

# Making a presidential visit to St Andrews

It was with a touch of trepidation that I walked into the most famous building in golf recently and informed the man behind the desk that I had an appointment with Sir Michael Bonallack. After all it's not every day that you meet one of the most influential and best known figures in the game.

Any such feelings of nervousness went as soon as Sir Michael appeared and offered a warm handshake and a smile before escorting me to one of the lounges in the R&A clubhouse, where we were to conduct the interview which appears on page 26.

That he has agreed to become BIGGA's new President is a tribute to the advances the greenkeeping profession in general, and BIGGA in particular, has made over the last dozen years or so and as a successor to the late Viscount Whitelaw BIGGA could surely not have made a better choice.

Throughout the interview I was struck by two things. One was the genuine love of golf that was apparent in his every word and the other was his encyclopaedic knowledge of so many elements of the game – including matters greenkeeping, although he modestly admitted to very little on that subject – “minuscule” was how he described his greenkeeping knowledge.

He was also well aware of how difficult it will be to replace a man of the stature of Viscount Whitelaw, who did a power of work on behalf of the Association and gave BIGGA the credibility it needed in its formative years. However he is surely just the man to give added impetus to an Association that is now about to hit its teens. No door in the corridors of golfing power will ever be anything but open to Sir Michael and a quiet word in the appropriate ear at the appropriate time will stand BIGGA in good stead for this next phase of development.

In his first year his involvement with the Association will be slightly limited as he recently “drove in” as Captain of the R&A for Millennium year and will carry out all the functions expected of the role. It must surely be unique to retire from the Secretaryship one day and become Captain the next - he still needs reminding to use the correct parking space. However we will no doubt see him at the BIGGA events he can fit into his packed calendar.

Once we'd finished Sir Michael took time to show me round the main lounge which boasts enough artifacts to keep the Antiques Roadshow busy for an entire series.

On the way out I mentioned that Walter Woods was taking me to see the new King's Barns course on the outskirts of St Andrews and Sir Michael pointed out the drawings of the course which were on display in the clubhouse foyer.

We chatted about the growing number of courses in the St Andrews area and he commented that it was good news as the more golf courses that were built the more greenkeepers that would be needed.

It just goes to prove that he's thinking of the Association already.



**Editor:**  
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# Greenkeeper

INTERNATIONAL

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Cover photo courtesy of AllSport Photography

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