



## News from the Chief Executive

There is a belief by some that members' subscriptions fund the activities of the Association. This is only true in part and there is no doubt that without the commercial aspects of the business then BIGGA would be a far different organisation to the one that it is today. In reality the cost of providing member benefits and membership administration account for most, if not all, of this income stream thereby contributing nothing towards the general overheads and other related subsidies and costs. Last year's turnover amounted to £1.8million of which only 23% was derived from members, while without members there would not be an association it is also important to put things into context.

Membership numbers have stagnated over recent years and while recruitment continues there is also a steady haemorrhaging of numbers, mainly as a result of greenkeepers leaving the industry or changing jobs and their new employer not agreeing to pay their subscription. Much of what greenkeepers do in managing turf is equally relevant to other aspects of sport and amenity turf maintenance and for some time there has been discussions at Board level about the notion that Groundsmen should be allowed to become more active members of BIGGA, by the creation of a specific 'Groundsman' category. This idea has been loosely circulated around the Section Secretaries and Regional Administrators for discussion with members and, of the feedback that I have had, there seems to be a wide difference of opinion ranging from very positive to the dogged belief that BIGGA is a greenkeeping association for greenkeepers only. In the commercial world then, the more numbers that we can boast the more pulling power we have with benefit providers, advertisers, sponsors and in particular exhibitors at Harrogate. Why would groundsmen wish to join? Hopefully to take advantage of the membership benefits, participate in BIGGA's education programme and also to network on a local and national basis with other people in a similar industry to their own. Courtesy golf should never become an issue, this is, and always has been, down to the policy of individual golf clubs and as a Groundsman member they could be issued with a different coloured membership card that clearly states 'Groundsman Member'. What's stopping this thought being actioned? The answer - the reaction of greenkeeper members and the Constitution. The current Constitution allows only 'Any person employed in the keeping of the green at a golfing establishment' to be Full members (subject to having the required minimum qualification) and any change would need to be agreed by members at an AGM. If the members attending are not in agreement then the motion would fail and even if it did get approved it is important that generally the membership approves. At the moment a Groundsman can join as an Associate member but it would surely be valued more if they could have their own category, with specific benefits and subject to such conditions as may from time to time be determined by the Board. We are not looking for a confrontation with the IOG merely proposing an alternative choice for Groundsmen. Twice this week I have been involved in dealings with groundsmen where we have been able to offer limited help because of the Constitution and I am sure many of you already have contact with people who would benefit from being a member under the appropriate circumstances. To grow stronger as an Association we need to grow the membership however the members also need to support their Association.

The next Board meeting is scheduled for September 26 when this will again be discussed with a view to putting together a firm proposal for circulation to members prior to the AGM. However there is no point in wasting time if a suitable suggestion will not be supported, even in principle. Please let me have your views either through the office or direct. My e-mail address is: [john@bigga.co.uk](mailto:john@bigga.co.uk)

**John Pemberton**

Around  
the Green

SCOTTISH REGION

### East

Since my last report, we have enjoyed record temperatures throughout Scotland, which have had suppliers of Wetting Agents and Irrigation Equipment jumping for joy, and the opposite effect for fertiliser manufacturers who are reporting a poor year.

The Open Championship has come and gone, with Craig Gilholm and his team putting in a fantastic effort prior to and during the Championship. The Hoylake greens staff were augmented by an additional 10 greenkeepers, drafted in by Craig from the UK and Canada, these included Mark Reid from Craigielaw and John Arbuckle from over the fence at Kilsplindie. Although the days were long and tiring, with a 4.30am start to hand cut greens and working in the evenings after the finish of play - Mark and John enjoyed the experience of a lifetime, one that will live long in their memories.

Our Secretary, Kevin Hodges, has asked me to inform you that the committee are currently considering two venues for this year's Christmas extravaganza, these being the Kilsplindie House Hotel in Aberlady and the Maitland in Haddington. Hopefully by September, the place and date will be finalised for the end of the year.

A club currently in the news is Whitekirk GC in East Lothian, who has applied for planning permission for a new 18-hole course and a huge hotel complex.

Also in the news is Swanston Farms Ltd, who are the new owners of Swanston GC. Work is currently underway on new golf holes, on land bordering the Edinburgh Bypass. At present, with the Clubhouse demolished, the members have relegated two temporary portacabins at the rear. However, a new clubhouse is planned, so the current arrangements are of a temporary nature.

Some time ago, I paid a visit to one of my suppliers, Greenbest, who are fertiliser blenders based in Dorset. On the day, I was met by Managing Director, Tim Le Mesurier, who spent the morning showing me around his premises and explaining the various processes involved in mixing both liquid and granular fertilisers. During the afternoon, we visited an airfield near Shaftesbury where Tim, a qualified pilot, owns a quarter share of a four seater PA28 Piper Archer. After a bite of lunch, Tim prepared the plane for take-off. Once on board, I was thoroughly grilled on all the safety procedures and what to do in case of emergency. It was not until we were airborne that the penny dropped - if anything happens to Tim, I groaned, you are on your own Mr Dooner! However, my fears were groundless and the views were fantastic, with our flight path taking us down over the New Forest, out over the Chanel and around the Isle of Wight, at one point dropping to 2000 feet to go around the Needles!

Finally, a big thank you to Tim for a most enjoyable day and trip of a lifetime.

Until next month.

Mike Dooner

### North

Hell, the year is flying by. The days are closing in fast - I even need the light on in the morning now to see my Frosties. July was a scorcher with record sunshine and minimal rainfall recorded and August looks like it will be much the same.

I would think most greenkeepers will need rain by now and I'm sure the water pools and reservoirs will have taken a pounding in the last few weeks. Has anybody run out of water or is being switched off by the water board? Let me know if you have any interesting stories about water issues. The up side of the very dry spell, is that it's walloped the Poa into submission especially on fairways and walking areas etc.

The challenge tour event at Murcar GC went very well, with golfers and press universal in their praise of the golf course and facilities. Well done to Brian Anderson and his team for producing a quality course for the tournament. The winner and several of the players were quoted as saying that it was nice to play real links golf for a change as it presents a much tougher challenge than their normally used to.