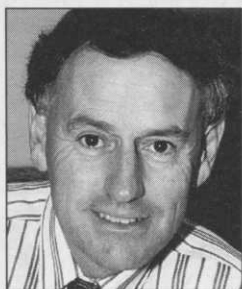


# Today's greenkeeper needs BIGGA membership

On April 1 BIGGA will introduce a new membership benefit of considerable importance for its greenkeeper members. Members will now be eligible for representation at all levels of employment disputes including representation at disciplinary hearings. In essence, therefore, greenkeeper members will be able to seek advice and support in relation to their employment at any stage from commencement of that employment all the way through to eventual retirement. There is a necessary proviso that the new scheme will run for a probationary period of six months and, if continued, be subject to annual review thereafter. This will allow us to gauge the use of the service and the costs involved. The value of this service to a member both in monetary and in peace of mind terms is considerable and those greenkeepers still reluctant to join BIGGA should really need no further convincing when a membership benefit of this magnitude is on offer.

Why is this service being introduced? Essentially it is to ensure that each and every member with an employment problem can be assured of appropriate legal advice and support as necessary in any particular situation. It is not a service to be used frivolously. Again it is not a service put in place to protect the incompetent greenkeeper. It is a service which it is hoped will encourage golf club committees to conduct proceedings in relation to their greenkeeping staff in a manner which has regard to the due processes of employment legislation. There are golf clubs who act strictly in accordance with employment law. Many others do not. For some years now our legal services have been provided through Hambro and it is their experience, in dealing with many different professions, that they have never come across a situation where employers, in the form of golf clubs, so consistently, and I quote, "Drive a coach and horses" through the employment legislation. As a result, Hambro's



## BIGGA in focus

BY NEIL THOMAS

success when representing our members at industrial tribunals is invariably guaranteed. However we do not want cases to reach this stage because by that time another greenkeeper is out of a job. It is very necessary therefore, that our members have recourse to adequate legal backing from the commencement of a dispute which is what the new service will provide.

I would urge members to read carefully the articles in both last month's and this month's issues of *Greenkeeper International* in order that they gain an understanding of the services which will be available and how it is envisaged they will work. Practically, there will be no change in the initial contact made by a member. Contact will be made as now with Hambro through use of the legal helpline card. Hambro will provide advice and if they feel representation is appropriate will advise the member to contact Kirbys. The operation of the service will be closely monitored and Kirbys will be providing regular

feedback to the Association.

One of the most standard questions posed by members is "Where does my subscription go?". Most certainly this new service is going to cost a not inconsiderable sum of money. It extends the services already available through the legal helpline, stress management helpline, and personal accident insurance. Without the additional costs of this new service, these three provisions for members cost a total of £12.40 per member per annum. The magazine is provided as a benefit of membership. On individual subscription this costs £34.00 per annum. With the exception of the South East Region, rebates are made by Headquarters to regions and sections to finance their administration. In total these amount to 15% of each subscription. The rebate for a first assistant/assistant greenkeeper rate of £47.00 is therefore £7.05. Again with the exception of the South East Region, honorariums are paid to each Regional Administrator and Section Secretary. In the South East the equivalent amounts are used as contributions towards the costs of employing a part time Regional Administrator. Special member prices apply for education courses and seminars. An example is the recent series of Local Management Courses, which, subsidised through the Education and Development Fund, cost £50.00 to members and £150.00 to non-members. For the golfing greenkeepers when courtesy of the course is granted a very substantial benefit accrues – a benefit which needs

to be cherished at a time when there is increasing evidence of its abuse. What value should be placed on the opportunities to meet with other members both on a local and national scale, to participate in such events as the BTME, the National Tournament and the Open Championship and to have willing contacts for advice and guidance when a greenkeeping problem defies solution?

What is abundantly clear is that subscription income would not on its own provide members with the range of services that the majority have come to expect. That is why BIGGA enters into commercial activities to generate additional income. That is why it employs experienced staff, with the appropriate expertise, to run the Association as a business in line with policies set out by a Board of Management elected by the membership. The Association is first and foremost about its members but it can only ultimately succeed with the backing and whole-hearted support of its members. Members need to be active at all levels in support of their Association. BIGGA is a buoyant organisation, growing and progressing with each passing year, but lethargy and complacency at whatever level have no place in this Association and need to be driven out. The more input by members the more successful BIGGA will become. Perhaps the order of the day should be to ask not what the Association can do for you but what can you do for the Association. It works better both ways and most certainly represents the way we should move forward.

### Southturf 1996 is cancelled

Following the recent death of BIGGA South East Regional Administrator and Southturf organiser, Geof Hills, Southturf 1996 has been cancelled.

It was felt that, at this stage, the event would not be feasible for 1996 with no administrator/organiser in place.

A new administrator is to be appointed in due course, when a decision will be made on staging an event in 1997.

The South East region would like to thank all companies for their support at the previous Southturf exhibitions.

### Wrong number

The BIGGA Headquarters telephone number is 01347 838851 only.

The 01347 838852 number which appears on some of the BIGGA letter headings does not belong to the Association. There are, in fact, two lines attached to the 838581 number.