



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 too 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

respected member of staff and has put up with the current Course Manager for about 13 years, so he must be made of stern stuff.

Another member with something to celebrate is Phil Don, of Kemnay GC. He and his wife had an addition to their family and on behalf of the Section I hope everyone is well.

The outing for the spring is at Murcar GC and hopefully the weather will be good and a good turnout will occur.

I recently did my spraying course at Moray GC and was very impressed with the set up there. The course was looking great, the sheds were very impressive and eight Celtic supporters in the squad, Martin seems to have things well sorted there.

The 200 Club is ongoing and if you have decided not to renew your ticket please send it back to Hughie as soon as possible so as he can sell them on again.

That's all to report now but if you have any news at all to report then you can phone me on 01997 420155 or 07766 956521 and leave a message if you do not get me.

Iain Gunn

West

Welcome to this month's report. I hope everyone enjoyed Harrogate, as once again it was a first class show. I attended through the Scottish package, which is great value with bed and breakfast at the Moat House and entry into the seminars.

I met up with a few old friends and had a first class week. If you haven't yet attended Harrogate you should make an effort for next year, as it's a wonderful experience. It was great to see Cecil George attending as he wasn't too well earlier last year.

There are three new members this month, Craig Black, Straven, Barry McCulloch, Williamwood, and Allan Rodgers, Windyhill. Welcome to the Section, I hope to see you at some of our Section events.

The spring outing will be played over at Ranfurly Castle, on April 21. This will be in a Stableford format, after discussions at last year's AGM to change the format.

Deposits for this year's annual night out will be taken on the day. Members will also have the chance to do this at the autumn outing. This will be over at Cardross, on September 22, and will be stroke play. A venue for the dinner has still to be finalised, information will be available at the spring outing.

Congratulations to Robert Bruce on his new post with Greentech. Robert has been in the trade for many years and is well known throughout the Section, it's great for the trade that we haven't lost a man of his character. Once again all the best for the future.

We hope to visit WBB Minerals at the back end of the year as we got great feedback from our last visit, information will be available nearer the time, so book up early, as there are very few places.

Well that's all for now, I hope the spring brings some good weather to get the season off to a good start. Anyone with any stories etc. please get in touch.

Fraser Ross

07970 366 355

NORTHERN REGION

North West

I have just received the sad news of the death of Derek Green, the Course Manager at Royal Liverpool Golf Club. This is particularly sad as next year the Open Championship is to be played at Royal Liverpool, and this would have been the icing on the cake for a man so dedicated to his profession. Our thoughts are with his family.

I am also informed of the sad news of the death of the daughter of Danny

Tomkins. His daughter's name is Ella, and she is only two years old. The thoughts of the Section members are with Danny and his wife at this sad time.

At the time of writing these notes the weather is dry and reasonably mild, hopefully giving you all the chance to catch up with your winter programme. Since last August I cannot remember a full week without rain, and from October onwards the ground has not had a chance to dry out, making maintenance work very difficult. The repercussions, of course, are less societies playing due to bad weather, and less income coming into the club meaning cuts in budgets. Lets hope this year gives us the opportunity to make up the shortfall.

Did you go to BTME at Harrogate? If not you missed an excellent show once again. Apart from the Trade stands and the ClubHouse stands, which exhibited the best and latest of everything you require, there were workshops and seminars available with excellent speakers. The Exhibition was better than ever so if you missed this year, put it in your diary for next year.

The match against N/Wales is to be played at Wilmslow GC, on April 5, and if you are available and would like to play, contact me. Let us see if we can win the GEM trophy back. I am hoping to complete the fixture list shortly, but if you have any queries about Section events please contact me on 0151 724 5412 or 07761 583387.

Bert Cross

Northern

I'll start this month's report with the news that after three years of being together I'm going to make an honest woman out of the lovely Joanna, so keep an eye out for the date of the stag do, because everybody is invited! You have around 18 months notice so start saving your pennies now!

Don't forget that the Spring Tournament is going to be held at Northcliffe Golf Club, on Wednesday April 20, and the first tee off time will be 10am. The date for President's Day has been set and will take place at Scarthingwell Golf Club, on Wednesday June 15, first tee off will be at 1pm.

The price for golf days this year is £17 and I need to have your names and payments at least one week before the event. Anyone who wishes to pay on the day will be charged £20 for the day of golf and their meal. You may pay by cheque to any committee member, or send cheques by post to me at the address at the bottom of my notes.

Anybody who hasn't given their name at least one full week before the event will not be allowed to play, so please ensure you get your names down early to avoid disappointment.

Yet again, this year's BTME show held in Harrogate was a great success and I hope you all found it useful and enjoyed your days out. A large thank you must go to Amenity Technology and Kubota UK, as I know many of you took part in their excellent after show festivities. Thanks also to John Dobson and Midlube for their refreshments in the afternoon. Lets hope 2006 will be as good as 2005!

I'm certain that you'll all join with me in thanking all the staff at BIGGA, all the show organisers, and all the exhibitors who make Harrogate such a fantastic three days.

We are currently in the process of organising both a barbecue night, for sometime in July, and a seminar which is likely to be held nearer the end of the year, so keep an eye out here for further details. These events are for you guys and really are superb occasions, so please try to make every effort to get to them. You won't be disappointed!

Adam Speight

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Cleveland

Well, another BTME has come and gone and another successful one it was. Good numbers attended so the Trade members I spoke to were very happy. Some excellent new products and innovative machinery were on show and I look forward to attending some machinery demonstrations and trying new fertilisers and chemicals. Some members enjoyed the TSL bus trip on the Wednesday. Thanks to Allan Morton for organising the annual homage!

There have been some changes within the Section Committee. At the last



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Peter Larter
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meeting Barry Walker handed over the Secretary's post to Ian Pemberton, of Bedale Golf Club. We need a new Treasurer, as family life has resulted in Martin Woods' resignation. May I take this opportunity to thank Barry and Martin for all their help over the years.

Some behind the scenes contact is planned in order to try and fill the Treasurer's position. However, Martin and Barry are still happy to organise the golf outings. The spring outing will be at Cleveland Golf Club, Redcar, on Tuesday April 19. Tee time is from 11am.

The new committee is keen to get a new programme of events organised. Social events and some educational presentations have been suggested but please let Ian know of any new ideas.

One very successful outing was a visit to the dogs. There is another one planned for May 20, at the Regal Stadium, Sunderland. If there is enough interest from the Middlesbrough area we can again organise a minibus.

A newsletter will be sent to all members to keep you up-to-date. If you don't receive one by mid March please ring me. Please try and support the Section and the Committee.

Baz Walker's quiz night is planned for Wednesday March 9, 7pm. The venue is Dinsdale Spa Golf Club, ring T.C. or Pembo if you need any more information.

We already know that the Wearside crew will win because Barry tells them the answers beforehand but who will be second - that is the real challenge? The committee has invited the Teesside branch of the Institute of Groundsmanship along to the quiz. Both groups are in favour of 'dual support' to talks, quizzes etc.

Some Section members attended a retirement dinner for George Malcolm at Middlesbrough Golf Club, in February. We all hope that George enjoys a well earned retirement. He served the Association with great enthusiasm throughout his greenkeeping career and we sincerely thank him for that. Good Luck George!

Don't forget - any news to El Prez on 07831 214879
 Ian Pemberton on 07989 508878, home: 01642 316416
 Terry Charlton

Sheffield

Hello everybody, once again I am doing the notes for the Section. Having taken over from Geoff Wells, who has stood down from the committee to give more time on becoming Captain at Gainsborough Golf Club in the future. Good luck Geoff.

Once again we held our winter golf competition at Rotherham Golf Club, in late November, we were very fortunate with the weather as we had a very nice day. Our thanks go to Rotherham Golf Club for letting us hold this competition year after year. Thanks also go to Dave Chappell and his staff for the excellent condition of the course!

A big thank you has to go to Mike Brear, from Rigby Taylor, for being the main sponsor of the event again, also thanks to all the other trade members who provided prizes. There was some very good golf played, but the eventual winner was G Britton, with 26pts; 2. T Simpson 25pts; 3. K Ashton, 25pts. Well done Gary! The winner of our guest prize was Rotherham Golf Club Greens Chairman, D Elliott, I think with a little bit of local knowledge there.

A special mention as always to the catering and bar staff for an excellent meal, which was thoroughly enjoyed.

Dates for your diaries: Spring Competition, Bondhay GC, May 10; Summer Competition, Renishaw GC, June 27; Autumn Competition, Notts GC, September 12; Sheffield Section Vs Northern Section, Hillsborough GC, July 13.

While I am on the subject of competitions, could all trophy winners please get in touch with Chris Astle about the trophies, as the committee want to have all



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Jane Jones
SOUTH WEST AND WALES
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the trophies returned so we can see what we actually have, and if anyone has one or knows who has one which has been missing for numerous years could we also have that one back please! Chris Astle's number is 01709548759.

If anyone has any news they want putting in the Section notes please feel free to get in touch with me either on 07793 111845 or via email, jv.lax@tesco.net.
 John Lax

North Wales

For this month's notes I would like to dedicate them as a tribute to the lives of two people that recently passed away. Ella Tomkins, 2, and Derek Green, 58, two people not known to each other but known by many people in the industry who died either side of the last weekend in January.

Firstly Ella, daughter of Danny Tomkins -Tomo - from Amenity Technology, was just two years and three months old, she was a bright and happy little girl who made everyone she saw smile and with the floral tributes and the amount of people present at the funeral you know she touched many people's hearts along the way, even those that only met her briefly in her short life.

Collete asked for all coming to the funeral to wear bright colours, as they did not want to see dark colours or black ties. I know Danny, Collette and her sister, Lilly, will miss Ella very much and the void in their lives will be hard to fill, our thoughts will be with them along with many from the North Wales Section with their loss.

Derek Green, Royal Liverpool GC (Hoylake). I first met Derek in the late 1980's, he was first and foremost a Brummie, he was from the Kings Heath Acocks Green area of Birmingham, an area I had worked around for many years. We had common interest in places from the start, Derek was greenkeeping at Gay Hill GC, then later at Woburn, before moving up to Hoylake in the mid eighties.

For many of you that knew him he had that warmth of person around him, he always had time to talk with you no matter how busy or how much work he had in front of him, he would take you out on the links and explain what was being done, where and how it was being done and the work involved, he did not have the stress levels the modern greenkeeper seems to work under or maybe he did but never showed it.

Derek's passion was away from the links, and to his beloved steam trains on the lines beyond Welshpool, where he spent much of his spare time. He travelled around the world to drive the trains, two years ago he went to South Africa and more recently to Inner Mongolia. He and I had planned to visit the Isle of Man, last October, so he could see the train systems around the island while we called in at the golf courses. Work on the links and his excursion to Mongolia came at the same time so we re-planned a visit this spring, sadly not now to be.

I got a phone call from Paul Gardner, Derek's First Assistant, in early January to say Derek had not been well since Boxing Day and was admitted to Arrowe Park Hospital with stomach pains, I decided to go and visit him that day, just a week before the BTME show, he was asleep on his own when I got there in Ward 16 and I sat by the bed for a few minutes.

I thought I would just write a note, but then he woke, sat up and said hello Andrew, how are you? I said never mind that Derek what are you doing in here? We chatted for a while about many things, I was glad I had that time, and along with many others will miss the chats with Derek, a real top greenkeeper and a real top bloke.

Mesen Cymru

Andrew Acorn - BATgolf@tiscali.co.uk



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MIDLAND REGION

Midland

Well as you may have noticed throughout the last couple of years of my reporting our notes, I occasionally have slipped in the odd word from a language other than English, we are an international organisation after all. Unfortunately I wrote February's notes in invisible ink, must have been in a 'Bond' guise. I'll have mine "shaken not stirred," "Campi".

For most of my life I have held an interest in the natural world, of which has been accelerated by working in what many consider to be the sterilisers of nature. I obviously refer to the golf course and greenkeeping. How naive society can be! Congratulations must go to Kim Blake, CM Fulford Heath, and his long suffering team, for being awarded the EGU/STRI Environment Certificate for their achievements. Obviously such achievements could only come to pass with the Club's backing. Surely a proud feather in one's proverbial cap.

Now for a chap who has, to the best of my knowledge, been within greenkeeping for over 40 years, and during such time has been an avid supporter of the organisation. He has also held Tournaments with great success. The Midland Section would like to wish David Brazier, HG Robin Hood GC, a very long and well deserved retirement. We hope to still see you at our events David.

It gives me great pleasure to welcome eight members to the Section this month. Such being: J. Humes, J. Asrew, C. Hartley, L.A. Wood, P. Dalton, J. Butler, J. Merchant, and finally an old dance partner of mine, B. Wood. Sorry Barry!

Finally it gives me great pleasure to be able to report that our Section Chairman, Ed Stant, and his fiancée, Tracy, have had a little baby girl, Isabelle. Would you believe it, little Isabelle was late. Well there's a surprise, just like her father. Congratulations to you both.

Well here's hoping that spring decides to join us sooner rather than later. Speak to you next month, just so long as I haven't had my P45.

Sean McDade

BB&O

Harrogate, how did my cup run over! Rioja, Rioja, Rioja, as my lips slowly turned purple, my diet shot off the rails, with a glass of Spanish delight, fantastic company and with friends new and old to pass the time away, unbeatable BTME. Long live the show!

Golfing events in 2005 have now been confirmed and some great venues to look forward to with East Berks GC hosting the Spring National Qualifier on April 7.

Henley GC is taking the Summer Tournament in mid June, followed by the Autumn Invitational at Southfield GC, and finally the Turkey Trot, at The Berkshire, in December to finish off the year.

On the social calendar, after popular demand, another Clay Pigeon Shooting Day will be planned, also on the agenda a chance to be Speedy Gonzales for the day at the Go Karting Club, and topping it all off, Paint balling - a chance to shoot the boss - details and forms will now be well on the way to you with the entry forms for the first event.

Education Seminars are in the early stages of development, and on the agenda are plans to approach interesting and varied speakers to stimulate the grey matter, also making these venues enjoyable with topics that will motivate a wider audience throughout the BB&O Section.

If you need any further information, John Scoones is always available and can be contacted on 07880 550 380.

Mark Day

SOUTH EAST

Surrey

Stuart Sheppard is leaving Cuddington GC after 25 years. Stuart will be starting his new job on May 1 and we all wish him every success in his new challenge.

Bert Watson was hot off the mark letting me know of the birth of his first grandchild, only two hours after the happy event. Bert and his wife, Lesley, sounded overjoyed and were already wetting the baby's head with champagne. Congratulations then to his son, James, daughter-in-law, Caroline, and, of course, granddaughter, Eloise Rose, 8lbs 5oz, born on February 4 at 18.30.

News of a new piece of equipment was too late for last month's magazine. It will surely be of great interest to all Golf Clubs with water features to hear of the latest Cushman with its revolutionary submarine style abilities. The first club to use it was the Drift and Paul Weston said it was a great success, for when they recovered it from the lake, its headlights were still shining brightly.

It is understood, however, that the driver, who was not wearing the recommended wet gear, dismounted prior to its exploratory dive. Any enquiries regarding Cushman spare parts, please contact Mark Bellamy.

The fixture list for 2005 has been sent to all members and dates include: March 11, Gentleman's Dinner, Walton Heath GC; March 31, Texas Scramble, Dorking GC; May 17, National Qualifier, Benstead Downs GC; July 18, McMillan Tankard, Sunningdale GC; August 11, Cresta Cup, Tandridge GC; September 21, Autumn Tournament, West Surrey GC; November 30, Greenkeepers versus Secretaries, The Berkshire GC; December 1, Turkey Trot and AGM, Woodcote Park GC.

Surrey versus Sussex will be at the Dyke GC and England versus Scotland at Walton Heath GC, both dates to be announced.

Brian Willmott

Kent

Firstly, Kent Section welcomes five new greenkeeper members to our fold. They are Robert Dillon, Peter Spicer, Andrew Hampson, Tom Mutch and Daniel Hampshire. They are all from Sundridge Park Golf Club. We hope they will all become active members of our group.

It was good to see a few Kent members at BTME and I noticed you all had your BMS calendars! Happy viewing!!

I can't believe spring is upon us already, what happened to winter? I hope you've all finished painting your tee markers and are prepared for the usual: "Why doesn't our course look like that?" comments when Augusta is on the telly.

Anyway it's time for us to be dusting off the clubs and preparing for what promises to be a great year for the Section. We have three golfing events planned and at least one course walk and seminar in the planning stage. If anyone is interested in Section non golfing events such as football, karting, etc then they will be planned in the future, but as we are still in the early stages of reforming the Section we need to establish ourselves properly first. Fixture lists are to be produced when all dates are finalised, so no excuses!

The trade are providing great support again and several companies deserve a big mention at this early stage for their pledges. At the time of writing they are: Sherriff Amenity, CMW Equipment, Greenkeeping Services, Construction Materials Limited, Banks Amenity, John Shaw Machinery, Collier Turf Care and T Parker and Sons (Cookie).

News is definitely a bit sparse at the moment so apologies for not writing a longer article but I can't write about things you haven't told me, or a rep, about. Any information is welcome. You can contact me directly on 07843 410755.

With your support this will be a very successful year. I look forward to seeing you all at our first golf day.

Rob Holland

London

Welcome once again to another edition of Around the Green for the London Section.

This is usually a very quiet time of the year, so any news or gossip is a bit thin on the ground, a bit like my greens sward really!

Harrogate has been and gone and it was great to meet up with a lot of greenkeepers who we might only meet once a year. To me it seemed quieter than previous years but I'm sure official figures will prove me wrong.

The London Committee will be meeting up in the next couple of weeks so next month's notes should have some more news about our plans for the rest of the year. I can tell you all that the golf fixtures for 2005 are almost confirmed and it looks like the venues will be South Herts, Welling Garden City and Porters Park. This will all be confirmed with dates in the next magazine.

We will also be looking at a number of education options to suit the requirements and needs of our members, so if any greenkeepers have any particular ideas that would suit, then please let us know as soon as possible and we will do our best to put something into place.

I am struggling to write any more here so please help me with some news before next month's edition. It is actually quite hard to fill any space, especially when you read the magazine and it looks like you've only written two lines!

Anyway, before I sign off I must mention a Happy Mother's Day to my beautiful mother, that must be worth some brownie points, Mum? Have a lovely day.

Alec MacIndoe
07780 955 817

SOUTH WEST & SOUTH WALES

South West

It seems that hardly a winter passes by these days without some sort of new bizarre weather record being created. Do you remember all that junk touted around by the Met Office last autumn, about "the unmistakable signs of a hard winter," tons of berries on the bushes, ladybirds nesting early, squirrels frantically mating in the treetops and so on. This year it has been so mild hawthorn buds were starting to burst into leaf during February.

I don't know about your courses, mainly because I'm not getting much news, but throughout the entire winter Minchinhampton has been closed for two days due to light snow, three half days because of rain, and no days whatsoever on temporary greens. Yes, the temps are looking perfect, which is more than can be said for some of the actual greens, but hey, you can't have everything.

The guys have been flat out outdoors building tees, renovating bunkers, stone walling, building ponds and thinning pine trees. Note: if you're intending to fell more than five cubic metres of measurable timber above 7cm diameter, in any calendar quarter, you need a Felling Licence, and you must contact the Forestry Commission tree licensing officer to get one.

We've only had time indoors to tidy the shed, lose the annual Christmas golf match against the committee and oil half-a-dozen benches. Even the tee markers have had to be sent away for painting, otherwise they wouldn't get done. I sincerely hope spring has sprung by the time this goes to print - my nerves won't stand much more.

Harrogate has come and gone and even that wasn't the relaxing excursion it usually is. Things got off to a bad start at the hotel check-in, the Secretary and I booked in OK, but when our Club Chairman, Barry Vanstone, presented his details, there was 'no room at the inn', due to some electronic cock-up with the booking system. I must admit I was expecting the Manager to say: "Hard luck sir - next please". But no, before you could say Super breaks dot com, Barry was booked into five star accommodation just up the road at no extra expense, with maid service, a telephone in the loo, and his own snooker table.

Giving a short acceptance speech at the award ceremony was the most stressful thing I have done for ages - particularly as I seem to have developed two left feet recently when it comes to public speaking. So I lay awake fretting all

the night before, with very little sleep, until it was time to get up that is, and then I soundly overslept. Waking up in a cold sweat, with about half an hour to get there, I then discovered I hadn't brought my suit trousers. That entailed a frantic sprint up to NEXT to buy a new pair, I did think about taking them back afterwards but no. After the speech and the awards were over, I was too relieved to care.

Back in the Section, our Patronage Partners for 2005 have been joined by Countrywide Farmers and Bredy Irrigation, taking the total to 11. The full list is, in no particular order, MJ Abbott, ALS, Amenity Technology, Avoncrop, Bredy Irrigation, BS Mowers, Countrywide Farmers, Irritech, Rigby Taylor, Rufford and Symbio. Many thanks to all these companies for their invaluable support - do give them consideration in all your business activities.

This year's fixture list will be distributed very soon, but a golden ball to all those that spotted the deliberate mistake in the list published last month. The Forest Hills date is Wednesday April 20 - my apologies for any inconvenience.

Congratulations to Chipping Sodbury Golf Club for reintroducing golf on the old Common. A joint initiative with the local District Council has provided six golf holes, which can be used, free of charge, by local people who are not necessarily members of the main club. This golf is administrated by the golf club to ensure some structure and organisation, and will be a superb facility for the community, hopefully attracting many new players to the game. Good luck with the Risk Assessment guys!

But am I disappointed. No one writes, my phone hardly ever rings, my fax is silent. No news is good news right? Not in this column. Remember the alternative - Yep, my holidays. Actually, we did Le Touquet, August 24 - 28 last year, for the French Amateur Championship.

For those that don't know Le Touquet, it is a very friendly, compact town with a large frontage onto a beautiful sandy beach, plenty of shops, bars, restaurants and hotels, and is conveniently located about 60ks south of Calais on the north-west coast of France.

There are two great golf courses on the edge of town - Le Mer, a superb 6900 yard Championship Links, designed by Harry Colt, which winds its way through the dunes right on the coast, and La Foret, 6300 yards, set in a semi-parkland situation with magnificent pine trees, slightly more inland.

Sounds good so far - the beach, the bars, and the golf tournament, but there was also the hotel, the weather and the French.

Things got off to a bad start when the hotelier fixed us with a knowing stare - "Hah, Ingleesh - you want ze car park view or ze factory view. Oh, so sorry, all ze nice quiet car park rooms are taken heh heh - 'ave a nice day." Cocky git - mind you he didn't sound quite so perky at 4am the next morning when I rang room service and ordered a bacon sandwich. What was I doing up at 4am? Simple - outside the window, the night shift was just going off duty.

The Tuesday was the first day of the tournament on Le Mer course. Unfortunately we quickly discovered that "Touquet" in French obviously means 'A cold and windy place', and the golf course was no exception. By mid morning, the wind was so strong that the players were having difficulty keeping the ball on the green, by lunchtime it was difficult to keep the bag on the green, and in the words of my wife: "Watching any more golf in this god-forsaken place is not an option."

So with a forest of red flags on the beach, there was only the Aqua-Lud left for entertainment. The Aqua-Lud, at Le Touquet, is a semi-tropical swimming complex of water slides and chutes, wave machines, palm trees, rapids, in short, all the things necessary to provide amusement for the whole family. However after a couple of hours of being hurled down slides and tossed down rapids, the wife had had more than enough.

On the way out of the pool, Rob, our youngest, unluckily caught his foot on a fake rock - not remotely serious, but it bled every time he tried to get his sock back on. So I was despatched with orders to find a first aid box. I approached the Caisse (pay desk) with a broad smile, determined to communicate in proper French, and proudly announced - "Bon apres-midi, mon fils a coupe de la pied" (Good Afternoon, my son has cut his foot) and was just mentally composing an appropriate phrase to ask for a sticky plaster, when the I noticed that the receptionist had gone as white as a sheet, and fixed me with a horrified stare.

Before I could say anything, she screamed "Mon Dieu" and fell off her stool in

a dead faint. Apparently I'd said: "My son has cut off his foot." Her assistant was made of sterner stuff and pressed some sort of panic button while jabbering away into a tannoy.

Things did get a little blurry after that - klaxons were going off and lights flashing, and what could only be described as a SWAT team of French paramedics appeared out of nowhere carrying all sorts of arcane resuscitation equipment and stretchers, and systematically kicked in an entire row of cubicle doors before finding Rob cowering in the end one, patiently waiting for me to return with an Elastoplast.

Happily, after everyone realised that a simple mistake had been made, it only took a couple of hours to sort things out and repair all the damage, but I haven't exactly been made a freeman of Le Touquet. "Do come back and see us again M'sieur" and other false platitudes. However, it is a really good place for a short break. Lets have some proper news next month.

Paul Worster

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South Coast

Firstly, can I please apologise for passing on some incorrect information to you. It was Ian Greenfield who sadly passed away and not Ian Greenwood as stated. I do hope I did not cause any distress to his family and friends and cannot apologise enough.

Some good news from Came Down Golf Club. The club have received an environmental award from the English Golf Union in recognition of their outstanding work in environmental management. Rightly the club are extremely proud and the award is a testament of the hard work that Derek Parker and his greenkeeping team are carrying out on the course.

It's well to remember that none of this very important work could have been carried out without the full backing of the golf club and its members. Golf is now a leading force in promoting and developing environmental management and we have a significant role in protecting the environment for future generations. Well done Came Down! Some more news from the boys from Came later!

I have just returned from another great and hectic Harrogate week. I travelled up on the Monday with my Course Manager, Bill Garner, and Trevor Smith, Project Manager at Remedy Oak Golf Club. Those of you who know Trevor can imagine that Bill and I hardly managed to get a word in! Trevor actually lost his voice on the Tuesday and when I bumped into him on Wednesday he told me how lonely he had felt. I felt quite sorry for him as I assumed he must have been missing Wendy, but when he said he had missed the sound of his own voice the sympathy was soon lost. Sorry Trevor!

Those of us who travelled up on the Monday had a free day as the Shows and seminars started on the Tuesday. We have some very cultured members in the Section and Derek Parker and Julian Cherry, from Came Down, travelled across to York and visited the railway museum. Apparently the museum has the Mallard and Flying Scotsman on display and the boys from Came Down conveyed their excitement at seeing these great engines. I'm not sure if the anoraks they ordered have arrived yet!

Anyway onto the BTME week. The seminars started on the Tuesday and covered a wide range of subjects. The show was excellent with many new products on display and plenty of friendly faces to catch up with. The AGM ran fairly smoothly and Section member Ted West was honoured with Life Membership for his outstanding support of the Association. The whole week was rounded off with the banquet, which was a great night of good food and company. All in all another memorable week and I'm looking forward to next year already.

Parkstone's Chris Sherrington has every reason to feel proud of himself as he has been chosen to join the Ohio State University Scholarship Scheme and jets out to America at the end of the month. Chris will be spending six months working at Oakhill, in Rochester, which hosted the last Ryder Cup, before moving south to work with the warm season grasses. We wish Chris every success for the future and will miss him enormously at Parkstone, but he has a fantastic opportunity ahead of him and he's living the dream.

He's not the only one leaving us at Parkstone, as Alan Magee is moving to Remedy Oak Golf Club. The exciting opportunity will see him working on a

fantastic course with exceptional standards. The chance to work with Penn A4 will also be a great experience. Alan has been at Parkstone for nine years so will be sorely missed by us all, but we also wish him every success for the future.

Ian Noble will be running the London Marathon this year and raising money for McMillan Cancer Research, which is a fantastic cause. I know Ian is busy training at the moment and would appreciate any offers of sponsorship, so if you wish to sponsor him please contact him. I would just like to pass on the Section's thoughts to Colin White as he continues his treatment. Our thoughts are with you Chalky and we look forward to seeing you in better health soon!

I'll have full details of our Section seminar in next month's column. The day is a sell out which is fantastic. If you have any news you wish to include please contact me.

Until next month

Alex McCombie

Devon & Cornwall

The New Year commenced with our Section's first meeting at the superb Trevoze Golf Club, sponsored by Barenbrug UK Ltd. The course was designed in the 1920's by Harry Colt, one of the pioneers of course design around the turn of the century, and apart from the 13th and 14th holes the original design remains essentially the same.

The course was in excellent condition thanks to the Head Greenkeeper, Neil Taylor, and his team. Neil even provided the blue skies and, of course, very windy conditions. To say it was a test of golf would be an understatement.

The Barenbrug Competition was a Stableford, playing of the white tees, and the winners were as follows: 1. Gordon Tamlyn, Mullion, 37pts, Hcp 6; 2. Chris Pearson, Newquay, 35pts, Hcp 4; 3. Mike Bush, St Mellion, 31pts, Hcp 13.

The non golfers went on a course walk with Neil Taylor, who enjoyed showing them his new satellite watering system, which has recently been installed with a total of 32 miles of irrigation pipes.

Having consumed an excellent lunch we were entertained by our guest speaker, George R Shields, the subject being "Meeting the needs of the Modern Golfer" when endeavouring to maintain old greens.

On behalf of the Section I would like to offer our congratulations to Mike Symons, the Head Greenkeeper at Bovey Castle Golf Club, most of you will remember the course's old name, The Manor at Mortonhamstead. Mike has just won the 'Unsung Head Greenkeeper 2004 Award'. This award is presented by Terrain Aeration, and is for Outstanding Performance and Dedication to Bovey Castle Golf Club and the Industry as a whole.

Mike has been Head Greenkeeper at the club for 15 years. For the majority of those years he has struggled with a lack of machinery and working without a budget to maintain the course, that has all changed now since the Manor Hotel was purchased by Peter De Savary two years ago.

In the last few years Mike has spent £1.75 million pounds on the course, this includes levelling out the 1st and 18th fairways, a massive drainage programme on all the fairways and greens. All 18 greens have had work carried out on them, restoring them back to their original design, and every bunker on the course has been redesigned. The major feature on the course is the 3rd hole, a par 3, it has been lengthened to 205 yards and the green is surrounded by water, a real challenge, once again Mike, many congratulations.

It is my sad duty to report the loss of Ben Adams who was tragically killed in a car accident a few weeks ago. Ben worked at Portsmore Golf Club under the leadership of Colin Webber. The Section's sympathies go to Ben's family and he will be greatly missed by all.

Finally I would like to end by thanking everyone involved with the recent BTME Exhibition. It was a great success and I was delighted to see so many Greenkeepers from the South West, Devon, and Cornwall.

Please remember our meeting at Churston Golf Club, on Wednesday March 16, with guest speaker Ann Murray, who is the Laboratory Manager and Director at The European Turfgrass Laboratories. Her subject will be on Top Dressings and Rootzones, it's not to be missed.

Donovan O Hunt