



News from the Chief Executive

By the time you read this I shall have been on holiday and I must say I am looking forward to escaping from the Northern, if not the English, weather. It seems odd that we have a drought order in place in the South of England and yet travel 200 miles north and we are all growing webbed feet!

May has been a month of meetings for me, having had two discussions with the R&A; a talk to Northern Section of the AGCS; a talk with Kerran Daly to Chairmen of Green at an EGU conference; a meeting with BIGGA Section Secretaries in Scotland and finally a meeting of the BIGGA/AGCS Health and Safety Group.

The R&A are keen to promote their website, www.bestcourseforgolf.org, and the principles contained therein. They urge golf clubs not only to register but also to complete the checklist. I encourage anyone who has not visited the site to do so. The debate on sustainability continues long after the Seminar at Harrogate Week and the R&A feels that the event was so successful, that they have agreed to fund further educational opportunities on this theme at Harrogate Week 2007 - details will appear in the Continue to Learn brochure in due course and in Greenkeeper International.

In our discussions, we identified the need to get a clear message on the issues involved to golfers, golf club committees and in many instances, the general public. It is simply not enough to 'win over' Course Managers and their staff without them having the FULL support of their club.

During our conversation the R&A confirmed that it would be withdrawing its annual grant to the Association after this year, however, I was advised that there was still funding available for special projects that warranted support. It is now up to the Association to identify these and put forward an appropriate bid. The R&A continue to be very supportive of the work undertaken by both BIGGA and the GTC, however, they wish to divert more funding into aiding the development of golf overseas excluding areas already involving the USGA.

In April I wrote to the R&A requesting them to consider free admission at the Open Championship for Greenkeeper members of BIGGA. This was received with some reservation and a final decision will be taken at the next meeting of the Championship Committee in June. Keep your fingers crossed that this will be approved - if initially only for a practice day.

I was pleased to be invited to give presentations to members of the AGCS and at the EGU conference, and I feel that this reflects the developing working relationship between our organisations. The Health and Safety group, an initiative of the AGCS, met with industry consultants to explain the work undertaken so far and the aims and aspirations of BIGGA and the AGCS in this regard. Our proposals for an industry accepted Standard Health and Safety Management System, were well received and we were promised full support from those in attendance. The target date for availability is Harrogate Week 2007 but an awful lot of work must take place before then. A basis of the scheme has been drafted and work has started on producing Risk Assessments for both golf course and associated facilities, and the clubhouse. It is our intention to make the final product available over the internet, at a significant financial discount to members of either the AGCS and BIGGA. The final costings will need to be decided in due course.

Finally, I hope that the BIGGA Support Team for the BMW Championship at Wentworth enjoyed good weather and needed sun tan lotion instead of squeegees!

John Pemberton



Central

With a very dry, cold spring, it has been a slow start to the year, in complete contrast to happenings around the Section. There has been a huge amount of movement within the area and without mentioning everyone by name - good luck to all those moving on, our best wishes go with you. To those new to the Section, welcome.

Congratulations to Mark Laing and his staff, at Aberdour GC, who despite the tough conditions, turned out a very well presented test of golf, for the Section Spring Outing. The best scratch of the day was by David Simpson, from Crieff GC, who carded a one over par 68. Best nett was by Stuart Pearson, from Aberdour GC, who carded a nett 63 (70 - 7). The Stewarts Quaich (best two from the same course) was won by Stuart Pearson and Paul Armour. More news, pictures and other scores can be read on our website (see below). Many thanks must also go to the Scottish patrons for their continued support within the Section.

The Scottish National Tournament will take place at Leven Links on June 22. I'm sure you will all do your best to attend and ensure the Section is well represented. Forms can be obtained from Peter Boyd (0141 616 3440).

As part of their studies, HND students from Elmwood College held a seminar in March, at St Andrews Bay Golf & Leisure resort, for over 50 greenkeepers and golf club officials.

The theme for the day was expectations of the modern golfer, with an underlying question - 'Can we still produce high quality golf courses to a demanding public in conjunction with sustainable management practices and a workable business plan?' Speakers for the day were George Brown, Course Manager from Westin Turnberry Hotel, Golf & Leisure resort; Graeme McDowall, Golf Professional; David Roy, General Manager, Crail Golfing Society, and Paul Miller, from Elmwood College. The presentations were encouragingly optimistic and the debate that followed raised some interesting questions, based mostly upon communication.

Another first for the Section was the "going live" of our very own website - www.biggacentralsection.org.uk. Please take a look and contribute as you feel necessary to ensure that it becomes an essential tool for the local greenkeeper. Please note that the first Wednesday of every month we intend holding a free seminar evening at Elmwood GC, with a selection of speakers invited to address topics of your choice and the opportunity for some much needed communication and refreshment afterwards.

Euan Grant

East

May 1 has arrived, with a cold and extremely dry April behind us and no growth being the general complaint amongst members of the Section. The usual window of false spring just never materialised, so let us hope more favourable conditions suitable to achieving fine surfaces are just around the corner.

The Spring outing was held at Dunbar Golf Club on Tuesday, April 25 (who got the date wrong? I hear you chorus). On behalf of the Section I would like to thank the Club Captain, Douglas Armstrong, for granting us courtesy of the course; Tom in catering for presenting an excellent meal, which included choices for both main courses and dessert; Bob, Susan and Alison for tending the bar and the pro shop for supplying the pre game pies. A big thank you must also go to Graeme Wood and his team for presenting the course in excellent condition.

The results are as follows: Best Scratch. Dean Muir 72; Category 1. 1. Stuart Greenwood 75; 2. 1. Steven Russell 75; 1. 2. Ryan McCulloch 75; Category 2. 2. David Coull 76; Veterans. Graeme Wood 80; Nearest the Pin. Mike Dennis; Trade. Ian Lauder 75; Best New Member. Cohn McArthur 75; Best Nett. Steven Lamb.

At the end of the day, we had a total of 40 in attendance, including four new members: Colin McArthur, Grant Moran, Graham Davidson and Steven Lamb - who enjoyed the golf, played in sunny but windy conditions.

A final thank you must go to the trade for providing raffle prizes, Stewart Crawford for selling the tickets, and last but by no means least Jimmy Neilson for checking all the returned scores.