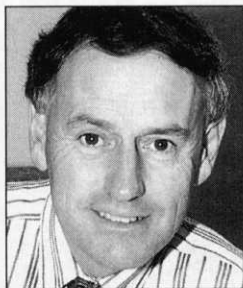


# Perceptions of BIGGA membership

I recently attended a meeting in Bury St Edmunds where some 50 greenkeepers had gathered to consider the formation of a new Essex Section.

It was a meeting where the situation was complicated by the fact that many of those present who were interested in joining the proposed new section were currently members of the long established East Anglia Section. In a wide-ranging discussion it was clear that the arguments had been well thought out and that members attending had come prepared and done their homework. I was impressed with the concerns expressed by those present, whatever position they were taking in the debate, to ensure that the best interests of the Association and particularly the East Anglia Section were served. There was no friction but much understanding. The outcome was a decision to proceed with the formation of an Essex Section which will become operative following the East Anglia Section's AGM in November.

Certain members currently serving on the East Anglia Committee will step down at the AGM with a view to taking up places on the new Essex Committee. They in turn will need to be replaced and a letter has been sent to all East Anglia members making them aware of the situation well in advance of the AGM. It is essential that two viable, forward looking sections emerge



## BIGGA in focus

BY NEIL THOMAS

from the changes and I believe that there is enough commitment from members to ensure that this will happen. The East Anglia Section will become more compact and hopes to align itself with a local college for the future benefit of its members. The Essex Section has a considerable potential membership and again will seek a close relationship with a local college. Here then are examples of member enthusiasm, commitment and a will to take the Association forward at local levels.

Decisions to form new sections are not taken lightly, for the failure of a new section would not reflect well on the Association. Indeed since 1987, the Essex Section will be only the second new one following the formation of the North Wales Section some five years ago.

Headquarters will be working

closely with both the East Anglia and the new Essex Committees to ensure that all is in place by the time of the East Anglia AGM and members are encouraged to make any observations or comments to Headquarters or locally over the next few months. So far this has been a most encouraging exercise reflecting very well on members who are determined to see the Association develop and continue on a growth curve.

In writing of these developments it is pertinent to consider the enthusiasm and commitment of members throughout the Association. In broad terms, I would suggest that they fall into three groups. You at local level will know far better than me which of these groups encompass your colleagues and yourself.

1. The first group are the really dedicated ones. Visible at section, region and national events, they are always eager to be involved, ready to take on new tasks, prepared to serve on committees and give freely of their time in the BIGGA cause. They have a clear perception of BIGGA's aims and aspirations and see the professional benefits of being part of and active in the Association.

2. The second group is supportive of BIGGA and willing to contribute to the ongoing development of the Association. Their work and family commitments militate against them being involved in BIGGA to the extent that they and the Association

would wish but they do attend BIGGA events and contribute in varying measures to BIGGA's cause.

3. The third group are relatively disinterested members, perhaps joining BIGGA as "the thing to do" under coercion from colleagues or because the club wishes its greenkeepers to be members. To them the BIGGA magazine is a welcome benefit of membership as is the membership card if they are golfers. Little thought is given to the benefits of the legal protection and insurance services unless they suddenly find themselves in need of them, whilst education is often a neglected area.

It is impossible to hazard a guess as to how many members fall into each group. The more who gravitate to group 1 the better but realistically many will fall into group 2 and serve BIGGA to the best of their abilities. The concern must be for those in group 3 and the need for them to become more active and involved, not only for BIGGA's sake but also for their professional development. Much can be done at local level to change attitudes and in the years ahead I would hope that group 3 declines in numbers with a corresponding increase in members who can be categorised in groups 1 and 2. As a member, in which group would you honestly categorise yourself? If it is group 3 then perhaps there is cause for thought.

## Contract in Algarve

Bill Hawthorn, Chairman and founder of Watermation, seen here shaking hands with Mr. Sander Van Gelder, owner of the prestigious Vale do Lobo Course in the Algarve, on the signing of the contract to provide automatic irrigation to the new Royal Course, which is presently under construction and expected to be finished this autumn.

The Royal Course has been created on new land adjoining the existing nine holes of the Yellow Course which itself has undergone updating and recon-

struction. Great care has been taken by the architect however to retain the famous "cliff top" hole which has been in play now for over 30 years. It was decided to replace the irrigation on these original nine holes and design a completely new 18 hole system for the greens, tees, and fairways. This comprehensive scheme will require over 800 sprinklers throughout the course.

The irrigation system will have all the latest technology from Watermation including the TW2



irrigation controller complete with remote control operating in conjunction with PC central con-

trol. The sprinklers are the Watermation GR2 and GR3 models.