

SCOTTISH REGION

West

Welcome to this month's West Section Report. Time is moving so fast, the season is just around the corner.

I attended the Scottish Annual Conference during March at Lawder College and once again it was a first class day. Peter Boyd has to be congratulated on his choice of speakers and the running of the day in general. It was nice to see our Chairman, Andy Campbell, in attendance.

There are several things happening during April with the greenkeepers v greens conveners match at Killermont Golf Club on the 15th. I am sure everyone is looking forward to playing Stuart's fine course.

The spring outing will be held at Renfrew on the 28th and I look forward to seeing a few of the boys on the day. Hopefully the weather will be kind, if not I am sure we will still enjoy ourselves.

On another note the West Section would like to wish Neil Stevenson all the best in his future career. Neil is leaving Bishopbriggs Golf Club after 28 years service. Gary Divers, from Ralston Golf Club, has joined us on the committee and hopefully he will have many successful years on board.

We hope to arrange some Educational days throughout the year. Stay tuned. Hopefully all members have received their fixture diary.

Well that's all for now all the best for the spring.

Any news or articles give me a call at home 0141-886-3721, mobile 07970366355 or e mail me at karen.ross@tesco.net

Fraser Ross

Ayrshire



Hello everyone, hope your winter work went well and you are now geared up for the season. It will be an exciting time for Ayrshire courses with Royal Troon hosting The Open and others qualifying events, not to mention all the visitors flocking to Ayrshire's other fine courses.

On to the news. Boro' won the cup, Yeah, that's right Boro' won the cup! Anyway, I digress, the

Scottish National Conference, held at Dumfermline, on March 2, went well again this year and I'm reliably informed all in attendance had an enjoyable day.

On to the news. Boro' won the cup, Yeah, that's right Boro' won the cup! Anyway, I digress, the Scottish National Conference, held at Dumfermline, on March 2, went well again this year and I'm reliably informed all in attendance had an enjoyable day. The Spring Outing will be now be played on Spring Tournament is now on April 20 and not April 29 as originally agreed, at Prestwick St Nicholas. Tee times begin just after mid-day, remember this event doubles as the first leg of the Harry Diamond Memorial Jug.

Tuesday, June 15 is the date set for the Scottish National Championship to be held at Kilmalcolm Golf Club. Let's hope we can get a good turnout and perhaps win a few trophies after our dismal showing last year over the Kintyre Course. I believe only Duncan Gray saved us from complete annihilation.

Auchterarder Golf Club hosts the annual Norrie Whittock Trophy on August 23.

Our AGM this year will take place at West Kilbride Golf Club with Hamilton Bros generously offering to demonstrate their wares and answer any questions regarding course machinery before the start of the meeting

itself. I will pass on more information as it becomes available.

Lastly, our football match vs. the West Section should have taken place and the details will be in next month's notes.

Phone me on 01292 478606 if you want.

Dennis Tweddell

Central

The new date and venue for the Spring Tournament is Thursday, April 29, by courtesy of Crail Golfing Society, Crail, Fife. Entry forms are already out for this event, so if you wish to participate, please return your form as soon as possible.

The Scottish Conference at Dunfermline last month was another excellent event organised by Regional Administrator, Peter Boyd, with the first class speakers keeping the capacity audience interested for the full day and it was heartening to see Central Section members supporting and participating in the conference. Here's looking forward to next year's event!

A man on the move recently was James "Sevi" Sievewright, who has moved from being assistant to Archie Dunn at Auchterarder Golf Club and has been appointed Head Greenkeeper at the King James VI Golf Club on Moncrieffe Island in Perth. Best wishes from everyone in the Section go to "Sevi" for a very successful future in his new position.

New members who have joined over the past couple of months are Kenny O'Donnell, from Muthill Golf Club; Stephen Mitchell, from Carnoustie Golf Links; Graeme Black, from St Andrews Links; Darren McKenna and Douglas Smith, both from Drumoig Golf Club. As usual we extend a warm welcome from everyone in the Section to them all and hope to get the chance of meeting them at some of our future events.

If you know of anyone who is completing an application form for membership of the Association, could you please ensure that you clearly indicate which section they wish to join, as according to head quarters the central section extends as far a field as the South of England and Northern Ireland!

Following on from the success of our Workshop/Seminar which was held last year at Elmwood College, your committee are in the process of organising further educational events, so if you have any subjects you wish to include in the programmes, please get in touch with any committee member.

John Crawford

NORTHERN REGION

North Wales

April in the greenkeeping calendar and Augusta fast approaches, the first big televised major of the year, and this is the time you need to have surplus "flack jackets" from the recent war over in Iraq, as your members will be on the Augusta Attack..."

Is it spring, or just an extension of winter? Are we lulled into a false spring at the end of March and, if so, do we then start watering when the weather is cold and cold water is showered on cold grass.

Then, if the members expect you to water, ask them how would they feel jumping into an irrigation tank in the middle of April with no clothes on! But then, with modern technology, shouldn't we have thermatically





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controlled heated irrigation tanks the type that we can set via our mobile phones while sitting on the settee at home (watching The Masters).

Perhaps we should also sprinkle a little lawn sand on, sulphate of ammonia (nitrogen) to give them that little perk up. Spring can be cold and dry or cold and wet, it's a fact grass only grows in soil temperatures of five to six degrees, and dry soils warm quicker than wet ones. You have to be careful as the cold east winds blow and the berries on the trees are "big" – it's going to be a dry spring.

This time of year greekeepers fear for their livelihood and wonder if they are doing the right thing at the right time, but you need not worry as everyone else is in the same boat, and you only get billiard type putting surfaces in brilliant green colour over in Georgia at this time of year.

Moving on we have a 'Pest Management' training course at Carden Park hosted by BIGGA, the cost is £70.50 including VAT for one person for a day. If you or any of your staff wish to attend please contact Ken or Sami at BIGGA House 01347 833800.

A sad note to end, the untimely passing of BIGGA Executive Director, Neil Thomas, in February was a shock to us all. His character and strength of passion for the Association will be his legacy and our thoughts are with his wife Elaine and his family as they come to terms with their loss.

Andrew Acorn

Sheffield



It was with great sadness to learn that Neil Thomas had recently passed away. He will be long remembered. Our sincere condolences go to his family from all Section members.

I would like to thank all the members that have attended the winter lectures and to pay special thanks, firstly to John Deere for a very enjoyable day back in October, to John Nicholson for his entertaining talk on

woodland management last November and lastly, but by no means least, to Neil Baldwin, of Amega Science, for his excellent lecture on dry patch. A special thanks to Mike Brear for his help in securing Neil's services at very short notice.

Diary dates to remember are: the Spring Tournament to be held at Retford GC, April 26, teeing off at 1.30pm. The annual Summer competition to be held at Sickleholme GC on July 12, tee off time to be confirmed.

Our Chairman, Gordon Brammah, has suggested and is trying to set up a Section Library where members can make use of books, videos, CD roms etc to help them with their education or on any other matters. If you have anything that could be of use please get in touch with either Gordon or myself.

Congratulations to John Davis and to Les Easthope. John, for attaining his new position of Deputy Head Greenkeeper at Wortley GC, and Les for 45 years service at Hillsborough GC. Well done lads!

And finally, Gainsborough GC is to hosting The English Ladies Golf Association Girls' Championships on their Thonock Park course from July 26 -31.

Any news or comments please call on 01427 614175 or 07904 121690 or you can e-mail me at geoff@wellsy1.freeserve.co.uk.

Geoff Wells

Northern

Hope that you and all your courses are well?

As some of you may already know, I have taken over from Dave Thackray as Secretary of the Northern Section. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank Dave for all his hard work as Secretary over the past few years. Also another thank you to Jim Brown, who has given many years of service to the Northern Section.

Jim has stepped down from the role as Vice Chairman and on the committee. He has passed the reigns to Andy Slingsby (can't wait for the speeches, Andy!).

The next tournament will be at Garforth Golf Club on April 27, tee off time will be at 10am. Please make sure you arrive by 9.15 at the latest. The price will be the usual £16, which includes bacon sandwich on arrival, golf, and a three course meal in the evening. This event will be sponsored by Scotts UK and the winner of the Scratch Cup and winners of each division will receive free entrance to the National Championship at Alwoodley Golf Club, in Leeds.

Welcome to John Hammond, who has joined us as a new member, from the West Bowling Golf Club. Also, congratulations go to Ian Pullan and family, on the birth of their baby boy.

And finally, if you want to play in any tournament, could you please make sure that I receive your name and payment at least a week before the event.

Contact me at 16a Hodgson Fold, Bradford, BD2 4EB. Telephone 01274 638366

Mobile: 07739 319060. Email adam@speight1156.fslife.co.uk

See you all at Garforth!

Adam Speight



North West

I start this month's Section news with the sad news of the death of Neil Thomas, after a long illness. As Executive Director, Neil has done so much for greenkeepers since the formation of BIGGA in 1987.

The Association is recognised throughout the world of turf culture, and golf course management, we have our own headquarters which is a great achievement, and almost 7,000 members. All this is down to the leadership of Neil and the various members of the Board of Management. He will be sadly missed by all and our thoughts are with Elaine and his family.

In February I attended the North Wales Education Seminar at Carden Park which was well attended by 74 delegates. It was an excellent seminar with four speakers, the first being Tony Smith, Course Manager at Teeside Golf Club, who spoke of his Agronomic Year at his golf club. His course floods regularly throughout the year of which I am not surprised as the difference between the highest point and the lowest point on his course is only eight inches. I don't think squeegees would be much help there.

The second speaker was Stephen Cox, Head of PGA Tournaments. He spoke about rules and course markings covering GUR, Out of Bounds, Water Hazards etc. which was very interesting, but to be fair 45 minutes was not sufficient to do justice to this interesting subject.

Peter Jones, Golf Course Consultant, spoke on Preparation for Competitions and Tournaments. Prior to tournaments being played he meets the course manager to discuss width of fairways, height of cut, etc.

Peter Wisbey, Golf Course Manager at Woodhall Spa, covered Managing Tournament Expectations. It was interesting to note that although his course is always busy, they have no temporary greens, and the only time the course is closed is when the frost is coming out of the ground. This is





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the time, of course, when we all know that damage occurs. All in all it was an excellent seminar and well done North Wales.

Next March it will be the North West turn to host the seminar at Mere Golf Club. So if any of you have any ideas for speakers you would like to hear please let me know as soon as possible.

The first of our golf events this year is the Spring Tournament at Ellesmere Golf Club on Tuesday, April 20. Tee time 1.30pm. All applications to Bill Merritt, The Lodge, Beacon Park Golf Club, Beacon Lane, Dalton, Wigan, WN8 7RU. Telephone 01695 632883. Please include a cheque for £20 made out to BIGGA N/W.

A further competition this year is the Golf Management Trophy to be played at the De Vere Carden Park Golf Club on Monday, August 23. This is a team tournament, which includes the Course Manager, Club Secretary, Club Captain and Chairman of Green. Entry fee is £100 per team to include coffee on arrival, 18 holes of golf and dinner. Anyone interested contact me for an application form asap on 01517 245 412.

One further bit of information is that Anthony Davies, from Prestbury Golf Club, has taken up singing and acting, and can probably be heard at dawn singing, "The Hills are alive with the Sound of Music" as he switches greens.

Any news or views contact me on 01517 245412 or 07761 583387.
Bert Cross



Midland

With respect to the late Neil Thomas, our lines this month shall remain silent. He shall be fondly remembered and sorely missed.

The Midland Section

BB&O

I bring news from afar, I recently jetted to the GCSAA Conference and Show in San Diego, California, with a white knuckle ride on the latest Continental Airlines sardine can. After landing at Newark Airport, New York and changing to yet another sardine can, only a lot smaller, I asked myself, was it worth it amigo. Yes, Yes, Yes.

Discovering tequila, the one the locals drank, taken with salt and limes which gave a whole new meaning to a Margarita and a Mexican breakfast of spicy eggs and beans, with the bite of a rattlesnake and twice as hot as a regular vindaloo. If only Dr Atkins had approved the recipe. Sunshine, perfect climate and good company with the many trade and greenkeepers that managed to jet the huge pond to see what it was all about.

It was gratifying to see that our American counterparts were enthused and interested in discussing British equipment and ideas. The cold grip of landing at Birmingham Airport brought back reality with a bump, as I am sure we all are looking forward to a better climate, and hopefully, as you are reading this, finer weather is around the corner.

Simon Douglas, from Maidenhead GC, will soon be flying his way over land, sea and water to Columbus USA. He has won a working scholarship where he will attend Ohio State University. This will be Simon's first visit to the USA; a fantastic learning experience and a big adventure awaits, as we all wish him Bon Voyage and good luck for the future.

John Gubb, from Goring and Streatley GC, broke his leg while on the staff Christmas bash and spent Christmas Day in the capable hands of the NHS, Chief Fishkeeper Steve Chandler and proud owner of Omar the goldfish (he's a big fish), are part of a fish breeding school at the Golf Club

where koi carp and golden orf are encouraged to flourish. All of Goring's staff take huge pride in their slippery friends and the welfare of the fish is included in the maintenance programme.

Peter McFadden, from Caversham Heath GC, had a Valentine day he will never forget and is now the proud father of a baby girl. Congratulations from us all. Keith Roberts from Farnham Park GC is expected to be following in Peter's footsteps soon and be listening to the patter of tiny feet.

The National Qualifier at Badgemore Park GC is on April 22 this month. Depending when you get to read this article, hopefully there will still be time to enter at the last moment if you fancy a day out with some great golf, good food and company. Contact Mr John Scoones on 07880 550 380.

We join with other colleges in expressing our sincere condolences to the family of the late Neil Thomas, Executive Director, who has done such sterling work for the greenkeeping profession over the years, everyone in the BB&O extends their deepest sympathy.

Mark Day

East Midlands

Our Section's annual Go-Kart evening took place once again at the Wymeswold race track on February 26. The qualifying heats saw some fierce and intensive battles to gain enough points for the final. After several races the competition had found its best six qualifiers with Steve Randall taking pole position. Apparently from what I have been told there was some serious foul play from Gavin Robson.



During the final, Gavin, however was outsmarted by Adi Porter and dumped into the tyre wall, although this was not enough to give Adi victory. That accolade went to Steve Randall, of Greetham Valley, with Stuart Raybould finishing in second place, and Adi Porter third. A complete whitewash for Greetham Valley (I think they must have had their own Go-Karts at work). Thanks should be extended to our very generous sponsors, Toro/Lely and P.S. Marsdens.

If you have not received your entry forms for the Spring Tournament and Wimbledon trip, please let me know.

Antony Bindley



Surrey

It was with some trepidation that I agreed to go on a secret mission to Lanzarote. My initial fear that this island, by its reputation, was fit only for the dregs of humanity and not a destination for one as naïve and as sensitive as I, was unfounded.

My mission, should I accept it, was to infiltrate the only golf club on the island, kidnap the 'Jafe varde hierba cortadura' (literally translated chief green grass cutter) and force him to join the Canary Island BIGGA Section. The fact that my mission failed had less to do with the sun and cheap booze but more to my inability to concentrate in the midst of tanned topless young ladies.

My return to near arctic conditions in England brought me swiftly down to earth as I realised that the more important task of writing this month's report was still to be completed, as follows...

All Surrey members will now have received this year's programme and

application forms for the first two events. I am sure you have all noticed that the first two golf days are costing considerably less than in previous years, and should therefore attract a large turnout. Surrey Section funds are in substantial credit and your committee has decided to subsidise the cost to the members this year and most events will be charged at £15. If any member has an idea for a Section excursion relating to education, travel or recreation, please contact a committee member.

I am writing this on March 5, one week before the Gentleman's Dinner at Walton Heath Golf Club and I am hoping that the weather will be kinder than the rain and wind of 2003. A report on this year at Walton Heath and results from the par 3 challenge at Duke's Meadow will appear in next month's edition.

The Spring Tournament at Woking GC will now take place on May 20 instead of May 10. We still need a venue for the Autumn Tournament, September/October 2004. If your club can help please contact our Secretary, Ian Sellers.

Brian Willmott

**SOUTH WEST
& SOUTH WALES**

Devon & Cornwall

Our second meeting of the year, The Avoncrop Trophy, was held at West Cornwall Golf Club on Wednesday, February 18 in glorious sunshine. Forty-five members were in attendance with 24 members playing golf.

John Palfrey, of Avoncrop, started the competition on the 1st tee. Head Greenkeeper, Brian Trevenna, escorted the remaining 21 members on the customary Course Walk. Stuart Ashworth, of Amenity Technology, did a demonstration using hydroseeding equipment, seeding an almost vertical bank around a new greenkeeping compound. I have seen this type of seeding used at my previous club with great results and anybody who has some steep banks where you find it difficult to grow grass, it is certainly worth considering.

After an excellent lunch, our sponsor, John Palfrey of Avoncrop, presented the prizes for the Bogey Competition to: 1. Simon Clarke, of St Mellion. +9, Avoncrop Trophy; 2. Craig Ershaw of Dartmouth +6; 3. Paul Newcombe of East Devon +5.

The winner of the Course Walk prize, a copy of Jim Arthur's "Practical Greenkeeping" wasn't Billy Mitchell this time, but brother John! So with all this knowledge the Mitchell Brothers are gathering, we may see an improvement in the Links at Perranporth!

I would like to thank Secretary, Ian Veale, and his committee for the friendly welcome we received and for the use of their excellent facilities. I would also like to thank the catering team and bar staff for a superb lunch and looking after our liquid refreshments. Also a big thank you to Head Greenkeeper, Brian Trevenna, and his team for presenting the Golf Course in fantastic condition. And last but not least, thanks to our sponsor Avoncrop and John Palfrey for once again, supporting our Section.

John Gawman, of St Mellion, has been in hospital recently and all those present at West Cornwall signed a "Get Well Card". This was delivered to John along with a basket of fruit and all at Devon and Cornwall wish him a speedy recovery.

It was with great sadness, we learnt of the recent loss of Neil Thomas. Neil was with BIGGA from day one as Executive Director and worked tirelessly, taking our Association forward, and making it the success it is



today. All greenkeepers, the length and breadth of the country, owe a great debt of gratitude to Neil who raised the standing of our profession immensely. I would like to convey our deepest sympathy to Neil's wife, Elaine, and all of his family.

Steve Evans

South West

How sad we all are to hear of the death of our Executive Director, Neil Thomas. Our sympathies to his wife and children.

Results from West Wiltshire Golf day as follows:- 1. Adam Matthews, 42pts; 2. Shawn Richards, 41 pts; 3. Matthew Worcester, 39 pts. Rob Lane and Shawn Richards won prizes for nearest the pin.

A great day was had by all and our thanks must go to Neil Bungay and his team for a superbly presented course, a real treat to see another of our old traditional golf courses managed in a sympathetic way.

Not much else to report on I'm afraid. So may the Spring be kind to us all (for once) See you soon.

Contact me on 01225 333928 or 078123 80936

Guy Woods



NORTHERN IRELAND

"Yes I'm still alive"

Sorry about the gap, not all my fault, anyway I'll try and catch up. From memory, two items that didn't get in previous issues are: best wishes to Terry Angus, of Donaghadee Golf Club, on his retirement, after 17 years in charge. There, I hadn't forgotten, Terry. All the best, up the scrum.

I'm also sorry for belated condolences to the Late John Boyd and his family. John had been supplying golf course accessories to the UK and Ireland for many years and was very well respected. Again my sincere apologies to his family for the delay in this announcement.

The Northern Ireland Section would also wish to express our regret at the passing away of Neil Thomas from BIGGA Headquarters. Neil has been over to the Province and I hope he left with pleasant memories of us.

Now then, Godfrey Clarke, from Ballycastle Golf Club, has moved on to a very nice job with his son, Darren, travelling the world (I have offered to carry his bag). Godfrey used to give me "hell" and I loved every minute of it, he has that kind of personality. He has a lot of long time friends in Northern Ireland so I'm sure I will see more of him. From us all Godfrey, the very best wishes.

Our best wishes also go to Mark Farrell, from City of Derry Golf Club, who is now over in England as First Assistant at the London Golf Club. Good luck Mark and "Happy Days".

Nick Webber, from Portstewart Golf Club, has been appointed Head Greenkeeper at Ballycastle Golf Club. Congratulations and best wishes Nick.

Welcome to six new members. Gabriel Loughran, Adrian Morton, Garth Abbermeety, Andrew Walker, Wolsey White and Fergus Scobie.

The two education courses held recently were very well received, thanks to Ken Richardson from BIGGA and Greenmount College.

The first golf day this year will be held at Ardglass Golf Club, on April 6. See you there, I've been practising.

Graham Prosser