



News from the Chief Executive

Some of you may have read in the national press that the Marston Group of hotels has been bought by Q Hotels for the sum of £180m. Q Hotels (formerly Quality Hotels I am led to believe) include in its existing portfolio the Queens Hotel in Leeds, Forest Pines Hotel and Golf Club, Scunthorpe and the Westerwood Hotel and Golf Club, Glasgow. Marston Hotels own and operate Aldwark Manor Hotel and so, by default, we have a new landlord of the land upon which BIGGA house sits. I have no immediate concerns over our tenancy that has a further 990 plus years left to run, in fact a change in ownership will hopefully bring a change in attitude towards our previous attempts to convert the Association into a limited company.

Harrogate Week dominates much of everyone's time at HQ and I am pleased to report that all four exhibition halls are full with the exception of two small spaces that I am confident will soon be taken. Bookings for the education programme are ahead of the same time last year and I know from my travels to various regions over the last few weeks, that there is a big push by members to attend Harrogate for at least one day.

I applaud the efforts being made by Regions, Sections and members in order to demonstrate their support for this vital event in the Association's calendar. Please remember that it's not just for greenkeepers, bring along your Secretary/Manager, your Chairman of Green or your groundsman friend or contact. There is something for everyone both in the exhibition and in the 'Continue to Learn' programme.

The Association's accounts for the year ended on September 30, 2006 and have produced a satisfactory surplus for the period and any member wishing a copy before the AGM should contact either your Regional Administrator, Section Secretary or Tony or Stephen at HQ. I would draw member's attention to the fact that the timing of the AGM has changed from 5.15pm on Wednesday, January 25, 2007 to 6pm on the same day and will continue to be held in the Queen's Suite at Harrogate International Centre.

Rachael Palmer who has efficiently run the Membership department for the last four and a half years, has decided to accept the offer of another job and will therefore be leaving in early December. I would like to thank Rachael for all her hard work and wish her every success in her new position. This naturally leaves Gemma and her colleagues under significant pressure until the staffing level can be rectified and I would ask for some patience from members at what is traditionally the busiest time of the year.

Finally I would like to wish everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. It is hard to believe that as I write this there are only five weeks left of 2006!

John Pemberton

SCOTTISH REGION

Harrogate Week 2007

The Scottish Region once again offers their members a subsidised package deal for Harrogate Week 2007.

The Package includes: Entry to Continue to Learn Seminars (seven in total); three nights Bed and Breakfast in en-suite twin rooms on 23rd, 24th and 25th January, 2007 in the Holiday Inn, Harrogate, (formerly Moat House Hotel). Package cost: £261.00. Accommodation package only £156.00.

To obtain booking forms contact the Regional Administrator, Peter J.Boyd on: 0141 616 3440 or 07776 2422120 or email: pj.boyd@btinternet.com

Ayrshire

Hello everyone, hope you're all well and prepared for the Christmas season! I think most of you will just be wanting the grass to stop growing for Christmas, there seems to have been a definite shift in the growing season with temperatures not rising till later in the spring and sustained growth continuing much later into autumn.

Our Patrons' Award winners this year are: Duncan Gray, The Pines, and Gordon Haughie, Southernness. Well done guys and enjoy your stay in Harrogate. You could probably pass on the Jim Arthur book to your apprentice greenkeepers as I'm sure you both know it all by now eh?

The Annual Scottish Conference will be held at Lauder College Dunfermline on March 6. This has fast become a very popular event so get back to Peter sharp if you don't want to miss out.

Goswick GC, at Berwick-upon-Tweed, will host the Scottish National Championship on June 21. Yes! I'm sure the powers that be ken that's in England but must figure if it's okay for them to play in the Scottish Football Leagues then surely we can visit for a round of golf. Controversial?

A total of 12 were present at the AGM on Halloween. It was unanimously agreed that Derek should continue as Secretary, while Stephen Higgins takes on the Chairmanship. Vice-Chairman will be myself, as Stevie boy managed to track me down at the Troon Beer Festival and after a couple of pints of Skullsplitter there's not much I wouldn't say no to... apart from the obvious, obviously!

Additions to the committee are Frank Clarkson and Duncan Gray.

Our 12 aside golf match vs the Northern Irish lads went ahead on October 20 at Irvine GC. The weather was good with no wind and the course well prepared. However after a grueling afternoon's play the visitors proved too strong for us and went on to win 4.5 to 1. All participants enjoyed the day and our thanks go to Derek Wilson and the committee at Bogside for allowing us use of the course and facilities. Well done also to Terry Crawford for his part in organising their trip over. There will definitely be a rematch in County Down next year so I'll keep you informed of dates as they arise. So congratulations to the Irish boys but don't get to attached to that magnificent Shield!

A big thank you also to George Brown and General Manager, Stewart Selbie, for getting the tourists a game at Turnberry the following day. I'm sure there were a few cobwebs blowing across the links after a night out in Ayr.

That's it for now so have yourselves a merry little Xmas and happy New Year alright!

Denis Tweddell

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