



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.

A young man on the move this month is Sean McLean, a former apprentice greenkeeper at Craigmillar Park in Edinburgh. He has gained a work placement at Rochester, scene of the infamous Ryder Cup, through the Ohio State University Scheme.

Until next month.

Mike Dooner

Northern

There are five new members to report this month: Matthew Smith, Apprentice Greenkeeper at Peterculter GC; Harry Rae, Greenkeeper at Gairloch GC; Ian White, Greenkeeper at Gairloch GC; Edward Ralph, Course Manager at Gairloch GC and Blair Middleton, Apprentice Greenkeeper at Fortrose GC.

The weather has improved in recent weeks, which will mean plenty of cutting and presentation tasks for all greenkeepers, to keep the members happy, for a short time at least.

The new practice facilities at Murcar GC are now completed and look very good. The greens and surrounds were turfed and have resulted in a quality facility for all their members. On a light hearted note, one of the greenkeepers at Murcar, Ryan Pederson, sent a text message to his girlfriend Debbie one day telling her that he loved her very much but sent it to the Club Captain, Derek Mortimer, instead. Derek returned the text telling him he liked Ryan but drew the line at any love between them ever developing.

Skibo will have hosted the Northern Open by the time you've read this. I am sure Gary Gruber and his team will have had the course in excellent order for this event. This is early for a Pro event in the North of Scotland but I'm sure Gary will have risen to the challenge and produce quality surfaces as always for this event.

I spoke to Bob Mackay, at Aviemore, and he was saying his opening of the course has been delayed from early May until late June. I'm sure Bob is quite happy about that, as it will give him more growing time on all areas of the course. From all accounts, this course is a beauty and will be well worth playing in the future, knowing Bob it will be in superb condition at all times.

The Spring Outing was held at Montrose Links on May 11. The course was in very good condition throughout and was enjoyed by all who played on the day. Thanks go to Richard Cutler and his team for all their hard work and also the catering and bar staff who looked after us in the clubhouse.

Results: Longest Drive. Class 1 Bradley Wood, Class 2 Ben Brooks, Class 3 Steven Simpson; Nearest the Pin. Raymond Warrender; Sweep. 1. David Duggan, 2. Jim McCormack, 3. Gary Tough, 4. Roy Donald; Guest Winner. Graeme Leslie. Trade Winner. Shaun Reilly; Committee Winner. Hugh Mclatchie; Veterans Trophy. 1. Hugh Mclatchie, 2. Roy Donald; Class 3 Nett. 1. David Duggan, 2. Hugh Mclatchie, 3. Andrew Nixon; Class 2 Nett. 1. Roy Donald, 2. Richard Cutler, 3. Richard Pirie; Class 1 Nett. 1. Jim McCormack, 2. Kevin Fowler, 3. Mark Maclean; Scratch Trophy. 1. Gary Tough, 2. George Paterson.

That's about it for this month folks, keep up the good work and if you have any news about the trade give me a shout on grassman351aol.com.

Cheers.

Robert Patterson

NORTHERN REGION

North East

April 27 was the day we had our annual Spring competition at Prudhoe GC. It's been a while since we have played there and what a pleasure it was, the golf course was in excellent nick, considering the slow cold spring we are having, as you will see by the leading scores.

Thanks to Head Greenkeeper, George Gainford and his small workforce for giving us an enjoyable day on his course, though it looks short on the card its still a good test, with a little local knowledge needed. The weather was tremendous but I'm not putting that down to George, I think that was down to me praying for a fine day.

Other thanks go to: the committee of Prudhoe for giving us the courtesy and also to the Steward, Jim Mulholland and his staff for giving us the best meals we have had for a long time. In fact, a lot of the players said it was the best meal we have ever had.

Donations were provided by the following companies: Shorts of Whitburn; Aitkens Turf Care; Border Sports Turf and Greenlay, who have given the Section a considerable donation to help towards prizes and anything else we may need this year. Before I forget, thanks to Terry Charlton for providing us with his postal service.

New members in Section are as follows: C. Lumley, Roseberry Grange GC and A. Smith, Prudhoe GC.

Best Nett B Wilson, Stocksfield GC, 77-9-66; Gross A Ingles, Newcastle Utd GC, 71; Nett M Harvey, Wearside GC, 91-24-67; J Storey, Alnmouth GC, 75-6-69; R Black, Westerhope GC, 76-7-69; G Morgan, Crook GC, 76-6-70.

On October 25 we will be having a 18 hole competition at Tyneside GC, to be followed by our Annual General Meeting 2006. Members will be notified and by the way we do have a lot of vacancies for the committee.

Jimmy Richardson

Northern

I have been told this month to start with a word of warning for all of you taking part in President's Day at Northcliffe GC on June 14. The warning is that President Dennis Cockburn is back from injury! After a few weeks off, with a twisted nerve in his shoulder, Dennis is back playing and the rumours are that he has splashed out a whole £5 on a new Slammer driver and is feeling very confident of a victory at Northcliffe.

Other news this month, the date has finally been set for the Invitation Day Tournament at Scarcroft GC - Wednesday, August 23. Anybody wanting to put their name down for this tournament please get in touch as soon as possible and don't forget to invite an official of your club as a guest.

If anybody has any news or gossip regarding the section then please get in touch and we can maybe fill a few more lines up in this report next month.

Adam Speight

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North West

The spring tournament was held at West Lancs GC on April 20. The winners were as follows: Best Nett. J. Ellisson; Best Gross. P. McFerron; Vet's prize. D McEvoy; Guest prize. Gary Potter; Nearest the Pin. P. McFerron; Longest Drive. P. McFerron.

Many thanks to Nick Gray and Bathgates, for sponsoring of the Nearest the Pin and Longest Drive.

The North West Section Committee would also like to thank: West Lancs for their kind hospitality; the catering staff for the lovely meal and also John and his staff for the wonderful condition of the course. It was a pleasure to play on. Although the weather was very kind to us, a member of the club was heard to say, "it was playing like a pussycat".

Next up is the summer tournament, to be held at Morecambe GC on June 15. This is another great golf course and well worth playing. To play in it you must send a cheque for £20, payable to BIGGA North West Section. The address to send your cheque to is: Bill Merritt, The Lodge, Beacon Park GC, Beacon Lane, Dalton, Wigan, WN8 7RU.

As always if anyone has any news or just needs a little bit of advice, please contact the Secretary, Bert Cross, on 0151 724 5412 or myself on 0151 289 4625. If you are on the worldwide web my e-mail address is jsheehan@blueyonder.co.uk.

Chris Sheehan

Sheffield

Firstly, I would just like to apologise for the lack of notes in the last few months.

On March 23, we had a very special day in the Sheffield Section, which was a talk given by none other than Peter Alliss (the voice of golf). The day consisted of lunch and then Peter's talk. Our thanks go to Bernhard and Co, for sponsoring the event and their staff: Steve Nixon, Richard Kerrigan and Gina Putnam.

Peter had his ankle in plaster and was on crutches due to an accident he had in Scotland the month before. His daughter Sara chauffeured him to the event, which was much appreciated.

After we had all enjoyed our lunch, for which I would like to thank the catering staff at Rotherham GC, Peter began his talk. Peter spoke about his involvement within the game of golf, throughout the world. It was in the usual Peter Alliss style of humour, very dry and funny and he had us all in stitches most of the time! (even at one stage putting Paul Docherty in his place). Nice try Paul, better luck next time! Peter talked about golf courses all over the world and his life as a professional. He then answered questions from the floor and was very interesting and funny as usual.

I would like, on behalf of the Sheffield Section and everyone present, to thank Peter Alliss for giving up his time and with his injury, still making the effort to come and talk, it was very much appreciated by everyone.

I would also like to thank Rotherham Golf Club for letting us use their facilities once again. Finally, while on the thank you's, I would just like to thank Gordon Brammah for all his hard work in arranging this event.

It was very well supported by our membership with over 80 people in attendance, so hopefully this will continue at future events.

Just to remind you of up coming golf events: Sheffield Section vs Northern Section, July 5, Bradley Hall GC; Annual competition - July 10, Serlby Park GC, 1pm tee off time.

Any news please contact me on 07793111845 or jv.lax@tesco.net.

John Lax

MIDLAND REGION

BB&O

"Summertime and the living is easy, fish are jumping and the cotton is high." And so the song goes!

I can hear you all singing away, strimming and cutting around bunkers, over the hills, near and far, as the summer growth kicks in. I apologise for not providing a report last month. As usual, I push the deadline button with Scott the Editor to the limit every month in the hope that my journalistic talents will scoop the biggest story in the history of the BB&O but, this time I got caught short over the Easter

period.

If anyone has any Section news or would like to put their views across to the masses, you only have to phone or e-mail to get your point across and I will be happy to put it in the magazine.

The annual Rigby Taylor Matchplay knockout will now be underway and your host, Gareth Acteson, is on hand to organise results of the first round, which will be published in next month's edition.

Last year's champions, the Goring gang from the Streatley area, will be defending their title and in true Mexican style, their sombrero hats just might need a trim this year.

Bob the Builder, are you out there? Have you built the house yet? Wishing you the best from the Section.

The village of Flackwell Heath in Buckinghamshire, situated high on a ridge between High Wycombe and Maidenhead was famous, decades ago, for its cherry orchards, but now they have all gone. Today there is a busy shopping centre, several pubs and restaurants and not forgetting the guitar shop and of course the venue for the Spring Tournament Flackwell Heath GC.

Established in 1904 this challenging course was a true test asking for a combination of accuracy and power as you wind your way to the bottom end of the heath, through beautiful established beech woodlands, a whole load of hills to climb and an abundance of interesting drives, to negotiate the well kept fairways. Local knowledge proved the key to winning, as our host, Dean Jones, showed by managing a 71 best nett.

1. Dean Jones; 2. Jim Howard; 3. Colin Wilson; 4. Carl Small; 5. Matt Smith. Overall winner of the Tacit Claret Jug was Rob Surgey, Wycombe Height GC, with a best gross 73 and nett 71 after beating Dean on countback.

Longest drive went to Casanova Wilson and Nearest the Pin to Matt Smith with R. Landells, managing the longest walk. Gareth Acteson won the trade and guest prize.

An EGM was held and Frank Booth was elected as the new treasurer for the Section.

A fantastic day was had by all, many thanks to Flackwell Heath G.C for their courtesy and to General Manager, Ian Hulley and Steward, Richard Chalmers who ensured our first event for 2006 was a success. Thanks also to Dean Jones and his staff for preparing the course to a first class standard, appreciated by all who played this blindingly good and interesting course.

Thank you to our sponsors: Tim Webb, from Tacit, and all the other trade who provided for the raffle table, which included: Gem, Rigby Taylor, Sherrif, John Deere and Scotts.

The next event is almost upon us and will be the Gem Rose Bowl to be held at Burnham Beeches GC, on July 5. Have a great summer.

Mark Day

mark@day.fm

East of England

The season is well under way now and we started with a bang. The first competition of the year was held at Sandilands GC. Our sincere thanks go to Mike Ladd and his staff, the course was in excellent condition, made even better by the large turnout. Well done everybody for making the effort. Our thanks also go to Rigby Taylor for sponsoring the day. The prize table was fantastic - TV & DVD player for first prize. Not bad, eh boys?

The results are as follows: 1. Nigel Broadwith, Nett 71; 2. Vince Gilroy, Nett 72; 3. Les Howkins, Nett 73; 4. Adi Kitchenon, Nett 73; 5. Rob Welford, Nett 74; Nearest the Pin. Steve Beverley; Trade Prize. Ian Collett

By the time this goes to print we will have played the world famous (infamous) PMGC. Results will follow next month.

Allan Walker

Midland

You'll be pleased that this month's notes shall be purely factual, as I am with the Grim Reaper while compiling.

On Friday, March 28, we held our spring tournament at Bridgenorth GC. The course was fantastically presented by Mr M. Jones and his very fine team. I bet that the wonderful sunshine on the day cost a packet Martin! Our greatest of thanks to you all, superbly done. The results of the day: Best gross. A. Jones; Nett; 1. E. Stant; 2. S. Mucklow (both of whom qualify for free entry to the National Championship);

3. C. Roberts; 4. A. Jones; 5. R. Hayhurst; Best Trade. A. Cornes; Nearest the Pin. P. Woodham; Longest Drive. A. Jones.

Our greatest of thanks to the main sponsor of the day, the old wag J. Mullins/Vitax. Also thanks to N. Tyler/Alpha Amenity and to R. Page/Turner Ground Care Machinery, for the drinks and chocolate bars around the course. Without question, our greatest of thanks to Bridgenorth for affording us such a wonderful and generous day.

On the topic of golf, this year's Scotts Doubles event, was drawn at Bridgenorth. Please remember that the home team is to contact the away team giving three different dates throughout three separate weeks.

To simplify and reduce costs to both the Section and yourselves regarding postage to and fro, start times or who you are playing in a golf event we/G. Cunningham have set up an email shot list. Anyone wishing to be included on such must email Gary your email address to: Cunningham.su@btinternet.com. Please remember that your address will only be used for the above and never to action commercial promotions.

Our next event is to be held at Oxley Park, July 5 at 2pm. Please get your entries in to Gary as soon as possible.

It gives me great pleasure to be able to welcome five new members to our Section: M. Morris; D. J. Fisher; A. J. Thurman; S. Scott and J. Moverley.

I look forward to reporting on the exploits of K. Booth's charity walk, next month.

Education - IOSH Managing Safely

This training is been offered to BIGGA members by New Grange Training. The Midlands Section has secured a reduced price. Details have outlined as follows:

Commences Thursday, June 15, and then on June 29, Thursday, July 6 and final day on Thursday, July 13, at Becketts Conference Centre just off J3 of the M42. If these dates do not suit, we intend to run the course during October, at Gay Hill GC. Cost is £325 including; IOSH fees, IOSH manual/notes, lunch and refreshments. (Normally £495 + £30 IOSH Fees). All prices are excluding VAT.

This internationally recognised practical health and safety qualification, is aimed at Managers, Team Leaders, Supervisors, HR/Personnel/Office/Quality Managers from any type of organisation who have to be aware of health and safety responsibilities. The courses aim to provide these staff with the knowledge and skills they require in their specific workplace. An IOSH Managing Safely course, will give them an excellent practical grounding in health and safety and on successful completion they will be awarded with an IOSH Managing Safely Certificate - (our current pass rate is 100%).

IOSH is Europe's leading professional body for health and safety practitioners and these highly successful courses are practical, certificated and are delivered to over 60,000 people each year. Contact us to receive detailed course information, on 01562 632143.

NewGrange Training and Services Ltd, having recently completed the course, can highly recommend taking this training to further your organisations H & S policy and systems. If you wish to discuss training, please contact Paul Woodham on 07880 734197 or email paul@ghg.org.uk.

Sean McDade

SOUTH EAST

London

Hello to everyone, hope you had a great Easter. I hope we were not the only ones waiting for the growing season to really get underway - at last we are and the courses are looking superb. I have some news on our tournaments, they start at Sandy Lodge GC on May 8. First tee is from 11am. I know that doesn't give you much time but please try to come along, we will have a great day and our Chairman, Rob Phillips, will have the course in tip top condition. The next two events are at Stockley Park GC, and Porters Park GC. I'm waiting for dates to be confirmed and will let you know as soon as possible. Some other news from the area, congratulations to Gary Butler from Hendon on the birth of his baby girl - mother and daughter doing fine. Hello and thank you to Ben Burnham, deputy from South Herts GC for fixing our Kubota - see Ben your name is in the magazine! If you have any news for the Around the Green section please give me a call on 07818 410333.

Matt Plested

Surrey

Thursday, May 4, the warmest day of the year so far, 26°C and all golf club members are praying the sun is here to stay for the summer. (In the South East, all BIGGA members are also on their knees but their prayers are for rain to fill the reservoirs and an end to the drought orders). This weekend, some rain is forecast, so let's hope for a sensible summer of warm days to keep the golfers happy and less critical and wet nights to keep the greenkeepers stress level below the suicidal.

Due to retirement at the end of March, is a man who needs little introduction. His voice you will recognise well before you see him and his GT golf swing on the tee, (which nobody has yet witnessed), will go down in history. Paul Weston, the Jacques Cousteau of greenkeeping, had his retirement golf day at the Drift GC, where he has drained the impossible for the last 30 years. His friends were there to celebrate with him, the weather was very kind and some 60 guests teed off in his honour, on a course he has cared for and been a member of, since being demobbed from the United Dairies all those years ago.

Paul, we had a wonderful day, as we are sure you and Doreen did and we look forward to seeing you at all Surrey Section sporting events. Remember, there is always a place in our new Surrey football eleven if you want it! In the meantime, enjoy the lawnmower and keep well.

Tony Gavin, Course Manager at Surrey Downs GC and his wife, Samantha, celebrated the birth of their son Brady Thomas (8lb 12ozs) on March 9. We wish much happiness to Ian Jennings, Head Greenkeeper at Wimbledon Common GC, his wife June and their new son Alfie (8lb 2ozs), who was born on March 6. Both boys have already had their names put down for the Surrey football team in 2024. We can only hope that by then, Ian Sellers will have hung up his boots for good and John Ross has done something else with his whistle.

Gareth Roberts, has again this year played a most important part in the organisation and running of a charity golf day at Hankley Common GC, in aid of autistic children. The event which took place on March 15 was blessed with warm, dry weather and raised around £11,000. Well done Gareth, I look forward to competing next year with the Dream team.

Surrey Sections second golf event of 2006 took place on Monday, May 8 at Woking GC, with some 52 members playing on a course carefully prepared by Jon Day and his team. The National Qualifier was indeed a competition not to be missed and although the day started with pouring rain, this had stopped by mid morning. Mike (but I played so well yesterday) Kirkham, Kevin (where did I put my sombrero) Day and yours truly, Brian (duck) Willmott made a magnificent threeball and Kevin, with some expert tuition from myself and Mike, played well under his handicap. Woking is a really attractive golf course, with many water hazards - both ditches and carp stocked ponds, once played it is a course you will want to return to again and again. The competition was sponsored by Amenity Technology and the prizes were presented by Ian (Volley) Sellers. The prize winners were: Best gross score. Wayne Sewell (68); Best net. Kevin Day (64), Andy Gatland (66); Longest Drive. Chris Lomas; Nearest the Pin. Ken Harding; Longest walk. Jon Day.

Although this was a stroke play competition, Dave Serles and Tony Brennan scored Stableford and won a bottle of wine and a smack.

Anthony (Kojak) Freeman, our beloved Chairman, reminded us that in future only those members who have returned their entry forms with a cheque, will be eligible to play in future competitions.

One final comment with regard to dress etiquette on golf days, please make sure you remember to bring your tie with you. Mike Kirkham did not and although the tie the club loaned him matched his eyes it clashed terribly with his shoes.

Brian Willmott

Kent

In true British style I shall begin this month's report with weather issues.

As I sit here enjoying a few drinks in the warm summer sunshine in the Costa Del Kent it's all too easy to forget about the dreary, never-ending winter we all endured not so long ago. Indeed, the major talking point now, especially in Kent, is the impending water crisis and how we shall all be reduced to quivering wrecks when the water companies pull the plug on our supplies.

It would be very interesting to hear what, if any, contingency plans your clubs have put in place for such an eventuality. The consequences of a total irrigation ban are too frightening to contemplate. Please let us know your views via the website address at the end of this report.

On a lighter note, Kent Section had our first golf day recently at the beautiful



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Peter Larter
NORTHERN & MIDLAND
 Tel: 01476 550115

Littlestone GC. It was a real honour to be given the opportunity to play a course where strong, traditional values are upheld and nostalgia is everywhere around the links. A new record turnout for any of our golfing events travelled to the perfect setting provided by this historic club. Conspicuous by his absence was our Chairman, Kev Morris, whose wife was poorly on the day and didn't let him out. The course played superbly and was a credit to Malcolm Grand and his team of greenkeepers, the new tees were perfect, the greens were like lightning and if you hit the fairways, the ball bounced for miles into the typically snaggy rough. For most of the front nine we were playing downwind but as we turned to start, the back nine the sea breezes really started to blow making the course even more tricky! Thanks to Richard Hill and John Shaw Machinery, for providing a halfway barbeque, although no amount of food and beer could get my game going! Unfortunately, my golfing exploits on the day were not noteworthy enough for this report but playing on such hallowed turf certainly is.

Results were as follows: 1. Craig Wretham, Stonelees Golf Centre, 33 pts; 2. Malloy Parks, Littlestone, 32 pts; 3. Russell Bain, Chislehurst, 30 pts; 4. Paul Larsen, Royal St. Georges, 30 pts; 5. Malcolm Grand, Littlestone, 30 pts.

The Secretary of Littlestone, Charles Moorhouse, dined with us and in a short speech, he made before our meal, he acknowledged the work that greenkeepers carry out nationwide to promote their individual clubs. We thank him and his superb club for their hospitality.

It was great to see so many new faces at Littlestone, please remember you and your colleagues are always welcome at any of our events. Full up to date fixtures and news can be accessed at our website: www.kentgreenkeepers.co.uk.

Finally, I would just like to add one more thing: COME ON ENGLAND! (I presume you're talking about the association football tournament which is taking place this month, Editor)

Until next time.

Rob Holland

Essex

It is one of the biggest accolades a man can receive - being asked to be best man at a friend's wedding. When organising the stag weekend, a precise and military style operation is required. Herding ten culturally aware, big arsed hairy men around Girona in Spain, is a liability. Three nights, two rounds of golf at top venues and San Miguel morning, noon and night have taken their toll. I have returned from the beer drinkers' equivalent of the London Marathon and am feeling every moment my 34 years of age. But still, one day's rest (which is not enough) and off to the first Essex Section golf day of the year.

The spring meeting at Ilford Golf Club, sponsored by Sheriff Amenity, was a cracking day out. A big thank you to Graham Paul for his continued support on our golf days. The weather was definitely on our side and I must say, even hotter than that which I had endured in Spain. Having never played Ilford before but knowing its exact location, my thoughts were of the motorway and the London Liverpool Street line. After only a few moments on the course my ill-conceived pre-conceptions were proven false. It was a well manicured course with some very attractive features. Well done to Sam and the team on presenting the course in such a marvellous fashion. I even enjoyed the wrist wrenching rough. A thank you is also in order to Ilford Golf Club for hosting the day.

Down on the first tee, Clare, from Vitax, kindly gave up some of her time to volunteer filling the starter's position for a few hours. Well done Clare. A big thank you!

The overall winner deservedly triumphed on the day with 42 pts off of a handicap of 6, well done Nick Gates, of Theydon Bois G.C. Nice arrows!

The category I winners were: 1. Tony Barker; 2. Bradley Adams; 3. Anthony Kirwan. Category II: 1. Craig Campbell; 2. Don Clark; 3. Andy McCreddie

Nearest the Pin for category I went to Jim Dillway and Roy Spong won the category II prize.

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The trade prize was won by Mick Fance, of Scotts and the Guest prize was won by Brain Arscott.

A wonderful spread was organised by the club and enjoyed by the golfers before the prizes were handed out and the raffle took place. Thanks, for all the generous donations for the raffle, go to: Avoncrop, Vitax, Rigby Taylor, Scotts, Tacit and Tuckwells.

Now then, Sam Cook, a word of advice, after you have forgotten your towel and need to borrow one, it is advisable not to use the one belonging to the Club Secretary momentarily before he, himself wishes to take a shower. Laughing audibly from the changing rooms as the Secretary asks around outside for his missing towel is definitely not in the 'How to influence and make friends' manual. By the way cheers for finishing off the raffle for me.

Langdon Hills GC, National qualifier up next on June 29. Remember to get those forms in early to avoid disappointment.

PS. Craig, yes you know who you are! No 'Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid' style handicaps on that day.

Until next month, be good!

Richard Williams



South West

I downloaded our weather station the other day - or rather the Scotts iTurf uMETOS Tabular Recording Device, to give it its proper name and after a couple of sticky moments, when it looked like the batteries had gone flat and all the data was lost, it linked with the computer's infra-red port and downloaded 300 days of weather records. Within seconds, I had average temperatures, wind speed in metres per second, transpiration rates, sunlight hours, models for Brown Patch, Pythium Blight, and heaven knows what else, but when it came to precipitation - nothing showed. I was just at the point of cursing out loud, as rainfall is the really interesting bit, when I realised that actually, it had recorded rainfall but there was next to nothing showing. You had to look really hard to find it. (Just stop and think for a moment, when did you last get soaked on a machine?) A farmer pal of mine near Cirencester has boreholes on his land, which are used by the Environment Agency to monitor local groundwater levels. His boreholes are 19 metres (or over 40 feet) below their normal level right now. There's never been a better time to start stitching fescue and bent into those greens. Certainly, on the golf course, having got our spring renovation work over with early, we were then hit with the cold late spring and then by several hundred-thousand leatherjackets. I might send in the photos I took the day after we reluctantly applied Chlorpifyros - I actually had to draft an emergency notice, apologising for the number of grubs lying on the surface, breathing their last. We had been aware that we had had "a few" grubs in the greens for a little while, but eventually, you could clearly see them eating their way down the Graden lines. That's nature for you.

No such problems over at Chipping Sodbury for the Greenkeeper(Guest tournament back in April. The course was very well presented, particularly in light of the difficult conditions, by Clive, John, Tim, and the team and the section were made to feel really welcome. Our very sincere thanks to the whole club and all their staff.

The results were: 1. S. O'Connell & D. Halling-Brown, Mendip, 48 pts; 2. John Keenghan & Bob Williams, Chipping Sodbury, 45 pts; 3. Nobby Knight & Mike Durant, unattached, 45 pts.

Thanks to our Patronage Partners for the prizes and to Sue Malone, from Tower Chemicals, for supporting the day. Thanks are also due to Chris Sealey for stepping into the breach and helping with organising the Section Days while Nobby gets his business up and running.

Back at Minch, the back-nine bunker renovation project is now complete. We turfed during the only remotely wet period of the spring - laying some 3000 square metres of turf (all small rolls on pretty steep banks) in a week. By the end of the week, having rotated my staff so that no-one actually walked out, I realised that I was completely knackered. Oh to be 30-something again (or even 40-something would do). I had literally turfed myself into the ground. What we would have done without the New Holland TS100 tractor, now resplendent on turf tyres, I don't know.

This machine carried the heavy pallets of turf literally right onto the job. You can reach the turf in the right place at just the right height without any double handling. Awesome. We have a valuable addition to our greenkeeping team in the form of Sarah Allcock, who has the lofty job title of Greenkeeper\ Ecology Coordinator. Sarah has a degree in Biological Science from Swansea University, races ocean-going yachts in her spare time and has taken a keen interest in the ecology of the golf course. Joining at a very busy time she is getting the hang of ride-on greens equipment, while completely overhauling our ecology programmes.

Never underestimate the importance of an expert (or so Sarah keeps telling me!). Hopefully, by the time this hits the shelves, the spring weather will have picked up, we'll all be enjoying warm rain at night and bright sunny days. We're looking forward to the Gloucestershire County Championships at the end of May, South West Counties week in June and the Open round in July. Then I'm looking forward to two weeks in Italy. Happy Greenkeeping.

Paul Worster. paulw@mgcnew.co.uk 01453 837355.

South Coast

Firstly, apologies for the lack of Section notes last month but the phone remained silent and there was no news to relay to you. We have, at last, seen some rain and how we needed it! It's been a very difficult winter and an even more difficult start to the season so surely things can only get better for us.

We have had two excellent Section visits since my last report. Our first one was to Eco composting depot, where Sales Manager, Andy Hill, showed us the large scale composting process with some very applicable end products. We were also shown around the turf production unit before being supplied with an excellent lunch. Many thanks to Eco and Andy Hill, it was a great shame more people didn't attend.

Our second visit was to Remedy Oak GC where Project Manager, Trevor Smith and Course Manager, Robert Hogarth showed us around the course, explaining the process of bringing the design concept to reality. We had a great turn out and learned much about the creeping bentgrass, that has established so well on the greens. Lunch was provided by Toro's Mark Winder. A great day was had by all. Many thanks to Trevor, Robert and Alan Magee, for showing us around and answering the many questions.

The draw has now been made for the Jim Fry pairs. Please ensure all matches are played promptly and that you phone all match results through to Phil Wentworth. Good luck to you all!

April saw our first golf day of the year, it was a very special day for the section, as it was the playing of the Colin White memorial trophy at Wellow GC. A great field of over 50 assembled to pay tribute to "Chalks" and hopefully win a place through to the national tournament. Our sponsors on the day were Avoncrop and Vitax and as usual Joe Crawley was on hand to ensure that everyone started off on time. Joe really is the South coasts Mr Starter, he does a fantastic job and is always treated to an array of different opening shots, which I'm sure makes the job all the more interesting. Joe is busy decorating the nursery after the fantastic news that he will become a proud father in October, we wish him and his lovely wife all the best.

The tournament was a 27 hole Stableford and Colin's mum and brother were present to give out the prizes to the winners who were:

Division 1. 1. Scott Taylor, 64pts; 2. Dave King 63pts; Division 2. 1. Spencer Haines, 64pts; 2. James Pouden, 60pts; Division 3 - 1. George Cooper, 65pts; 2. Peter Handfod, 57pts; Longest Drive. Colin Pardie; Nearest the Pin. Dave King.

A huge thank you to Wellow GC for their superb hospitality. Graham Bungay and his team must be congratulated on producing a first class course, there wasn't a blade of grass out of place.

Many thanks to the stewards, along with all the catering and bar staff who looked after us so well and gave us a feast to remember.

Chris Sturgess, as always came up trumps in organising the day and we are extremely thankful for all his hard work in making our golf days such enjoyable ones.

To our sponsors, Avoncrop and Vitax, a massive thank you for a truly superb prize table. We really appreciate all you do for our Section.

I am currently looking for some talented footballers to play for the Section in a match against the Surrey Section. The date and venue are yet to be confirmed but interested players, please contact me.

Robin Wilcox, of Canford Magna GC, is helping in an Oxfam collection of used postage stamps. He would be really grateful if you could send all your used postage stamps to him and help raise money for this excellent charity. Stamps should be sent

to: Robin Wilcox, 108 Windham Road, Bournemouth BH1 4RD. Many thanks!

Our next golf day is at The Army Golf Club on July 12. It's an invitation day and all entries along with a cheque for £21 per person, made payable to BIGGA south coast should be sent to: Chris Sturgess, 31 Bay Road, Sholing SO19 8EZ.

Until next month.
Alex McCombie

Devon & Cornwall

How many times have we heard members make a comment on the course, "Where are all the Greenkeeping staff? Why aren't they on the course working?" The fact is with the clocks going forward the majority of the course work has been completed before the golfers arrive, but having said that, there is always an exception to the rules. At the Lanhydrock GC, near Bodmin, in Cornwall, one of the Greenstaff was mowing the 12th fairway when to his surprise the machine bounced viciously. Luckily he had the foresight to put his foot down on the pedal, then stop and look around, to his horror he found a large hole, 5ft x 4ft and 25ft deep. Surprise, surprise, he had just driven over an old mine shaft. I had a conversation with Martin Morgan, the Head Greenkeeper and apparently in the old days they mined copper and tin in the area and the mine is called Treoil. Martin informed me that some wonderful suggestions have come from the members on how to rectify the problems - wishing well and another bunker to mention a couple. Who said Greenkeeping was boring?

I know that Brian Summers, the Course Manager, at Carlyon Bay GC, near St Austell has had the same experience on his course in the past. Who mentioned health and safety?

Congratulations to Justin Austin, ex Head Greenkeeper at Windwhistle GC, near Chard, in Somerset, who is on the move. He has procured the Course Manager's position at Trethorne GC, at Launceston, in Cornwall. We wish you all the best. Justin is the Vice Chairman of our Section.

As I write this report the weather is an excellent 22°C, with bright blue skies, although dropping considerably at night, down to 5 degrees. Long may it continue.

Have a good month, in fact, a good year.
Donovan O Hunt, Events Co-ordinator.

NORTHERN IRELAND

I would like to apologise for the lack of notes over the last few months.

Our Section organised a visit to Malone GC, in Belfast, in early April, to view Course Manager, Mike Norman's Woodland Management Project.

Mike received useful advice and support from his local biodiversity officer with Belfast City Council, the RSPB and Wildlife Trust. The work has involved the removal of Lauriel and Rhododendron Ponticum, from under mature deciduous woodland. We viewed the resultant re-generation of tree species and wildflowers. Mike and his staff have also introduced large numbers of bird boxes, to assist the breeding of wildfowl and woodland bird species. He intends to control the local grey squirrel population, as this area of Belfast is one of the few remaining habitats of the red squirrel, in Northern Ireland. We would like to thank Malone and Mike Norman for accommodating our visit.

Our first golf day of the year took place on April 27 at Rockmount GC, near Carryduff. Robert Patterson and family, have created and developed an outstanding golf course, complemented with a clubhouse, restaurant and quality food, which could best be described as five star.

Results were: 1. Ken Henderson, Allen Park GC, 37pts; 2. Gary Murphy Silverwood GC, 34 pts; 3. Eamonn Crawford, Royal Co Down GC, 33 pts; 4. Gerry Bruen, Killeel GC, 33pts; Visitors' Prize. Robert Patterson, Rockmount GC, 32 pts; Nearest the Pin. Gary Murphy, Silverwood GC; Longest Drive. Eamonn Crawford R C D.

Our next golf day will be at Downpatrick GC on Tuesday, May 30 with a 1pm tee time.

I would like to welcome three new members this month: Trevor Andrews, James Patterson and William McCann from Dunmurray Golf Club.

Well, that's all my news for this month. I hope to see you all at Downpatrick later this month.
Francis Henderson

SECTION NOTES INFORMATION

In order to improve the sending and receiving of Section Notes, where possible can all future notes be emailed to melissa@bigga.co.uk by no later than the 5th of the month prior to publication please.

Word limit for Section notes: 500-600.

You will receive an email back to confirm receipt of your notes. If you do not receive this confirmation please get in touch with BIGGA HQ.

In the Shed ANSWERS

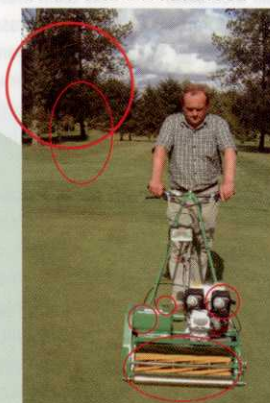
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SPOT THE DIFFERENCE



ANAGRAM

CHAPEL MILE LAMB - Michael Campbell
MORE COIL GEM IN TON - Colin Montgomerie

A QUICK NINE HOLES

1. Germany and Brazil. 2-0 to Brazil
2. Johan Edfors
3. Peter Stringer
4. Bulgaria and Japan
5. Michael Ballack
6. Numbersixalverde
7. Roberto de Vicenzo
8. Richard Caborn
9. Matthew Pinsent, James Cracknell and Tim Foster