



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.

What makes his achievement more remarkable is that he gained his degree six months within his allotted time and that out of a class of 38 sitting the exams he was the only person who was not practising law as a profession. Well done Ian!

Another two new members join us this month and they are Craig Hempseed, who is an apprentice at Aberdour Golf Club, and Stuart Muir, a greenkeeper on the Eden course at St. Andrews Links, as always we extend a warm welcome to them from everyone in the Section and hope to see them at some of our future events.

Along with the entry forms for the Spring Tournament at Elie, on April 27, you will receive a list of the educational programme that is available to you and the number of delegates required to hold the course. If you are interested in attending any one of them please return the form to me and we will endeavour to organise them on your behalf. The courses are there, we just need your support!

Personally I would like to thank everyone who has sent their best wishes to Ailsa during the past few weeks, it is very much appreciated by us both, thanks again.

John Crawford

East

Well we're back after an absence of a few months and it's now down to business, so here goes. Since I last wrote in this column we have had a few changes on the Committee and they are as follows: The Committee now reads: Chairman, G. Wood; Vice Chairman, Stuart Greenwood; Past Chairman, Chris Yeaman; Secretary, S. Dixon; and messrs F. Forrest, I. Watson, I. Bell, J. Neilson and K. Hodges. So I would like to wish Graham all the best for the next two years and Stuart for his two years as Vice Chairman.

I would also like to welcome Ian Bell back to the Committee after a few years away and Kevin Hodges, Longniddry GC, who has joined the Committee, so welcome and we hope you enjoy your time with us. I would like to thank the Section and all the members for allowing my time as Chairman over the last years and I look forward to continuing on the Committee for the considerable future, so thanks to you all.

There are a number of people on the move at the moment. Firstly, Mark Barrie has left Ratho Park GC to become First Assistant at Gogarburn GC and Paul Armour has left Dora GC (Fife) to become an Assistant at Ratho Park GC. Also Danny Murray, son of Tom Murray, Ratho Park GC, is moving from Archerfield Links GC to the USA to Pinehurst Golf Resort on a year placement in association with Ohio State University. This may be longer but initially it is for one year.

He will be working on Pinehurst's number eight course, but will be also doing some work on course number two in the run up to the US Open, being held there in June this year. Danny flew out on this opportunity of a lifetime on March 21 and we would all like to wish him all the best on this amazing trip.

I believe Robert Hogarth, Cardrona G&CC, has been in hospital having an operation on his damaged ankle and we all hope it has been a success, Robert, and we wish you a speedy recovery and hope to see you out on the course very soon.

I hope anyone who attended BTME 2005 had a great time, as once again everyone at HQ did a superb job and gave us a Show to be proud of. Every year it just keeps getting better and better. I know the two East Section Patron Awards Winners, Steve Dixon and Kenny Mail, had a great time and hopefully they will write an article for the magazine very soon, so come on lads we're waiting! So roll on BTME 2006 and another great Show, workshops, etc, well done to everyone concerned, and it was good to meet up with old friends and new!

There are a few dates for your diary, they are the Spring Tournament, at Royal Musselburgh GC, where we haven't been for a while, on April 20, and you should have received your entry form by now, so get them back ASAP with the correct entry fee. You'll notice different entry fee categories this year, as no late entries after the closing date will be accepted and that's final!

The Annual Dance has been booked for Saturday December 3, at the Kilspindie House Hotel, Aberlady, for another great night as it was last December. So if you haven't been before get yourself along for a good night out as there is room for a few more for the social event to finish of the year.

Frank Forrest has put together a Section questionnaire, so please take some time, fill it in and send it back, as the Committee want to find out what the membership of the Section want, so we can put on events that you all want, i.e. golf, social, education. So fill it out and lets get this Section working, because it's your Section and this is your opportunity to tell us what you want.

The Autumn Tournament will be at Bruntfield links GC, in September, and the date will be announced shortly. The Willie Woods Invitational returns this year, hopefully in August, with the venue to be announced later. Lets see a big turnout at all these events please!

If anyone has any news or views please get in contact, as I would like to hear from you and we will get it into this column throughout the year! The contact numbers and address are: Chris Yeaman, Westwyn, West Linton Golf Club, West Linton, Peeblesshire, EH47 7HN. Phone: office 01968 661721; home 01968 661313; mobile 07719 580449.

So come on, lets hear from you! I'm waiting by the letterbox and the phone. Well that's it for this month and apologies for being away for a while but normal service is now resumed and I look forward to next month with news and views around the Section.

See you then.

Chris Yeaman

North

There are quite a few new members to report this month. Michael Thomson, Assistant Greenkeeper at Longside GC; David Nicolson, Greenkeeper at Old Meldrum GC; Andrew Stables, Greenkeeper at Forres GC; Joanne O'Neil, Apprentice Greenkeeper at Newmachar GC; David Merchant, Apprentice Greenkeeper at Kings Links; Jordan Main, Apprentice Greenkeeper at Elgin GC; Brian Patterson, Apprentice Greenkeeper at Shetland GC; Scot Davidson, Apprentice Greenkeeper at Hazlehead GC. Our apologies to Scot as his membership was paid a few months back but did not come through to me to print.

Also a welcome back to the Section to Ross Macrae, formerly of Old Meldrum GC, who is now Assistant Greenkeeper at Newmachar GC. I hope all the new members enjoy their membership of the Association.

The Scottish Conference at Dunfermline was badly hit by the weather, with the roads difficult due to the snow. However 116 hardy souls were at the Conference and it is to their credit that they were able to get through. The Conference went well and our thanks go to Peter Boyd and the speakers.

The 200 club still has tickets left and if anyone is in possession of tickets and has no intention of renewing them could you please send them back to Hughie Mclatchie at 24 Whitehill Place, Peterhead, Aberdeenshire, AB42 2YF or please phone him on 01779 470173. The club is our main source of revenue so we need to sell as many tickets as possible.

The spring outing is at Murcar GC, on May 12, and we hope there is a good turnout. Hopefully the weather will take care of itself. The National Tournament will be at Mcdonald GC, Ellon, on June 23, and that is a date for your diary. Brian Anderson and John Geddes are the respective Course Managers so a good turnout would be greatly appreciated by these guys.

Our Secretary, Dale Robertson, has been in touch with Gareth at BIGGA HQ and we hope the draw will be put on the events page of the BIGGA website before the tournament, so try the website if you can access a computer.

A former member of our Section, Stuart Hogg, formerly of Fortrose GC and now of St Annes GC, in England, was presented with his Master Greenkeeper award at Harrogate this year. This is quite an achievement as a lot of work is required to get through the exam, so congratulations go to Stuart and his family. As Stuart is a growing lad he needed a bigger BIGGA blazer, allegedly.

As I write this report the snow is piling down again and our season has actually started, seems to be more snow showers in March these days than during the main winter months.

Iain Gunn

NORTHERN REGION

North East

Recently Hexham Golf Club has been the recipient of an award for good environmental practices. Hexham has worked towards this over the last two years in a scheme ran in conjunction between the EGU and STRI. Following inspections, the STRI were delighted with the work carried out.

Matfen Hall Golf Club have been granted planning permission for a 10 bay driving range, work has started and should be completed and ready between May and June, it will have a small eating and drinking area which will act as a Clubhouse for the par 3 course.

Please note that BIGGA card holders will not get balls for free, but on showing their cards will get a discount, this will be sorted out nearer the opening time.

They have also recently applied for planning permission for an extra nine holes, this will not be a third or weaker nine, but will link the existing 18 to make a 27 hole layout, approximately 3500yds, par 36, with the traditional two par 3's and the course has been designed in house by Course Manager, Craig Parkinson, and Head Professional, John Harrison, Craig will be the appointed Project Manager.

Just to let you know that they are looking for an Assistant Greenkeeper who has the necessary skills and been or is still going to college who will start work April/May. They are also looking to employ a further two staff in the year 2006, so if anyone is interested drop Craig a line. Just as a little temptation they are offering 95% of BIGGA rates, plus overtime and membership of the new leisure club.

A question from Craig, he wants to know if anyone in our Section has had their wash bays fitted with a grass filter/clean water system? He would be grateful for any information, he can be contacted on 01661 886586.

Our spring competition is at Ponteland GC, April 14, and the autumn competition is at Foxton Hall GC, September 29.

Jimmy Richardson

North West

The main news this month in the Section has been the Mere Seminar, which took place on February 22. The seminar was a joint venture between the N/W and the N/Wales Sections. Every member of both Sections received an application form, 700 in all, and the seminar was attended by 75 people, which included the six speakers. This means that 10 percent of the membership attended which is about average for seminars.

We are lucky that our seminar was able to go ahead as the weather in some parts of the surrounding area was under snow and ice, making travel dodgy, but almost everybody made it. As you can all see from the application forms sent out, we had some great speakers covering the environmental issues, which the whole world is talking and worrying about.

I would like to thank all the speakers who gave us their time and expert advice, which made this a seminar worth attending. I mentioned the weather, and how the seasons are changing, in March we seemed to be getting the December weather, and now in April, with the Masters in Augusta shortly to be on TV, I wonder how long it will be before the members will be happy with our late to develop courses.

Upcoming events are as follows: North West v North Wales, Wilmslow GC, April 5; Spring Tournament, Whitefield GC, May 25; Summer Tournament, Childwall GC, July 27; Autumn Tournament, Prestbury GC, September 1;

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Whitelaw Bowl, Penrith GC, September 14; Presidents Day and AGM; Wilmslow GC, December 5.

That's it for now, any queries or suggestions ring 0151 724 5412 or 07761 583387.

Bert Cross

Northern

Can I please remind you all that the Spring Tournament is being held at Northcliffe Golf Club on April 20. Teeing off commences at 10am. Please let me know if you wish to play and let me have a cheque to cover entrance fee at least one week before the day. Don't forget the fee is £17 for the entire day, which includes coffee and bacon bap on arrival, your golf and a three course meal. How's that for excellent value! As I mentioned last month, anybody who wishes to pay on the day will have to pay £20, so do make sure to get your cheques in as early as possible.

Hopefully next month I will be able to bring you the details of the summer barbecue, which we are hoping to arrange for the first time this year, and maybe also the result of the first five-a-side match between Moor Allerton GC and my boys at Otley. There is just the one problem, we at Otley haven't got five members of staff at the moment, but I'm confident that we can still win with four men!

I'm afraid that's about all I have to say this month, hopefully I'll see you at Northcliffe. If anyone has any news they would like to share with the Section, then please do get in touch, my details are as follows: 16a Hodgson Fold, Myers Lane, Bradford, BD2 4EB. Tel: 01274 638366 Mobile: 07739 319060

Adam Speight

Sheffield

Firstly, I would, on behalf of the Section, like to thank Steve Pickering for his work on the Committee. Steve resigned last year and since that day he has become a bit of a celebrity. Recently on his stag do he decided to, or was forced to, have a go on a bucking bronco, he wasn't very successful as he fell off and slipped a disc.

Hope you are OK now Steve, by the way Dave Chappell says: "Ride them cowboy!" Then further more he has had his picture printed in the Greenkeeper Magazine with Dave. Fame at last Steve, all the best mate.

On Thursday February 3 we held one of our winter lectures, at Rotherham Golf Club. Our thanks go to Jonathon Hamer, of Farmura Ltd, for giving us a very interesting lecture on organics. Unfortunately there wasn't a great turn out which the Committee is in the process of addressing.

Well done to Chris Astle, our Section Secretary, who has just been promoted to Deputy Course Manager at Wheatley Golf Club, following the retirement of Neil Maltby. Good luck Chris.

Just a reminder that our first golf of the year is on May 10, at Bondhay Golf Club, with a tee off time of 10.30. We hope to have a big turn out from greenkeepers and trade alike, look forward to seeing you all there.

Once again if anyone has any news feel free to get in touch with me either by phone on 07793111845 or via email jv.lax@tesco.net

John Lax

MIDLAND REGION

East Midlands

The annual Go-Kart evening was held once again at The Wymeswold Industrial Estate on Wednesday February 16. The format for the evening consisted of four qualifying races for each competitor, with the top eight then contesting the final.

After several keenly contested races, 21 of the competitors were eliminated, leaving the rest to do battle in the Grand Final. This was won by Danny Brown, of Lingdale GC, with Adi Porter and Stuart Raybould, both of Greetham Valley,

finishing second and third respectively. Stuart Raybould won the fastest lap.

On behalf of the Section I would like to thank Toro/Lely and The Mowershop for sponsoring the evening and also a special thank you should go to every member who took part in supporting the evening.

Our golf fixtures for this year are as follows: Spring Tournament, Melton Mowbray, Wednesday May 18; Summer Tournament, Cosby, Thursday July 7; AGM, Norwood Park, Wednesday November 2; Christmas, Chamwood Forest, Thursday December 15. The spring and summer combined will be a National Tournament Qualifier.

The Committee do hope to see as many members as possible supporting these days. If you require an entry form please give me a ring or email me about a month before the competition, as no forms will be posted.

Anthony Bindley

BB&O

Farewell to Happy Valley! Jack Evans will be taking some happy memories away with him when he leaves the Conway's Bridge Estate and Happy Valley after 34 years of taking care of what is probably the most under played golf course in the country, with no more than a couple of dozen rounds played on the course in the last ten years.

Ill health has forced Jack, 62, into retirement as ambitious plans have been announced to create a high quality country club and golfing complex on the Park Place Estate, giving a new lease of life to the 68 acres of golf course, woodland and boathouse.

During Jack's time at Henley on Thames he has rubbed shoulders with the rich and famous, with George Cole (Arthur Daly), Mary Hopkins, Comedian Charlie Drake and a host of international actors and footballers. In addition to this, Jack persuaded the artist John Piper to paint Conway's Bridge, and the painting now adorns the Mayor's parlour at Henley Town Hall. On one occasion when the estate was on the market, a red Mercedes with a number plate SC1 pulled up in the drive and out stepped Sean Connery, who joined Jack for a cuppa and a guided tour of Happy Valley. Unfortunately, the great actor decided the house was too small and not for him.

Jack has a very special memory of the time when a golfing superstar turned up to discuss redesigning the six hole course - Jack Nicklaus was standing by Conway's Bridge with a group of managers and Jack, with tongue in cheek, introduced himself and after talking to one of the greatest golfers in the world he was presented with a Happy Valley scorecard signed "To Jack from Jack".

Jack will be moving into a bungalow in Twyford and will have a lot more time on his hands and he is starting to think about what will keep him busy in his retirement. "I have been promising myself to take a golf lesson since 1963. Maybe now I will find time for it," he said. So if you're passing Twyford pop in and see Jack, he will be only too pleased to see you. From all the BB&O, we wish Jack the very best in his retirement.

Remember that your news and views are always welcome and if you require further information on Section events planned for 2005 contact the Secretary, John Scones, on 0788 550380. PS. It's just started snowing, welcome to spring!

Mark Day

Mid Anglia

Welcome to the Mid Anglia Section news. There is not a lot to report this month. One important item is that the spring event this year will only be an 18 hole event and not a 36 as of previous years. Those of you who know Royston Golf Club will understand why, it has several "heart attack hills" and we didn't want to kill off the whole Section in one event!

The plan is for an afternoon round of golf, plus all the usual stuff, I believe that more information will be posted to our members with the entry forms. By the way, get your entry forms in early this year to make life easier for Richard.

That's about it, hopefully spring will have sprung by now and we'll all need a holiday soon!

Bob Butfoy



Peter Boyd
SCOTLAND & NORTHERN IRELAND
 Tel/Fax: 0141 616 3440



Peter Larter
NORTHERN & MIDLAND
 Tel: 01476 550115

SOUTH EAST

The South East Region's annual Gentleman's Dinner was held at Walton Heath as the magazine was going to press. A full report will appear in May's issue of Greenkeeper International.

Kent

I don't suppose I'm going to be the only one mentioning the weather in this month's 'Around the Green' section but as I look out across the snowy landscape that used to be a golf course summer seems a far distant memory. Indeed, this very morning I went to one of the high points of my course where a number of winter sports enthusiasts had gathered. I said to one: "How's the snow for skiing?" "Dunno," he replied, "I'm a tobogganist." "Oh," I said, "Can I have 20 Bensons then!" The old ones are the best! I'm sure this scenario will soon be a gone and we'll all be rushed off our feet trying to cope with the arrival of spring and the associated flush of growth. Happy days!

On the subject of arrivals, many congratulations to my Deputy, Richard Burgess, and his wife, Helen, on the birth of their second son, Henry. Another new member to welcome this month is David Tomlin, from The London Club.

With the help of our many trade supporters, who shall all get plenty of publicity for their efforts throughout the year, we have been able to compile a full fixture list for the coming season. This will begin with an educational afternoon at Wildernesse Golf Club, in Sevenoaks. This will start at 2pm and include

seminars and a course walk. This is a great opportunity to learn at a great venue for golfers and non-golfers alike.

Our first golfing adventure will be hosted by Broome Park Golf Club, near Canterbury, on June 9. We then visit Southern Valley Golf Club, on September 29. Finally we shall return to Birchwood Park Golf Centre, on November 24, for the annual turkey trot and AGM. We shall be producing a printed fixture list for all members in due course, but at least now you all have a basic agenda for the year in Kent and can plan to be at as many occasions as possible.

Please remember, BIGGA golf days are not just open to Course Managers and other regulars. All greenkeepers, at all levels of work and golfing ability, are welcome to join us.

If you have any news or gossip for this column please contact me. Even if it's the result of your staff snowball fight! I can be contacted on 07843 410755 or by email at grassyars@hotmail.com.

Rob Holland

Sussex

Hello again. Believe it or not, with the weather being very mild, we have just been promised a couple of weeks of Siberian winds and for a change I think they might have got it right, as there is snow on the ground and biting winds. Roll on the summer!

I did put my email address in last month's magazine, roberthudson77@btinternet.com, just in case anyone had any news they would like me to include, and just to clarify this is not an agony aunt column! I did actually get some feedback from a member and I think it was in response to my dig at members that were not attending any golf days through the year.

All I can add is that the golf days consist of 18 holes with a meal, for a very

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reasonable cost. I know we used to have 27 or 36 hole days, but that has not been the case for quite a while. Also it has been stressed that we are maybe starting too early and not giving you guys enough time to prepare your courses and then travel to the event. If this is the case than we can try and put those guys at the back of the field, although we are now trying to get a later kick off anyway.

If you would like to attend a golf day here are the fixtures and dates: May 5, Pycombe GC, Qualifier for the National Tournament; July 14, Haywards Heath GC, Team Challenge; August 31, Dyke GC, Sussex v Surrey - hiss boo; September/October, yet to be arranged.

Just a little in reference to the Sussex v Surrey match. Not only is it at the Dyke, where the Fixtures Secretary is Course Manager, it is also his birthday. Not too much pressure to put on oneself at 50 is it. Let's hope his game lives up to it.

As you can see there is no set fixture for September/October, so if any one feels their club would kindly hold an event then, or for the forthcoming year please let me know. Please support your Section!

That's the lot for now, look forward to seeing you at the next golf day.

Rob Hudson

East Anglia

Spring is here and I am sure everyone is flat out with their spring renovation. It has been a winter of mild weather for most of us with only a few course closures, and just a handful of days with temporary greens in use. The 'must play everyday member' has been happy throughout, so let us hope he shows some understanding as we tirelessly bring our courses round for the summer onslaught.

The Section's 2005 fixtures are now confirmed and the fixture cards are going to press as I write. Due to unforeseen circumstances, the first golf meeting of the year has had to be arranged later in Spring than normal, the meeting at Diss Golf Club is to be held on Tuesday May 17, the entry forms and fixture cards will be sent to all members of our Section shortly. If any member has any queries then Ian Willet, our Section Secretary, can be contacted on 01728 452759 and he will be pleased to deal with your call.

Congratulations must go to our Section Treasurer, Martin Mison, and his wife, Tracey, on the birth of their fourth child. Matthew weighing in at 91b 2oz, and was born on January 3.

Hope to see you all at Diss on May 17, for our qualifier of the BIGGA National Tournament. So for you serious golfers get some practice in, and for the rest of us it's time to locate our clubs - as they are most probably still in the same place that they were dumped in after our last meeting!

Steve Millard

Essex

Well, thousands of apologies for not writing sooner, but I have no excuses. I could say the dog ate the article, I could say my children ruined the article, I could say I mowed over the article, but alas I have no excuse. Still I have been inundated with things to write about from you members... not!

Our last event of 2004 was a Texas scramble out at Orsett Golf Club. Don and the boys put on a great day and our thanks to them, the caterers and the staff of Orsett GC for allowing us to play and have a really enjoyable day. The winners were... slight problem, I cannot find the piece of paper that Dave Beale gave me and he cannot find his copy, but who ever did win well done!

Our thanks to Rigby Taylor, who sponsored the day and put up some terrific prizes. Also thanks to all our other sponsors that gave raffle prizes: Avoncrop, Scotts, Tuckwells, Ernest Doe, Collyer Turf, Banks Amenity, Vitax, CMW, Sherriffs, Tacit, Seoul Nassau, and anybody else!

The AGM was then held after a fine dinner. A complaint was heard that how disappointing it was that when the AGM was about to start many of the members who had been there for the golf disappeared. This is one complaint which I feel I totally agree with. If you did not attend the AGM do not moan about anything, it lasted just 15 minutes!

No change in offices other than Don Clark will now be organising the golf days. Our thanks to Dave Beal's effort and all his hard work over the last couple



Jane Jones
SOUTH WEST AND WALES
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of years and especially for the new scoring system. On behalf of the Section I would like to thank all our officers and sponsors for all the work and support they have given the Section during 2004.

Harrogate has been and gone, I did not get there myself, but I understand it was as good as ever. You should all have received your events cards for 2005. The golf days are as follows. April 12, Thorpe Hall; June 8, Abridge Golf and Country Club, which is a National Qualifier; August 4, South East Essex Golf Club; October 6, the Bentley Golf Club; December 1, the Essex Golf Club, which will be followed by the AGM.

My, what a boring article! Will write again soon.

Geoff Smith



South West

Winter finally got its own back by spectacularly mugging all the competitors with a bitter cold wind for our early spring competition, at Weston Super Mare Golf Club, on February 23. Wasn't it Adge Cutler and the Wurzels who penned some completely loopy song about Weston Super Mare? Mindless lyrics about ice cream and donkeys? They obviously didn't bother to suss it out in February, when even the seagulls were huddled morosely outside the travel agents in the middle of town. Trust me Adge, it was so cold, your Wurlitzer would have frozen solid and most probably dropped off.

Despite the freezing conditions, there was some good golf played on some absolutely superb greens. Yours truly was "off sick" with a virus and missed the day, so apologies if some of the details are not quite up to my normal standards. 1. Jamie Acton, 43 points; 2. N. Smith, 40 points; 3. P. Gibson, 37 points.

Nearest the Pin, with prizes from Tower Chemicals, were Paul Godwin and Nobby Knight. Peter Blackwell, of Bredy Irrigation, one of our new Patronage Partners, gave a short presentation of their products, and we were grateful to Richard Whyman, National Vice Chairman, for attending. He took away our very best wishes for his coming year in office. Many thanks to Weston Super Mare GC for the courtesy of the course, and thanks to all the club staff, indoors and out, for a super day.

A big welcome to the Section to Dominic Rogers, who is joining The Wiltshire Golf Club as Course Manager on April 1. Dominic has been Course Manager at the Suffolk Golf & Country Club for the past four years and is a keen golfer. He is looking forward to attending the Section meetings, and is particularly looking forward to the Section visit to The Wiltshire on May 19 for the Greenkeeper Amateur Tournament. No pressure Dominic, we like the greens at 10 on the stimpmeter, and all the rough well mown.

At Minchinhampton the staff have been very busy putting the final touches to two new tees and a long stretch of dry stone-wall is being rebuilt. A small water feature is being completed and we are installing small concrete pads to facilitate the collection of grass clippings from around the courses. The last monthly pass with the deep spiker on the greens will be in March, we then switch to shallower tining and linear aeration, spring and autumn.

I recently did a 'PowerPoint' presentation to some of the MGC members, based on the one I did for the Regional Seminar at Cannington last year. It was very well received and certainly helped to raise the awareness of members within the club. I also received the ultimate accolade by being invited to give a similar presentation to a Deputy Course Managers training day for Crown Golf, at their headquarters at the Blue Mountain Golf Centre.

Finally - I daresay everyone has his own favourite digger driver. Ours is Digger Dave Lees, who works for Robert Cole Landscapes. He is one of those devastatingly helpful types, who can make the JCB sit up and dance. What he can't do with an excavator isn't worth bothering with.

Towards the end of March we were finishing the last tee construction on the Avening course. Dave was roaring up and down with the digger carrying bucketfuls of muck and rubble, I was watching morosely from a short distance away, wondering how I was going to explain all this latest lot of mud and ruts to the Committee, when the JCB suddenly screeched to a halt and Digger Dave vaulted from the cab. "Aha," he yelled triumphantly, "I thought so" and picked something up out of the mud.

I clumped over bad-temperedly, mentally cursing that I hadn't been paying more attention, while conjuring up images of treasure-trove and Dave swapping the JCB for a Rolls Royce. When I got to him he was staring intently at a muddy, dripping object, which looked like a small stone with tattered fabric clinging to it.

"Look at that," he smirked, "A mobile phone - some poor so-and-so must have dropped it ages ago - ha! Won't be much good now I've run it over." He was just musing about how long it must have been lying there, when suddenly and unexpectedly - it rang.

"Hello?" he said slowly and suspiciously, and then much more abruptly, "How'd-you-get-this-number?" Then the penny dropped. Slapping his pockets, and then looking desperately back into the cab, his own phone-holder was empty. The call terminated abruptly with a loud sizzling noise, and Digger Dave clambered slowly back into the cab no doubt determined to take it out on the course.

Keep the news coming in guys - see you all at Forest Hills.

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Paul Worster

South Coast

We have at last seen some winter weather during the last couple of weeks. The weather leading up to the cold snap has been unseasonably warm and dry which has brought its own set of problems. I know there have been several courses seeing unusual heavy levels of play because they have not been closed due to the good weather. No doubt everyone is very busy trying to finish those winter programmes before spring arrives.

We have been continuing our heathland restoration work and have had a number of trees removed as well as clearing some invasive scrub. We have followed this work up with removing debris that has covered the mineral soil and seed bank and hopefully in the next couple of years these areas will again be heather stands as they were some 40 years ago.

We should have expected bad weather in February, as it always seems to arrive when we have our Section seminar. We had a record turn out for the day, which was held at Canford Magna Golf Club, and also a reserve list. We have a ceiling of 110 delegates so for those who failed to get a place this year I suggest you apply earlier next. Thankfully the weather stayed good for us and a packed clubhouse was treated to a superb day with Jim Arthur agreeing to act as Chairman.

Ian Tomlinson gave us an excellent insight into the excellent work he is carrying out at Rungsted Golf Club, in Denmark. With a pesticide ban in force Ian, like many of the golf clubs in Denmark, are turning to traditional greenkeeping and promoting fescue and bents with excellent results. Ian was followed by Gordon Irvine, who is currently working at Royal Cinque Ports Golf Club as a Consultant.

Gordon is helping restore this great golf course back to its very best and his presentation showed us some of the work currently being carried out. Again it was promoting traditional greenkeeping, although Gordon also raised some issues that are concerning him within our profession and gave us some food for thought.

Malcolm Peake finished the morning session off with a presentation relating the importance of teamwork when carrying out corrective programmes. The Chairman of the Green is a very important part of that team and Malcolm worked extremely hard with Martin Gunn, at Temple Golf Club, when he was Greens Chairman. It was suggested by Brian Pierson that Malcolm should be cloned so every golf club could have him!

Lunch followed and Canford Magna again provided an excellent buffet for us.

There was a healthy buzz around the room as people discussed the morning's presentations. Billy McMillan was first up after lunch and his presentation showed us the importance of teamwork, communicating effectively, expanding our teams to include committee members, etc as well as how to motivate effectively and fulfil those dreams.

The final speaker was National Chairman Kerran Daly, our former Section Chairman. Kerran is currently implementing a corrective programme at Gog Magog Golf Club with some staggering results after only three years. The fescues that once dominated the turf at Gog Magog are returning at a very impressive rate thanks to the hard work of the team.

Kerran ended his presentation by reciting one of his own poems, which was a tribute to Jim Arthur entitled 'The Knights of King Arthur' and the day was over.

I would like to thank Canford Magna Golf Club for their hospitality and in particular Alan and Jackie for all their help in ensuring the day ran so smoothly. We could not organise such a great seminar without the support from sponsors and I would like to thank BIGGA's Gold and Silver Key holders and Farmura and Bredy Irrigation Services. Many thanks to all of the speakers who gave superb presentations and gave the captive audience much to think and talk about. Also, many thanks to Jim Arthur for ably chairing the day. It was good to see Jim enjoying the day listening to his disciples!

I would also like to thank the GTC and the R&A for all their support and help and in particular Fiona at the GTC who worked so hard in putting together the handouts. Lastly many thanks to all who attended. Our seminar continues to be a huge success and that is largely due to great support we get from those of you who attend, long may it continue! We are already looking at next year's so if you have any particular speakers you wish to hear or a topic you want covered please contact me.

Our first golf day will be the spring tournament at Highcliffe Castle Golf Club, on Tuesday May 10. The 27 hole Stableford will be a qualifier again for the National Tournament. Divisional winners will receive free entry as well as the usual prizes from our sponsors. Cost for the day will be £19 and cheques, made payable to BIGGA South Coast, should be sent to: Chris Sturgess, 40 Kinsbourne Way, Thornhill, Southampton, Hampshire, SO19 6HB.

That's all for this month, if you have any news then contact me at 01202 661106, 07966 386232 or a.mccombie@ntlworld.com

Until next month

Alex McCombie

Devon and Cornwall

It's just amazing what some Course Managers will get up to in order to earn some beer money! Andy Parker, the Course Manager at the Downs Golf Course at Crediton, is in the process of increasing his greenkeeping skills by becoming a marine salvage expert. Recently a member parked his car on the upper car park at the club in his usual spot, nothing wrong with that you might think, except that he neglected to put his hand brake on, oh dear.

You know what is coming next. You have guessed it; the car slowly but surely started to creep forward, through the fence, over the 10th tee, down the bank, straight into the lake constructed about a year ago, PLASH!

Well, as Andy said, it could have been a lot worse, it could have gone across the 18th green, at least it makes a change from a golf buggy entering the water.

February commenced with north and northeast winds, snow and frost, yes, we do have snow in Devon and Cornwall and freezing temperatures, that is until we arrived at Newquay Golf Club, on February 16.

The skies were a bright blue and looking down over Fistrel Beach one could have been in the South of France. In fact it was so warm that the majority of the golfers finished their round playing in short sleeves. The day's golf was kindly sponsored by Avoncrop Amenity Products, many thanks go to Rod Feltham, the Managing Director, and to our President, John Palfrey, who as Starter set all off from the first tee and was later on hand to give out the prizes.

The day commenced with a Stableford Competition, playing off the white tees, and the results were as follows: 1. Jason Brooks, Torquay Golf Club, 39 pts, Hcp 3; 2. Andy Parker, Downs Crediton, 34 pts, Hcp 5; 3. Mike Bush, from St Mellion International, 33 pts, Hcp 13.

30 members took part in the golf and Chris Pearson, the new Head Greenkeeper at Newquay, did a course walk with 20 non-golfers in glorious sunshine. A big thank you to Chris and his team for presenting the course in such excellent condition.

After the golf and course walk we sat down to a marvellous lunch thanks to Geoff, the Head Chef, which was enjoyed by all. The lunch was followed by a talk from none other than our old friend Dave Everett, Course Manager from Lyme Regis Golf Club, explaining how he copes with losing part of his course through coastal erosion, and we think we have problems! Well done Dave, your talk was appreciated by all.

Before rounding off my report for this month I have two requests, one from our President, John, who has asked that the member that won the Avoncrop Trophy, two years ago, please could he return it or contact John.

The second request is from none other than me, with the same problem. The DOH Trophy has not been returned for some time, so I would be very grateful if you could contact me in the near future and return it.

Finally, I am endeavouring to arrange our summer meeting in June at Launceston Golf Club and will hopefully give you a date in next month's edition.

That's about it. Keep well and keep fit, spring is around the corner.
Donovan O Hunt

South Wales

After a long absence the South Wales Section is back. Hopefully all winter programmes are nearly to an end and that you are looking forward to the spring and summer. Wales has been lucky to miss the recent bad weather that has been affecting the east of Britain with snow drifts of 100ft in London, although very cold, the figures tell us that February was 20% drier than last year.

Hopefully you have already applied to be apart of the Support team for this year's Open Championship at St Andrews, to those who have, we hope that you will be successful with your application, for those who have not applied, this is an amazing opportunity to be apart of the biggest golfing event in Europe, it is strongly recommended that you apply next year. Contact BIGGA Headquarters for further details.

Congratulations go to Machynys Golf Course for taking on the Ladies Welsh Open 2005, I understand that Royal Porthcawl were happy to pass this event on to the new club and ease the pressure on the staff after a run of four years. A quick note to congratulate David Ward (MBE) and his team for their excellent work during their commitment to the Welsh Open.

Darryl Jones has left Garnant Park Golf Club to return to his home club of Glynneath. Darryl, who has worked in the industry for 14 years, has worked across Britain and has finally settled down. I would like to wish him all the best for the future at Glynneath Golf Club and to ask for the £20 he owes me, which I borrowed to him on his leaving do.

Peter, from Treflooyne, has decided to go on a career change, working with his family he has set up and taken on a Catering Franchise and I know all of us in the South Wales Section wish him all the best.

Adrian Griffiths has joined Steve Mills at The Gower Golf Club. Adrian, formally of Glynabbey Golf Course, has decided to join the Gower and give advice to Steve on how to run a Golf Course!

You should have recently received your educational calendar, from Tower Chemicals, along with the fixture/seminar list, which they kindly sponsored, our thanks go out to them for their support of the 2005 season. You will see from the list that a number of top events have been organised, every effort should be made to attend these events.

I have been approached by several A1, A2 - formally D32, D33 - assessors enquiring about a recent post by Myerscough College on the website that informs these assessors that they can be paid for doing assessments, I will need to enquire into this further and report back in due course.

Paul Discombe has been in positive mood this year with the retention of the greenkeepers attending college at an all time high level. Paul, however has concerns with the level of resource that is allocated to the up keep of the college golf course, which is used as a learning tool for the student greenkeepers. If there are any companies out there that could provide the college and the future

greenkeepers with machinery then this would be excellent PR. Contact Paul on Pdiscombe@brigend.ac.uk

I would like to congratulate Garnant Park Golf Club for recently winning the Welsh Section of the BIGGA Environmental Award, the prize was a cheque for £500.

I have just recently received an application form from the SCW for a Ryder Cup Legacy Fund, which has gone to all local authorities promoting any projects that will attract golfers or enhance facilities in readiness for the Ryder Cup. Two million in total is available, keep you eyes open for this.

We are looking to automate the letters that get sent out by developing a database of email, 70% of people have access to email, so please supply your email address to Peter at the next gathering or send it to his home address which is 31 Browns Drive, Pennard, Swansea.

April 21 is the date for the Section's Seminar, to be held at Royal Porthcawl Golf Club. Entitled 'The Balanced Approach', the schedule for the day is as follows:

9am: Registration, Coffee and Biscuits; 9.25: Introduction to Seminar by Chairman Mr Angus Macloed; 9.30: Jonathan Harmer MD Farmura - The Balanced Approach - Back to the Future?; 10.30: Ian Elliott, Marketing Manager, Omex Group - The Targeted use of Plant Nutrients to improve Health and Vigour; 11.30: George Attwood-Harris, BSc Hons - The Agronomist and the Golf Course; 12.45: Lunch Break; 13.45: Who wants to be a Millionaire?; 14.14: Guest Speaker - Jim Arthur; 15.30: Coffee and Biscuits/Close of Seminar.

Diolch
Kerry

NORTHERN IRELAND

Firstly I would like to apologise for the lack of notes over the last few months. It's now early March and the weeks are just passing so quickly. The winter work programmes are nearing completion and the spring competitions are fast approaching.

At Allen Park we will soon be bringing our new bunkers into play, which should provide both members and visitors with a completely new challenge. We have rebuilt and added about 30 new bunkers to our front nine, with a similar project on our back nine to commence in September this year.

I must add that the work was expertly completed by Trevor Simpson and his team from the contractors CJ Haffey's. Trevor is very well regarded by greenkeepers throughout the province for his skill in using his mechanical digger to shape and transform any area on your golf course. Golf Course Architect, David Jones, has expertly designed our bunker reconstruction.

Our new Section Secretary, Gary Crawford, from Royal Co Down, is currently organising a number of events for this year, which will lead up to our autumn seminar in early November.

The spring golf outing will be held in the last week of April. The venue has had to be changed at short notice, so members will be informed in early April of the exact date and location, which should be North Down. Other dates for the diary will be Fortwilliam GC on May 26; Allen Park on June 30; Clandeboye GC, which is a charity day on August 5; and the National Championship Qualifier at Royal Co Down in mid September.

So members why not introduce a colleague or greenkeeping friend to the Association and come along to our golf days this year and enjoy the genuine friendship and good humour that exists within our Section.

I would like to welcome here new members to the Section this month, Patrick O'Brien, Gerrard Hughes and David McClutcheon. Well that is all my news for this month.

Ken Henderson