



News from the Chief Executive

Firstly, a welcome back to Marie who returns to the office having taken maternity leave following the birth of her daughter, Jessica, in August. I am sure that by the time you read this Rachael, in our Membership Department, will have given birth to her second child, which is due at the beginning of March. I hope all has gone well for her and that the new arrival is as much a model baby as her first.

Now on to an issue that is a cause of concern. Having just returned from the GCSAA Show, in Orlando, where Superintendents queue up to enter all-day seminars that start at 8am, I was disappointed to learn that the take-up for our own conference in March has been poor to say the least. With only a handful of registered delegates we have had no option but to cancel the event. It seems that we have failed to provide what our senior members are looking for in terms of education and serious thought must be given to our provision of education in the future.

There are going to be those who say: "I told you so", however, the Board and Staff arranged this event following criticism of the 2004 Conference at Harrogate. It would be helpful to have some feedback from Course Managers as to why they have voted with their feet. Is it the cost, the timing, the venue, or the subject matter? Or is it just apathy? I would welcome your views and in the meanwhile we will try to rearrange use of the facilities at Staverton Park for a later date, by which time we hopefully will have devised a seemingly more attractive programme.

The fact that there has been virtually no support is very disturbing and is becoming a worrying feature of so much of what we do these days. I am well aware that the pressure is increasing at many golf clubs, however those who say that they get little for their subscription may well be proved right if trends continue.

Sponsorship is becoming harder and harder to obtain and since a great many golf clubs, and some members, do not seem to be able to grasp the concept of Continuing Professional Development, and the true cost of providing such education, then there is only one eventual outcome. A reduction in services to members.

An enthusiastic management team at Headquarters has just experienced its first taste of failure and it is not good for morale, especially as it comes so soon after a very successful event at Harrogate. It goes against my nature to be pessimistic and I, and my fellow members of staff, will continue to strive to provide the appropriate benefits for both members and golf clubs, while working with other bodies in the industry to progress the 'lot' of the greenkeeper.

Perhaps in some ways we are trying to move too quickly for some, however, as the Chairman has written in his column, times are changing and we must be pro-active rather than re-active. With this in mind the Board will be involving a wider range of people in Board sub-committees than has been the case in the past.

This will enable the Association to benefit from the wealth of skill available in order to help shape the future. Whatever your background, if you feel that you have something to offer then I would be pleased to hear from you and I emphasise that this need not be a permanent commitment and can be on an ad hoc basis.

On a more positive note, my colleagues and I at Headquarters look forward to meeting many of you in 2005 as the new golf season slowly emerges from winter. While in Orlando I had a series of very worthwhile meetings with other related bodies from around the world, in particular Europe and America. There is an increasing willingness and a great need to work together and I am sure that 2005 will see much progress in this direction.

John Pemberton

SCOTTISH REGION

Ayrshire

Hello everyone, not really much happening at the moment I'm afraid. Harrogate seemed to run smoothly once again and I know I enjoyed my trip, as part of the Patrons Award, immensely.

The spring outing has yet to be confirmed so there will be an update next month.

Largs Kelburn have secured the services of Brian Aitken in the position of First Assistant. Brian moves on from Turnberry after being there for four years. Enjoy your long lies Bri!

Our rematch against the West Section is planned for mid to late March, so any interested players please contact Marshall Sloss or call me on 07939104701. The more the merrier as the lack of fitness proved to be our undoing last year!

Denis Tweddell

Central

We begin this month's report by welcoming five new members to the Section and they are Mark Inglis, from Muckhart GC, Steven Paul, James Clement, Ross Anderson and Craig Wilson, all from St. Andrews Links Trust. As usual we extend a very warm welcome to you all and hopefully we will get the chance to meet you at some of our forthcoming events.

Congratulations go to our Section Chairman, Stuart Cruickshank, on his appointment to General Manager at Deer Park Golf and Country Club, his life was busy enough before this appointment, with all the developments that are taking place there at the moment, but it will be even busier now, no doubt he will still find time to keep the Section Committee on their toes! Every success in your appointment Stuart, from everyone in the Section.

A meeting took place recently between a number of members to discuss some of the problems which appear to exist at all levels within the Association at the moment and how they can be overcome for the benefit of every member, some of the subjects covered were Communication, Training and Development, Raising Our Image, Education Services, Magazine Content, The Role of The Section, Committee/Regional Administrators, Members Benefits, Members Participation in Section/Region and National Events, the list goes on, hopefully further meetings will take place in the not to distant future, which will take a number of the points discussed a step further forward. It is also intended to involve as many members as possible in future meetings, so if you are interested in taking part, please get in touch with any member of the Section Committee.

Several educational courses will be organised for your benefit this year, some of which will have subsidised funding and some will not, but hopefully you will give your support to the ones which are of interest to you, even if you, or your employer, have to pay a small fee to help cover the costs of organising the particular course.

Entry forms for the first golf tournament of the year, at Elie Golf House Club on Wednesday April 27, should be arriving with you soon, so if you intend to participate in this event please return your form in plenty of time to avoid disappointment, and that includes you P.A!

John Crawford

North

No new members to report this month.

The conference at Harrogate went well again this year with quite a few of the North members making the trip down. As yet there are no incriminating stories been put to me, but no doubt in due course they will unravel. The Scottish Conference at Dunfermline College will just have gone ahead by the time you read this report, and I will report on it next month. I hope there will be a good turn out as there are many excellent speakers chosen again this year.

One member who has just served 25 years service is Jim Morrice, of Cruden Bay GC, Jim received a presentation from Cruden Bay GC to mark the service and he hopefully will carry on for many healthy working years yet. He is a very well