by all who knew him.

He was always a keen supporter of the Greenkeepers'

Association and was a popular figure at many events around the country. He will be very sadly missed by all his friends and colleagues in the greenkeeping business.

The Northern Section, together with Bill's family, have purchased a trophy in his memory and The Bill Mountain Memorial Trophy will be played for annually on President's Day.



Bill Mountain and his wife Emmie