

Get the most out of your Association

Having stood down at the end of my term of office on the National Board of BIGGA in January, I have had time to reflect on the progress made by the Association since its inception in 1987.

The saying "from little acorns big oak trees grow" certainly is the case as far as BIGGA is concerned. In 14 short years we have achieved so much. We now have our own purpose built headquarters, with its education unit, marketing department, magazine and advertising with a design base, a membership department to look after all members needs, plus a finance department to run the whole show. The regions have their own paid Administrators to keep members in touch with what's going on. It has all moved so fast, it is hard to take in, and we still have members dissatisfied - Why?

I wonder how many members have not yet attended our week in January for the National Education Conference and Exhibition. If not, you don't know what you are missing. There is so much to do, see and learn. Then of course there is our AGM where all members should make the effort to attend, even the critics. Harrogate is a lovely town and certainly the place to be for the BTME week. The camaraderie is unbelievable. Everywhere you go, whether it's in the halls, hotels, or around town in restaurants you see groups of greenkeepers young and old talking and passing on ideas, experiences and knowledge. A great week run by BIGGA for you!

If you add to that the Environment Competition, Toro Student of the Year and Excellence in Greenkeeping Competitions, with Management Courses held at BIGGA HOUSE, regional education courses etc, BIGGA members and staff should be proud of what has been achieved.

I would also like to mention our Section Secretaries and committees, Regional Administrators and their Boards. They all work very hard on your behalf. So why then are there so many moaners? Members who say, "what do I get out of it?" They never seem to ask themselves "what do I put into it?" If you don't help yourselves it is difficult for others to help you.

There is not a greenkeeper in the whole of the UK who has not benefited from BIGGA. Greenkeepers enjoy a far higher status now than ever before. Greenkeeper salaries and conditions



Above: Past Chairman, Gordon Child

have improved, so has your standing with clubs and in the golf world. This has not just happened because you have been sat on your backsides. This has come about with hard work and drive from your Association. Your membership package is first class, but again - do you use what's on offer? How many of you use the legal helpline for every day happenings at work or home, insurance discounts, education courses, library and of course your magazine. I bet most of you just take out your membership card, sign it and bin the rest, and then moan about what's in it for me.

Let's take one case in point. Do you read your magazine? If you do, do you then criticise its contents? There's nothing wrong in criticising just so long as it's constructive. How many of you put pen to paper? The magazine is all about information and if you have something to say why not write about it. I am sure the Editor will put it together for you if you feel you need his help. Don't just sit there and grumble about it, do something! Of course some people will criticise anything, often without knowing enough about the subject. Those people are very hard to please, and some will never be happy, no matter what.

The trade companies in general sup-

port the Association a great deal and we very much appreciate their help. Often they set a fine example to members up and down the country so don't slap them in the face by not attending their supported events, whether it be at national, regional or section level. I know you can't attend them all but it would be nice if you could turn up to a few, and not leave it to the same stalwarts all the time. Many greenkeepers and trade members have spent

a lifetime trying to improve the greenkeepers' lot, and still do, but now with BIGGA at the forefront we are at last seeing things happen. I have been in greenkeeping for 55 years and believe me the changes have been dramatic. We have come a long way over those years and it's great to see.

Nothing gives me more pleasure than to visit and see many young greenkeepers running golf courses in such a professional way. It makes me feel proud to be still part of this fine profession. I cannot understand members who are always being and talking negative, running down the very people and organisation that are there to help them to a better life and career. So I ask you all, just stop and think where you would be without BIGGA, try to think positive and help where you can.

I know there is still a long way to go, but we need your input if we are to keep on improving. It's your Association and if we are talking about value for money then all I can say is, "it's no use paying the bus fare if you don't get on in the first place".

On a personal note, I have always felt honoured to be allowed to serve BIGGA members as Administrator, Board member and most of all, your Chairman over the years. I got tremendous enjoyment from being part of something special, and for that I thank you all. Now that I have stood down, I do not intend to walk away as greenkeeping has been my life, so I will still be at as many events as I can, but certainly BTME.

There is no truer saying than, "he only helps those who help themselves."

Gordon Child, Past Chairman

Foot and Mouth: Latest advice

As the Foot and Mouth Outbreak spreads throughout the country more and more golf clubs are being forced to take action, including temporary closure to reduce the chances of the virus spreading.

Many members have contacted BIGGA HOUSE for advice on what action they should be taking and they have been referred to the MAFF Hotline 0845 0504141 for England and Wales and 0845 9335577 for Scotland. The lines are open from 8am to 11pm seven days a week.

It is this course of action which is also being recommended by the three UK mainland-based Golf Unions.

Additional information can be obtained from the MAFF website, which can be reached by a hyperlink from BIGGA's website, at the end of the Foot and Mouth Outbreak statement.

However the situation is still volatile, and advice often conflicting. A MAFF fact sheet outlining restrictions and precautions on outdoor activities in infected areas was withdrawn in light of further guidance issued on March 16.

With the level of risk dependent on location and topography of the golf club many Course Managers and Head Greenkeepers have taken the common sense attitude of "being seen to be being responsible" with disinfected straw or mats at the entrance to clubs, trolley bans and signs requesting that golfers wash their spikes after every round.

A fuller report on the impact the FMD outbreak has had on golf will be included in May's magazine.

Get the latest FMD news and links at www.bigga.org.uk/footandmouth.html

Plans for BIGGA's future get underway with survey

A selected number of members will shortly be receiving the survey, explained in last month's issue of Greenkeeper International. If you do have one drop through your letter box please take time to fill it in as comprehensively as you can as the information gleaned from it will help to shape the future of your Association.

If you don't receive a survey but would like to take part you can obtain one by contacting Mike Williamson, at; MW Associates PO Box 6677, Edinburgh, EH14 3YB Tel/Fax: 0131 476 6677 email: mw.assoc@virgin.net

New President elected for CGSA

Jay Leach has been elected as President of the Canadian Golf Superintendents Association for 2001. Jay is Superintendent of the Cottonwood Golf and Country Club in Dewinton, Alberta.

At the same time Vince Gillis, the National Executive Director of the CGSA, since '89 has been awarded a contract extension by the Board of Directors.

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