



News from the Chief Executive

Congratulations to Rachael (Membership) and her husband Stuart on the safe arrival of their son Adam. Rachael is now on Maternity Leave and in the meanwhile Gemma is looking after the Membership Office with help from our other Rachael (Reception), Sarah (my PA) and others as time allows.

A 'Well done' must also go to Stephen (Accounts) who, not only recently passed another module in the final stage of his accountancy exams, but also managed to win a shiny new Peugeot 206 in a competition run by the local radio station. I have banned him from taking over the office lottery syndicate since as a non-member I cannot afford for them to scoop a jackpot and leave me on my own!

Staff wise we are still under Establishment as they say in the golf club world. We have a vacancy in our Sales Office for someone to sell the classified advertising, a situation that originally arose some while ago with the departure of Cheryl, who emigrated to Australia. Until recently the position has been covered by temporary staff from an agency, however that has now come to an end due to the incumbent's personal situation. The scenic but somewhat isolated location of BIGGA HQ often works against us when recruiting which, together with very low unemployment locally, results in a shortage of suitable candidates. Things have not been made any easier by a bout of illness that has moved through the office.

There appears to be continued confusion and concern over the Recommended Salaries and Conditions of Employment for Greenkeepers as published by the current Committee. I would firstly point out that the BIGGA Pay Rates have not existed since 1997 and members and their employers should refrain from using this terminology as it only adds to the confusion. Historically it was always felt inappropriate that greenkeepers (through BIGGA) should determine their own remuneration recommendations and so a totally independent Committee was formed comprising representatives from golf club owners, golf club secretaries, the R&A and greenkeeping (again through BIGGA).

The Committee, which meets twice a year, established a completely new scale based on a survey and research and for the first time also linked remuneration to qualifications. This scale has been reviewed annually and is adjusted in line with the Average Earnings Index, this is an official government index and is Great Britain's key indicator of how fast earnings are growing. In using this index the Standing Committee ensures that the recommended scale for greenkeepers does not fall out of sync with the rest of industry.

I would comment that the scale is only a recommendation and employers can choose to either be guided by it or ignore it. For ease of administration, queries are normally routed through BIGGA Headquarters but I would stress that this is only to try to provide a quick response and NOT because BIGGA controls the Committee. A booklet containing the scales for 2005 may be obtained free of charge by contacting BIGGA Headquarters.

While on the subject of confusion may I take the opportunity to clarify the scope of and access to the Member's Legal Helpline. This is a 24hour/365 days of the year service to BIGGA subscribers and is for the use of and benefit of members and ANY of their family living in their household. The service is operated by a specialist company and is manned by suitably qualified staff who, in most cases, will be able to give you instant advice but who may on occasions need to ring you back with an answer. The person answering the call cannot be expected to know every point of law!

Advice can be sought on any legal matter and is not restricted just to employment. If any insured person has been wrongfully dismissed from their employment then the company will, at the company's discretion, pursue a claim through the appropriate channels at no cost to the individual.

The service is operated through a free-phone number that is 0800 068 1893. If you, or your family, are unfortunate enough to have need to use this facility and feel that it does not provide the level of service that you expected then please inform a member of Headquarters staff as soon as possible. My only additional comment is that you will be advised on 'What the law says' and this might not always coincide with your own feelings on the matter.

As the days and the grass grow longer I wish you all a successful season and hope that neither you nor your course is put under stress that you cannot cope with. Headquarters' staff are always on hand to help where they can, please do not hesitate to contact someone if you feel the need - full details can be found inside the front cover of this magazine.

John Pemberton

SECTION NOTES INFORMATION

In order to improve the sending and receiving of Section Notes, where possible can all future notes be emailed to gareth@bigga.co.uk by no later than the 5th of the month prior to publication please.

You will receive an email back to confirm receipt of your notes. If you do not receive this confirmation please get in touch with BIGGA Headquarters.

SCOTTISH REGION

Ayrshire

Hello all! I hope you've had a good off season and managed to get your courses repaired for the upcoming season. Although I was away for a few weeks the weather seems to have been pretty decent this past winter. At the time of writing however its maybe been a bit too good, with the past few weeks staying quite dry.

Three new members have joined us and they are Russell Adams, Lamlash GC, Paul Smith, Lochmaben GC and Michael Byrne, West Kilbride GC. Mick began his career at West Kilbride and returns with experience gained from Wentworth and Turnberry. So, well done to Mr Paton on his dealings in the transfer window. I'm sure Mick won't miss the commuting distance from Saltcoats!

Other members on the move include Alistair Storrie, to Beith GC from Largs GC, and John Mair, who continues his missionary work in the west by joining Hamilton GC from Bellshill GC. Keep spreading the word Johnny Boy! John's brethren in Ayrshire would like to wish him all the best as he begins his journey into matrimony on April 30.

The Scottish National Conference, in Dunfermline, was a success once again with over a 100 in attendance. It was reported however that a couple of Ayrshire delegates may have dispersed a little early, so an inquiry will be conducted and any sanctions meted out in due course.

Okay, the football match verses the west is now set to be played in the latter half of April. Anyone interested can get in touch with Marshall, at Beith, or myself on 07939 104701.

Wait! There's still more, with the spring outing, which is to be played over the Kintyre Course at Turnberry, on Tuesday April 12. The day starts with coffee and a bacon roll on arrival followed by golf and an evening meal at only £20. Tee time is reserved from 1.30pm.

As some of you know I was lucky enough to travel to Florida with the Bernhard's Delegation. One night while sitting in the local watering hole I happened to get talking to a greenkeeper from Aspen, Colorado, who after hearing that I worked in Scotland stated that his club were going to make their course more Scottish in nature. Intrigued at this I inquired how would this be achieved? To which he replied: "By raking the bunkers just twice a week!"

Denis Tweddell

Central

We begin this month's news by sending our heartiest congratulations to Section Committee member, Ian MacMillan, Course Manager at Murrayshall Hotel and Golf Courses, on his achievement in becoming a qualified Fellow of the Society of Specialist Paralegals. Ian set out to gain this degree in order that he could be of assistance to fellow greenkeepers who are having difficulties in their employment.