

Viscount Whitelaw to relinquish BIGGA presidency



Viscount Whitelaw pictured here at a BIGGA award ceremony last year

It was in January 1988 that the BIGGA Board of Management invited Viscount Whitelaw to become the Association's first President. Ten years on and with the approach of his 80th birthday Viscount Whitelaw has advised the Chairman and Executive Director of his wish to step down from his position in favour of a younger person.

Commenting on the President's decision, Neil Thomas said, "Following a recent meeting with Viscount Whitelaw, the Chairman and myself fully understand and respect his wishes and the Board of Management has reluctantly accepted his resignation.

"His contribution to BIGGA in the past decade has been outstanding. His empathy with the greenkeeping profession and his support for greenkeepers has greatly benefited both BIGGA and individual members."

First Honorary Member

BIGGA's constitution enables the BIGGA Board of Management to recognise as an Honorary Member any person deemed to have contributed in an outstanding manner to the Association or the profession.

"I am delighted to announce the

Board's decision to award the first Honorary Membership in the Association's history to Viscount Whitelaw," said Neil Thomas.

"It is richly deserved and we all join in sending our very best wishes for the future to both Viscount and Lady Whitelaw," he added.

Club Captains Asked for Donations

Every golf club Captain in the country has been circulated with a letter from BIGGA President Viscount Whitelaw asking him to request his committee to make a donation to the Association's Building Fund.

In the letter Viscount Whitelaw writes...

"As I prepare to step down from the presidency of the Association, I take great pleasure in the knowledge that the construction of BIGGA's new headquarters building will be completed later this year. This will most surely mark another step forward for BIGGA and its members who will be able to take advantage of the modern training facilities within the building. At present the Association is actively raising funds towards the cost of the

building and I write to ask if you would kindly request your committee to consider making a donation to BIGGA's Building Fund in recognition of all that BIGGA has done to enhance the profession of greenkeeping in the last ten years and which in turn has led to the great improvements in golf course management and maintenance which so many golf club members enjoy today.

"Donations should be forwarded to BIGGA headquarters and will be acknowledged on a Roll of Honour within the new building. For donations of £250 and upwards, BIGGA will additionally recognise such donations through the presentation of plaques."

BIGGA's Chairman Gordon Child said, "It is hoped that a positive response from the country's golf clubs to Viscount Whitelaw's letter will help to ensure that the Association's financial commitments brought about by the need to build a new Headquarters are reduced."





All donations welcome



George Barr with
Ham Manor Captain
Graham Holton and
Greens Chairman Don
Brewer MBE

First Golf Club Donation from Ham Manor

Ham Manor Golf Club in Sussex has become the first golf club in the country to contribute towards the building of BIGGA's new Headquarters and Training facility with a donation of £500.

Club Captain, Graham Holton, and Chairman of Green, Don Brewer MBE, together with Course Manager and BIGGA Board of Management member, George Barr, spoke with Greenkeeper International Editor, Scott MacCallum, about their reasons for making such a generous donation. **What was it that persuaded Ham Manor to donate money to BIGGA's Building Fund?**

Graham: When George first mentioned it I didn't really hesitate and when I suggested it to the Council of Management the agreement was unanimous. Each mem-

ber had obviously come to the same conclusion that this was useful and that the club should put something back into greenkeeping in a small way.

Don: The fact that it will help towards the training and professional development of greenkeepers was the thing which sold the idea to me. It is not much use having a wonderful course but not then training the people to maintain it properly. If BIGGA is the organisation which is going to do this then I believe it is down to the clubs to put something into it. It is only going to come back to us in the end anyway.

What have been your perceptions of BIGGA as an organisation?


Graham: We knew a little about BIGGA but not very much and, I would hesitate to say it, but I would think that 70% of our mem-

bers don't know anything about BIGGA at all. The other side of the coin is that without doubt it is the greenkeepers who are THE most important element of a golf club.

Don: Having said that the majority of members don't think there is any training involved - the greenkeeper just sits on a tractor and cuts grass. I don't believe that the average club member really knows that BIGGA exists.

Have you noticed any discernible improvement in course quality in the last 10 years?

Don: From our point of view greenkeepers have become more knowledgeable about what they are trying to do. In the past greenkeepers tended to be doers rather than thinkers but nowadays they think more about their job and that is down to the training which has become available to them.



Graham: What has perhaps transformed greenkeeping has been the tremendous advances made by the manufacturers of greenkeeping equipment which has enabled greenkeepers to do their job better. Of course the greenkeeper has to have the ability and knowledge to operate this much more sophisticated equipment. It must also be encouraging to green staff to see that golf clubs are buying this machinery to make their job easier.

Of course, maintenance is a lot more intensive because there is so much more play than in previous years.

George: In the ten years I've been here the increase in the amount of golf played has been huge. When I first arrived no-one teed off between 9am and 11am and then a few more after that. Now it is virtually all day. Ten years ago trolleys came off in November and went back on in March, now they are on all year round and maintenance has had to come up with the systems to allow people to play a lot longer.

Don: Members just don't appreciate that. There is no argument that golf courses are taking a much greater bashing than they ever have.

Graham: Some members are up here seven days a week which gives them good value for their membership. It does wear the course out but they expect it to be in apple pie order no matter the conditions.

Do you feel that golf supports greenkeeper education as much as it should?

Graham: I do believe that more should be done and I would like to see it because, as I've already said, the golf course is the most important thing in the golf club. The better a person is trained the better he can do his job whether he be a banker, a bus driver or a greenkeeper.

George: I don't believe the golf clubs know how much the training

costs. My Deputy recently went on a BIGGA training course and the club paid £75. The realistic value of that two day course was around £600 so the club is getting a very good deal. When I explained to the club just how little of the Golf Union levy came back into greenkeeper training I think everyone was surprised and shocked by that. We are talking pennies and I believe every member of this club would sacrifice 50p per head if they thought it would help the golf course.

Don: If you took 50p from each golf club member would you have far more than you needed?

George: Oh yes. That would be an astronomical sum of money and would enable every greenkeeper in the country to be trained to a minimum standard.

Ham Manor is obviously a far thinking golf club what else does it do for the good of the game?

Graham: We have a junior programme to provide money to assist in the development of the game as I believe that if the game is to prosper we must nurture our new and young players.

Thank you very much on behalf of the Association for the kind donation.

Graham: Our one desire at Ham Manor is that we may have provided an incentive for other golf clubs to follow our lead in donating to BIGGA's Building Fund. If there is one criticism of BIGGA it is that you don't promote yourselves enough but I think that this scheme will help to spread the word about BIGGA and what the Association does. I also think you should give yourselves credit for the wonderful job you do.

To date, the Buy a Brick Raffle, which will be drawn at BIGGA's annual golf day in June, has raised £6,600 while donations to the Building Fund stand at £10,259.



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