



News from the Chief Executive

Onward into Spring

The staff at HQ have already started the task of planning for Harrogate Week 2008, in the wake of a very successful event this year. The major machinery manufacturers have all requested exhibition space and I am pleased to report that it has been possible to integrate them with very little disruption. Already virtually all available space in Halls A, B, C and M has been sold and the task now facing the sales team is to fill Hall Q!

Education remains a top priority for the event and once again we will be working with other related organisations to bring members and non-members alike as much variety as possible.

The new version of the BIGGA website (www.bigga.org.uk) is now functional and I hope members will take full advantage of the facility. The site has been rewritten to allow full content management by HQ staff, whereas previously most changes had to be made by a third party programmer. Over the next few months further enhancements will be made to the site as well as a review of the style and content of Greenkeeper International.

Tony Cocker, the Association's accountant who completed 10 years of service in January, has decided to take early retirement as of the end of March 2007. Tony succeeded me in the post when I became Chief Executive and his calculator, quill pen and fingerless gloves will be passed on to Stephen Coates, who joined BIGGA a couple of years ago as Tony's understudy. Stephen has been working hard at his professional qualifications and following success in the December exams now only has one module to complete before being fully qualified. BIGGA has been pleased to support his training and will continue to do so.

There is a misplaced rumour that Tony's retirement has been possible thanks to a secret windfall as the administrator for the staff lottery syndicate! Joking apart Tony will be a hard act to follow and his presence around the office will be missed. I would like to thank him for his devotion to duty and the support that he has given to me personally and I wish him a long and happy retirement.

Talks continue, albeit slowly, with the IOG about the feasibility of a merger of the two bodies. At the moment there is nothing to report apart from the fact that a 'Heads of Agreement' document has finally been approved by both organisations and by the time you read this I hope that it will have been signed by the Board of both BIGGA and the IOG. The Agreement sets out the aims of the talks and includes clauses regarding 'Confidentiality' and 'Disclosure of Information'. The next meeting of one of the sub-committees is on April 26 when the potential structure of any new body will be discussed. There is much work yet to be done before a firm conclusion can be reached however I would urge members to give the matter serious consideration and I welcome any constructive feedback, preferably by e-mail or letter.

Finally, I look forward to the days getting longer and the clocks going forward so that a few holes of golf after work may become possible. Each year I start the season determined to work hard at reducing my handicap and then in the Autumn analysing where my strategy when wrong! Perhaps this year may be better but as with so many things in life - only time will tell.

John Pemberton



SCOTTISH REGION

North

There are a few new members to report this month. The Brora boys have come out in force this month with the whole staff joining up - Ian Wakeman, Head Greenkeeper; Andrew Wilson, Assistant Greenkeeper; Anthony Wakeman, Apprentice Greenkeeper; Peter Etheridge, Apprentice Greenkeeper and Alan Murray, Labourer. Also Richie Mackenzie, Second Assistant Greenkeeper at Inverness GC - Welcome all of you, to the North Section.

I hope you are buying up the 200 club tickets for this year, as it will help swell the coffers and give the Section some much-needed revenue. Bob Hardie still has plenty of tickets left if you need more. The Spring Outing this year is at Oldmeldrum GC in early May. The forms will be out soon so let's have a good turnout for this one on the day. More information will be available on the forms about start times etc.

I, along with several other Greenkeepers and Groundsmen from the North Section, attended a small seminar run by Greentech Scotland at Meldrum House GC. The guest speaker on the day was Kevin Cavanaugh from the States. Kevin was Assistant Superintendent at Augusta National for three years - among other posts held in the States. Kevin now works for Floratine products and he gave an interesting talk on various aspects of plant nutrition and health. There was lots to learn and I'm sure everybody who attended would have got something out of the day.

Thanks also to Kenny Harper at Meldrum House for the use of the clubhouse and to Tom Brannan and Neil Mitchell, from Greentech, for organising the day. Paul Marshall has moved from Newburgh GC to become Deputy Head to Hamish Steven at Cruden Bay. All the best Paul in your new post I'm sure you will enjoy working at such a great golf course.

Robert N Patterson, Royal Aberdeen GC

NORTHERN REGION

North East

The Spring Competition will be at Tynemouth GC this year, on April 19 with tee off time from 9.30am to 11am - going by recent competitions I think we could be all teed off before 11am, if anyone is likely to be late arriving try and let me know as it's unfair on the club members having to wait all that time if no-one is on the tee. The Autumn Competition will be played at Ravensworth GC on October 4 - this is later than usual but this year we are having the Section AGM on the same date. Tee off from 9.30am to 10.30am.

I called at Parklands GC recently and was surprised at what is going on there - New bays to be constructed, work being done on the driving range and a floodlit crazy golf or is it a miniature 18 holes? Anyway, I call them crazy golf courses so that will most likely raise a few eyebrows because I think that will be the only one in the North East.

Staying at Parklands, congratulations are in order for Head