



News from the Chief Executive

Plans for Harrogate Week 2006 continue to evolve and the booking forms for the education programme have already come into the office in improved numbers when compared with this time last year. The completion of the Queen's Suite has enabled the Association to offer exhibitors the opportunity to run fringe workshops and seminars and this has been well received. A separate booklet detailing these should have been delivered with this edition of Greenkeeper International.

BIGGA continues to place a great emphasis on education and in the 2004/2005 financial year it contributed £38,000 by way of individual member career development grants and subsidies to Region and Section education events. We never know everything and none of us should become complacent about continuing professional development (CPD).

I have now the opportunity to write in Golf Club Management, the official monthly publication of the Association of Golf Club Secretaries, and provided a broad background to BIGGA in their October edition. My next article, in January, will concentrate on the need for the employer to support ongoing education. All too often I find that the clubs that do nothing about developing the skills of their staff are those where the staff do not fully commit to ongoing education.

My congratulations also go to the 10 successful applicants who won a place on the trip to the GCSAA Show in 2006, as sponsored by Bernhard & Co. Sam McLean, from Bernhard, and I recently interviewed 22 members who we had short listed from the many dozens of applicants. The overall standard was extremely high and I hope that those who did not make the Delegation will try again next year, assuming of course that Bernhard & Co continue their sponsorship.

One of the 10, Keith Ratcliff, has good reason to feel pleased. Keith recently passed his final exams to become BIGGA's newest Master Greenkeeper. Keith, like many others, came into greenkeeping as a second career and has demonstrated that with hard work and determination it is possible to progress quite quickly to a high level.

November has seen me put quite a few more miles on my car in an effort to visit some of the Section and Region activities, as well as incorporate visits to trade companies in an effort to improve communications. It is clear to me that many members still do not appreciate the value of being a member or understand just what benefits they are eligible to receive. We will continue to promote these through Greenkeeper International, at Harrogate Week and at the Section Secretaries' meetings. If any member is in doubt about their membership benefits then they should contact either Rachael or Gemma in the Membership Services office at HQ.

Finally, I would remind members of the importance of supporting Harrogate Week. Many of you may be tired of reading my 'call to arms' for Harrogate, however I cannot stress too strongly the importance of this event to the finances of the Association. The exhibitors will come if the visitors come. This is YOUR Association and so I hope YOU will support it.

BIGGA has helped bring greenkeeping and greenkeepers a long way, now its future success rests with its members. Remind your Secretary/Club Manager that their Association (AGCS) also has a presence at the Show and encourage them to accompany you. There really is something for everyone!

John Pemberton

SCOTTISH REGION

The Scottish Region has several changes to announce in relation to Harrogate Week 2006. It has been decided to withdraw travel to and from the Conference venue at Harrogate. Having taken everything into consideration the Board has decided it is no longer practical or cost effective to continue with this service.

As in previous years Harrogate Week will provide Seminars and Workshops. Two day, one day and half day workshops will be available. The cost of these will be intimated nearer the time but it should be noted they are not part of the Scottish Region package. However there will be a series of Seminars run by Trade firms at which everyone is welcome to attend free of charge.

The Regional Administrator will continue to arrange and book accommodation for anyone who wishes to attend. The accommodation will, as usual, be the Moat House Hotel, Harrogate. The cost of three nights accommodation on a bed and breakfast basis in en-suite rooms on January 24, 25 and 26 2006 costs £155.00.

Once all accommodation has been confirmed the Regional Administrator can provide names of all attendees, this will allow members to contact each other, make travel arrangements and perhaps share the cost of travel. The Regional Administrator has already contacted the National Rail Help line, 0845 7 225 225, and has confirmed that competitive rates and lower cost travel is widely available.

Booking forms for accommodation at Harrogate Week 2006 are available from the Regional Administrator.

Peter J. Boyd, Regional Administrator

Ayrshire

Hope you're all keeping well and the weather has been kind as you start to tackle your winter work programmes. The AGM was held at Irvine GC on Thursday October 27 with a dozen in attendance. Derek Wilson was strong armed into staying on as Secretary. Marshall Sloss begins the second of his two year term as Chairman with Vice Chairman, Stephen Higgins, doing likewise.

Patrons' Award winners for the year are Dale Norquoy, Irvine GC, and Alistair Storrie, Beith GC. So, on the behalf of the Section, well done and enjoy your learning experience at Harrogate Week.

I can also report that our golf outings for 2006 will be held at Southernness GC and Western Gables GC respectively.

Lauder College, in Dunfermline, will host the Scottish National Conference on March 8. Peter Boyd has arranged for some of the best in the business to speak and I encourage all who can attend to so as it is well worth it!

Thanks to Derek for lying on a few beers at the meeting and the sweets were nice too! Any news, call me on 07939104701.

Denis Tweddell

North

Well here we go the last Section news of the year, and my last Section news as Robert Patterson, of Royal Aberdeen Golf Club, is taking it over. So this leaves me to get on with my secretarial duties.

I was disappointed (from a greenkeeping point of view) to hear that some of my friends were leaving the trade and moving on to other things. They are Martin Cameron, from Moray GC, and Mike Reid, from Peterculter GC. So I would like to wish them both the very best of luck in their new ventures. I do hope this is not the start of a trend.

Some other members moving up the greenkeeping ladder are Mark Angus, who has stepped up from Assistant to Deputy Head Greenkeeper at Peterculter. So I would like to wish him all the best in his new position. It is especially pleasing for me as Mark is a good friend and also an ex-employee of mine at Newmachar.

We had some changes last month at my own club, with George Mitchell and Patrick Wood being made up to Head Greenkeepers. George on Hawkshill and Patrick on Swailend after a very successful six months trial. So all the best to them in their new positions. Also best wishes to Stephen Brown and Ross Macrae, who moved up to Deputy Head Greenkeepers, Ross with George on Hawkshill and Stephen with Patrick on Swailend.