



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

Greenkeeper, Steve Quince, on becoming a father for the first time. Best of luck Steve from the Section. Not forgetting George Gainford, of Prudhoe GC, he has just gone up a step, as he will become a granddad.

As you know Matten Hall are opening their new nine holes in June, well it looks like they have been busy over the winter as they have been planting a few thousand trees on the new course and if they take as well as the ones on the main course heaven help if you don't keep that ball on the fairway.

Just been checking the membership, we have lost three members from the Section this year already, all leaving the trade, it doesn't take a brain surgeon to work out why, the latest member to pack it in was Barry Weddell, from Alnmouth Village, not many of you would know Barry but once upon a time he used to be a regular player in the competitions. Myself and some of the older members, I'm sure, will wish him well for the future. His job has been taken over by young Kerry Shotton, from Alnwick GC.

Jimmy Richardson

North West

As I write these notes I am busy taking bookings for the Spring Seminar, in fact I have had to close the list at 101 delegates so anyone who could not get a place please accept my apologies. We knew that this particular seminar would be a sellout and we were not disappointed. Many thanks go out to Stuart Yarwood, Steve Oultram, Nick Gray and Dave Austin for their help, also many thanks to the speakers for their precious time and not forgetting Wilmslow GC and their committee for supporting the association and allowing us the use of their clubhouse for the seminar. Many thanks to all who attended and I hope you all enjoyed it.

A bit of news on the job front, Russell Lewis has been appointed Head Greenkeeper at Hale GC; James Blacklock, from Lymm GC, has been appointed to Head Greenkeeper at Ellesmere GC, and takes over from Trevor, who, I believe, is starting a new career venture. We wish them all good luck.

Adie Holt, from Birchwood GC, and his wife, Rhian, are now the proud parents of a daughter. Welcome to Ariana. Put some matchsticks in your eyelids, Adie, it tends to help. We wish Ariana good luck, good health and happiness.

Last, but not least, we have the Spring Tournament coming up at Prestbury GC, the time is to be confirmed but the date is April 19, 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 Golf Club, Beacon Lane, Dalton, Wigan, WN8 7RU. Please remember we will be limited in numbers for this tournament so please get your names down quickly.

If anyone has any news or just needs a little bit of advice, please contact the Secretary Bert Cross on: 0151 7245412 or myself on: 0151 2894625. My email is: jsheehan@blueyonder.co.uk.

Chris Sheehan

Northern

Well, after a long hard winter, the cutting and golfing season is nearly upon us and I'm hoping that by the time you read this you should all have received this year's fixture list. A few dates for your diaries which are already confirmed are the: Spring Tournament, Wednesday, April 18, at Hessle GC; President's Day on Thursday,

June 26, at Ripon GC, with first tee off being at 1.30pm. The Autumn Tournament will be held at Fulford GC on either September 25 or 27. I will confirm the date in the next issue of the magazine. Like last year's Christmas Competition, we need to have your name and your entry fee at least one week before the event.

Please note that following a few technical problems, my new email address is: speight619@btinternet.com. You can contact me by email, telephone or post. My details are as follows: Adam Speight, 16a Hodgson Fold, Myers Lane, Bradford BD2 4EB Tel: 01274 638366 Mobile: 07739 319060

Sheffield

Sorry there was no news last month but there wasn't anything to report! As I always say, if anyone has any stories/news, even not related to greenkeeping, please feel free to get in touch with me and I will gladly put it in the magazine.

These are the golf dates for this season: Spring Competition, May 14, Rotherham GC, tee off 1.30; Summer Competition, July 9, Wortley GC, tee off 1.30; Sheffield Section Vs Northern Section, July 19, Hickleton GC, tee off 1.30; Autumn Competition, September 17, Brough GC, tee off 1.00; Sheffield Union Greenkeepers, September 24, Sandhills GC. The Christmas competition is still to be arranged.

The Section are running the trip to Wembley in October - date to be arranged - dependent on numbers wanting to go which we will be trying to find out over the next few weeks, anyone interested feel free to contact me or any of the committee so we can have an idea of numbers for transport reasons etc.

Feel free to contact me on: jv.lax@tesco.net or: 07793111845
John Lax

North Wales

It has now been just over six years since I took over this scribe's position from my predecessor, Dave Goodridge, of Denbigh GC, and hasn't the time flown, it has been real fun and I have enjoyed it immensely.

I do believe for any Section to move forward, to achieve its goals, we have to introduce new blood with new ideas and a fresh outlook otherwise it's just same old, same old.

This position I took on voluntarily and said to myself two to three years and move on, but I am still here, still writing these notes... And yes over six years I have missed one or two months for one reason or another but all in all I am proud to have contributed my time for British Golf Greenkeeping in what I feel is a really great profession and industry to work in.

I am handing over this pen to my "brother from another mother", who is also my golfing roll up partner at Lymm GC, known by many of you now as the original Gingerbread Man, and the North Wales Section holder of the most raffle tickets sold on any one golf day, with his classic phrase, "Raffle tickets £1 each or I can do you a deal, why not buy 3 for £3!" A man with a vast vocabulary and an insatiable lust for life it can only be the one and only Mr Stuart Yarwood d.b.t.c. (Don't bend the card).

Far from taking a back seat, I will still be on committee and help out actively at Section events throughout the year, which brings me nicely onto our first golf match of the year, our Spring

Tournament being held at Abergele GC and a chance for many of you to inspect the great condition of Darren Anderson's course with its sand greens laid just under five years ago, and from our visit there some three Christmases ago it will be nice to see how they have come on. If you have not yet received your entry form, one should be posted out to you shortly.

Following this date it will be the North Wales vs North West Match being held again at Sutton Hall GC, on May 23. Anyone wishing to put their name forward for the North Wales team please contact Jez Hughes on: 07876 776265 – If possible we are looking for players with that will to win, as last year saw us lose this competition yet again going down in five of the six matches.

A bit of sad news for these final notes, I am to report the passing of Elfyn Owen, on February 2. He was 69 years old and I knew him from his years at Dolgellau GC as Head Greenkeeper, then latterly at Royal St David's, Harlech, where he worked alongside the Kerry bros. Elfyn was one of life's really good guys, a good golfer and a good friend to many and all of you who had that chance meeting with him would have said the same, he did not have a bad word for anybody. His passion was singing in the Welsh male voice choir. In fact he travelled the world with the Godre'r Aran choir (in Welsh it translates 'the choir from the foothills of the mountain') he made friends and had acquaintances from many countries in the world and in their coming over to give him a big send off just showed how well thought of he was.

On a lighter note, Gareth Evans, also from Royal St David's, has

attained a 12 month sabbatical at Pinehurst GC in the USA. We wish him well and have yet to find out if it is No1 No2 No3...No8 etc but, whichever it is I am sure he will have a most enjoyable time.

Finally, I would like to congratulate all those who organised the Spring Seminar held at Wilmslow GC, it takes a lot of preparation and the anticipation of the day going well for all involved bears heavy for the 24 hours prior to the start, making sure the best laid plans come together – and it did with well over 100 attendees, a full panel of speakers and guest speakers on the hot subject of sustainable golf.

This just leaves me to say a big thank you to each and everyone of you who helped with your contribution to the notes, because however small or insignificant you think it may be, it is always a help and I have been grateful for your stories and anecdotes, also a big thank you to everyone who takes the time to read them, some funny, some sad, some serious, some topical, some interesting and some enlightening.

So to end I would like you to think of the words from the song; Never forget where your coming from, Never pretend it's not real, because some day, this will all be someone else's dream!

Mesen Cymru

Andrew Acorn

MIDLAND REGION

East Midland

I have to start this month's column with the sad news that Dave Johnson who worked at Horsley Lodge GC passed away on February 20, Dave had worked at Horsley Lodge for 12 years and passed away while doing one of the things he loved in life, playing Shrovetide Football. He will be sadly missed by everyone who knew him and our thoughts go out to Russ and his team at Horsley and to Dave's wife and family at this sad time.

The annual go-carting event took place on February 21 at the East Midlands Formula 1 Carting Centre and we had a good turn out of 21 budding Jenson Buttons. The event was a two-man team event and was won by Ben Cumberland and Dean Buxton, from Bulwell Forest GC, and our thanks go to Toro UK and Andrew Humble, from Toro, for sponsoring the event and all the greenkeepers that attended to make the night a success.

There have been a couple of greenkeepers seeking pastures new lately Scott Purdy has moved to Willesley Park GC as Head Greenkeeper and Frazer Harrison has left his position as First Assistant at Willesley Park to join Shirland GC as Deputy Course Manager and I'm sure we all wish them well in their new jobs. The date for the Spring Tournament this year is Thursday, May 24, at Horsley Lodge GC and entry forms will be sent out soon in the post.

Dan Rodgers

Berks/Bucks and Oxon

Due to a mix up at BIGGA HQ Berks/Bucks and Oxon Section notes for March did not appear in that issue, so here there are:

Groundhog Day! March - is it spring yet?

Global warming has caused a great debate.

This mild winter past makes it seem just great,
On this groundhog day we think of one thing,
Will we have winter or will we have spring?
On Gobbler's Knob I see no shadow,
Spring will soon be on the meadow.

'Spring Forward' and 'Fall Back' - that's how to remember when to change the clocks. This year we 'Sprung Forward' early on Sunday morning, March 26 - so I hope you remembered to put your clocks forward one hour, for some of us that would have been before we went to sleep on Saturday night! Barry Holt, from Burford GC, after 23 years on the job overslept twice in one week, Barry, what on earth were you doing!

Steve Coone, formally a Grounds Manager on a Private Estate, has changed hats and is the new representative for Golf & Turf and will join James Moore on the road covering Berkshire and Buckinghamshire. Welcome to the Section.

T H White has done a great job in preparing and printing this year's fixture card which will be sent out in the next mail out. One for the diary, so remember to log it, Sonning GC will be the venue for the Gem Summer Tournament on July 4 and Beaconsfield GC will host the AGM and Turkey Trot on November 21 this year.

The first event this year will be held at Wycombe Heights GC, sometime in May. Sorry there is no date at the moment, however we are working on it and promise you will have plenty of notice this year to plan your diary for these events.

Congratulations to Chris Lomas, from the Berkshire GC, who has achieved Master Greenkeeper status after clearing the final of many hurdles in October. Chris has joined 45 others from around the world who have attained such a distinction.

April showers bring May flowers, or a sweet pea or two. After all, the month of 'aperire' is now upon us, when in the northern hemisphere buds begin to open and things start to grow after the winter period, or at least that is what is supposed to happen, but with a mild and wet period over the last few months, I hope the sun has shone for all of you over this Easter period.

An exciting time for Rob Surgey, and his team at Wycombe Heights GC, as a new heat generating plant is being trailed and tested. These plants, known by the scientific name Solar Complexus Americanus, were imported from Venezuela. One plant alone, fed by nothing more than half a litre of water per week, or at regular intervals using the greens irrigation system, generates as much heat as a 2kw electric fire. A few of these horticultural wonders which are submerged just below the surface have been strategically placed around the green surrounds of Wycombe Heights GC in the hope that raising soil temperatures will make frost greens a thing of the past. The Scandinavian botanist behind this and responsible for discovering these hot air producing plants was the much acclaimed Professor Olaf Lipro, who is a keen golfer and member at Wycombe Heights GC.

With all this in mind on May 17 we kick off with our first event of the year at Wycombe Heights GC, and battle it out over this testing course designed by the legendary John Jacobs, that has many varied holes with the course situated on a hillside giving stunning scenery over the Chilton's with a particularly enjoyable finish, which will leave you wanting to come back for more.

Rumour has it, that Adam King, from Radley College, is looking at the feasibility of organising a cricket match between the Section members and the IOG. So if there are any budding beefy Botham's

out there who fancy a whack with the willow, give the graphite a rest and get in touch.

Next the website - Yes, I hear you say - the website? Our cyberspace prayers have been answered. Dean Jones has been busy putting the finishing touches to the first ever BBO Greenkeepers website and this can be found by using the domain name now registered which is: bbo-greenkeepers.co.uk

The aim of the website is to bring and enhance current educational opportunities and social events by communicating better on all topics relating to the Section

Mark Day mark@day.fm

Mid Anglia

The Spring Meeting will be played at East Herts GC on Friday May 4. This will be 18 holes (pm) and this will also be the qualifier for the National Tournament. Entries sent through to Richard Saunders as normal.

On a sad note, I have to inform you that early in March Steve Mason's wife, Sue, passed away after a short illness. Our thoughts are with Steve and his family.

Gerald Bruce

SOUTH EAST REGION

Surrey

Wednesday, March 7. It's nearly 6pm and it's still light, surely spring is just around the corner and if it stops raining the faces I see on my daily wanderings will once again grin in happy contentment. I have just returned home after visiting several customers in Sussex and they like you Surrey guys are trying to find jobs for the boys that keep them off the course and causing more damage than good. On Monday, March 5 one of my visits was to the Drift GC to congratulate Mark Pennels on his appointment as the local Mafia boss. Mark had all his staff working on their irrigation system in anticipation the current rainfall levels dropping to those which we experienced last summer. Mark has assured his members that he has no intention of turning it on yet although he is desperate to see if it works! I sometimes bump into other reps as I travel around upsetting other road users and an old face that I see occasionally knocked on the window of Chris Gosden's office at St Georges Hill GC, as we were putting the world to rights, and grinned as if training for a Gunning competition. Chris Rudkin, that amiable and very able representative from Sheriffs, was gesturing with hand signals that I took to mean my time was up and that he was anxious to get at Chris's budget before it was all gone. Yes Chris Rudkin is older than myself and the years could have been kinder, but he plods on with his little dog, Fang, terrorising, his customers by showing them his photograph in his bus pass. Be sure to take a look next time he calls, as he is a dead ringer for Victor Meldrew, although he doesn't believe it.

Peter Broadbent is saying goodbye to Effingham GC where he has been Course Manager for many years and is taking up the a similar position at Woodcote Park GC and we all wish him a very happy future there. Please, will every member of the Surrey Section welcome Robin Douglas, the new Course Manager at Bramley GC, to our bit of

England and wish him every success and happiness.

Daren Wales, Course Manager at Clandon Regis GC, and an old friend of Matthew Lawrence, at Guildford GC, would like to announce his forthcoming marriage to Caroline on the May 11 at Leatherhead and would welcome all members, if they can find the venue, to have a drink before they leave honeymoon.

Brian Willmott

Kent

Hi everyone, the news a little thin on the ground this month so straight in with a couple of Good Luck messages. Firstly to Tony Neve, who has joined my team at Birchwood Park, as Deputy Course Manager and secondly to Mark Todd who left Nizels GC to take over from Huw Morgan at The Wilderness Club. Best wishes to both of them and, indeed, to Huw as he makes his return to his homeland of Wales.

Our website, which has been off the air for a while, is now up and running again in a very much 'New and Improved' style. Please try to check it when you get a free minute for all the latest news as well as a picture gallery and a few 'funnies' to brighten your day. We are still at the same web address which is at the end of this report. You can contact us through the web page as well to give us any news you may have.

Our next golf day will be on June 12. This will be held at the Westgate and Birchington GC which is a lovely seaside links at Westgate on Sea. Entry forms will be downloadable from the web page soon. We hope to see as many of you there as possible. Other events such as team football and golf matches will also be arranged and details posted on the web as soon as we find someone we can beat!

Rob Holland www.kentgreenkeepers.co.uk

London

Welcome to London Section. I would like to apologise for the delay in the Around the Green, this has been due to a technical problem that we hope is now sorted. So a late Happy New Year to you all! In recent months, there have been a variety of events taking place and I feel that things are moving forward for the Section. In October, an educational seminar on Woodland management was held at Oaklands collage. It was a highly productive day and very informative. Thank you to John Nicholson and Mike Edwards for their invaluable input.

Watch out Arsenal, Tottenham and Chelsea - we don't need your millions, the London Section now has a football team to be proud of! The team have been in impressive form, apart from the slip up, against Surrey. Watch out for the re-match!

The Turkey Trot in December was once again held at Porters Park GC, with a great turn out of 55. There was a good standard of golf on the day.

We must give a special mention to Sam Brennan, of Old Fold Manor GC, who got a hole-in-one on the nearest to pin hole with a classy 8-iron. His joy soon turned to regret when handed the bar bill!

The results of the day are as follows: Nearest the pin - Sam Brennan, Old Fold Manor GC; Longest drive - Nick Beesley, Stockley Park GC.

Texas Scramble results: 1. Northwood GC, 60 pts; 2. Highgate GC, 56 pts; 3. Brookmans Park GC, 54 pts; 4. Stockley Park GC,

53 pts.

Congratulations to Martin Smith and his team for presenting the course in superb condition. Thank you to the catering staff and the bar staff and thank you to our main sponsor, Scotts.

Please see below for fixtures and events for 2007:

Spring meeting (Olivers Toro trophy) at Brookmans Park GC, Wednesday April 25, tees from 12pm; Summer meeting at Gerrards Cross GC, Thursday, August 14, tees from 1.45pm. Turkey trot meeting (Scotts Trophy) at Porters Park GC on Wednesday, December 12, tees from 10am.

Paint balling, Saturday, June 9 at Bricketwood, contact London Section Secretary Aaron Percival on: 07966 247913 spaces are filling fast.

Finally if you have any information e.g. achievements, good or bad news or anything interesting please let me know on 07818410333. Thank you.

Matt Plested

Essex

Our first meeting of the new Committee took place at Colne Valley GC, with a full attendance of the committee. Several matters were discussed and these will become apparent in the next few months.

Paul O'Kane, Colne Valley GC, qualified to travel to the GCSAA Golf Industries Show and Conference in Anaheim, USA as part of the Bernhard & Co contingent representing BIGGA. I spoke with him for some minutes and he was really enjoying himself and I'm sure he made some good friends out of the other lads on the trip. Don Clark, Orsett GC, went with Andy Turbin, Ernest Doe & Sons and Ransomes Jacobsen. Here again I'm sure that they will both have learnt a lot from their experiences. While I was there I bumped into Ex-Essex member Andy Sheehan, and a few other faces from the past and present. A very large and exciting show and well worth the trip, lots to learn and plenty of new people to meet. Next year it's in Orlando, Florida. So why not take the family along and make a holiday of the whole thing?

Don't forget the Spring Tournament sponsored by Avoncrop Amenity Products. Wednesday, May 2, Gosfield Lake GC, get your entry in early to avoid disappointment.

Just a note if anyone has moved or has not been getting correspondence from the Section please notify Martin Forrester on: 07984-867.939 or by Email: mdwforrester@hotmail.com On Thursday, May 17, at Brookweald Cricket Club, Weald Road, South Weald Park, Brentwood, we are holding an Essex BIGGA v Trade cricket match. Start time is 2.30pm. Those interested in playing in the teams should contact Ian Wood on 01708 746157 or mobile 07952470861 or email ian.wood@romfordgolfclub.co.uk those not interested in playing but just enjoying the fun, are welcome too. There is a bar open all afternoon and evening. Would all applicants please include official club handicaps with their applications.

Move news of the month, is that Antony Kirwan is moving from Colchester, where he has been for the last eight years, to take on the role of Head Greenkeeper just down the road at Lexden Wood GC. I'm sure that you will all join me in wishing him the best of luck in his new job and the next stage of his career in greenkeeping. You should all be receiving a flyer through the post from Paul O'Kane (Education) informing you of some of the courses that he is

intending to run. There will be limited availability for these courses so an early response would make your chance of getting a place more certain. Fixture cards should also be dropping on your mats, please study these and make a note in your diary.

I'm sorry that this month's news is short but it's the time of year plus I've only just returned from the States.

Sadly I have to inform members of the passing of Jack Cheeseman on March 14, Ex Head Greenkeeper at Colne Valley Golf Club and also in mid February Daryl Spellburg who was Head Greenkeeper at Miller Barn Golf Club.

Anyone who has any news for inclusion can Email me: highwoods.photographic@virgin.net or call me: 01206 852353
Arnold Phipps-Jones



South West

I was really sorry to hear that Mark Ford, Head Greenkeeper at Kingsdown GC, has been taken ill recently. Mark, all in the Section wish you a swift and complete recovery. February 22 really was the first day of Spring – mild and temperate, golden sunshine, a warm breeze. Okay, it tanked down with rain all day, blew a gale, and was freezing cold as well. All perfect ingredients for yet another successful South West Section Meeting. The venue was Stockwood Vale GC, Keynsham, but despite the weather we couldn't have had a warmer welcome, or been better looked after. The course, prepared to an almost unbelievable standard by Steve Francome and his team, may have been a little soft underfoot, but that in no way detracted from the day. Yes there actually was golden sunshine, but not until after we'd finished playing golf and retired to the bar. Still, spare a thought for Roger Davey, of sponsors Irritech, - all psyched up for a PowerPoint Presentation after the golf, only to have all his equipment stolen from his hire car the day before. So no laptop, projector, or notes – other people may have crumbled, but Roge is made of sterner stuff – he came up with a quiz on irrigation, and a prize for the highest score. After much deliberation, Chris "the big suntan" Sealey (just back from a fortnight in Goa) won on 14 out of 20 something. I lost count and blew it on the back-ten. The golf was keenly contested as usual, and was well won by Nigel Pring, from Farrington Gurney, with 37 points. Nige, who dragged himself onto the 1st tee moaning about failing eyesight, piles, and not having hit a ball since before Christmas, proceeded to take the course apart playing the back nine in just one over. Jamie Acton came second with 36, and yours truly third with 35. Well done to all the members who attended, both the golf and the Irritech event – the day was a great success.

Thanks to Nobby for all the hard work behind the scenes, and thanks to all the Patronage Partners for their sponsorship. All these names are on the fixture card, but could I just welcome John Mullins, and Vitax, who have recently joined the scheme. Talking about the fixture list, Nobby was offering a prize for who can spot the most deliberate mistakes – the printers dropped a complete clanger, failing miserably to delete some of last year's info from the list. The National Tournament is not at Ogbourne (unfortunately), and you will not be expected to turn out on a Saturday to play at the AGM – the correct date is Thursday, October 11 at

Minchinhampton New.

I had the very great pleasure of bumping into my old friend, Ian McFarlane, long-time Greenkeeper at Saltford GC. In fact 29 years at Saltford, and a career of 47 years-greenkeeping in total. Beat that. Ian was reminiscing of his early days at North Berwick in 1959 - after being at the club for about three months, one morning the boss told him that someone else was going to rake all the bunkers that day, and Ian was going to be allowed to mow one or two greens. Ian whooped for joy and headed straight for the Atco kick-start petrol mower. "Nae so fast laddie," said the boss – "when you get your lines straight, we might let you have a go with that one - until then..." (Gesturing towards a 16 inch push mower) "Enjoy yourself with this!!" (The greens at North Berwick are the size of small football pitches). Happy Days.

Darren Moxham has taken over from Ian at Saltford, and all in the Association wish you well Darren. Ian told me that there was a "nice gathering" for his retirement in the Saltford clubhouse, with a sizeable delegation of members and officials assembled to make a presentation and mark the occasion. In his acceptance speech, Ian, ever the diplomat told them that despite their generosity today, at one time or another during his career he had cursed each and every one of them out on the course! Ian, we wish you a very happy and lengthy retirement. Another retirement in the offing is Ivor Scoones from Long Ashton. Ivor has recently been hors de combat with a knee replacement operation so James Braithwaite has taken over the running of the course. We wish Ivor a swift recovery. I joined the BGGGA in 1975, and Ivor was already well established as the Head Greenkeeper at Long Ashton and went on to be National Chairman of both the BGGGA and BIGGA, as well as Regional Chairman. I remember very well the first section AGM that I attended at Knowle GC in 1976. Ivor was the incoming Secretary, Bob Gates the Chairman, Frank Ainsworth the outgoing Secretary and Derek Cheetham the Match Captain. The atmosphere was like something out of "Twelve Angry Men", with a hot debate about the PGA merging with the Greenkeepers Association, and those four had some very strong views. As a vulnerable teenager I remember cowering at the back and thinking, Please God, don't let him ask me anything!

Back at Minch, Abbotts only have four greens left to do and I'm counting down the days. The local gyppos have recently decided to help by raiding the Abbotts compound, and also our machinery shed. The locks on Abbotts steel containers were cut off like child's play, presumably with the same angle-grinder as peeled open our machine store. Happily our alarm went off before they could nick anything, and of course the police came screeching up about five hours later with the Scenes of Crime officer and his oppo looking like something out of Hinge and Bracket (and about as effective). Needless to say, the criminals disappeared like smoke in the night as did several Abbotts generators and other small expensive pieces of equipment.

Finally, Chris Sealey has long-forgotten Goa as he has just had his application accepted to join the maintenance team at Oakmont for the US Open this year. Oakmont Country Club, Pennsylvania, has greens which are reputed to be "like putting down marble staircases", but maybe no-one told Chris that it also has over 180 bunkers (before he rashly volunteered to rake them every day). Ernie Els was the US Open Champion there in 1994, Larry Nelson before him in 1983, and Johnny Miller shot what is generally

accepted to be the greatest round of the 20th century, a 63 to win the US Open there in 1973. The 3rd and 4th holes feature the famous "Church Pews" bunkers, from which Arnold Palmer once famously took four shots to escape. Hope Chris makes a better job of raking it than Arnie did. One thing is certain – there are few people who deserve this experience more than Chris. Nobby has asked me to remind all members that in order to receive details and invites to tournaments and meetings, they must register with him by returning the slip which was circulated with the fixture lists. Wayne Vincent has also asked that members wishing to represent the section team get in touch with him direct on 07958630590. See you all at Cotswold Hills on the 25th.

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

South Coast

It's been a wet winter (understatement) but there is light at the end of the tunnel. Our golf season for the Section is nearly upon us.

Our first outing will be the Spring Tournament at Romsey GC on May 3. This event is very special to the section as we remember Colin White. So, it is also very appropriate that Avoncrop Amenity Products are one of the main sponsors, alongside Vitax Ltd. If you have not already received your invite please contact Chris Sturgess on: 07773 138409 or email him: chrismaggisturgess@tiscali.co.uk. Start time TBA.

Approximately four weeks following Romsey will be the Scotts/BIGGA Management Trophy. This will take place at Stoneham GC on May 31. Each Golf Club that enters a team must make up a four ball which must include a member of their greenkeeping staff, the other three must be members of the Clubs Management eg Secretary, Chairman, Chairman of Green, President etc. This is reasonably flexible as long as a Greenkeeper is part of the team. This is an excellent day as it really encourages good networking across the whole of the industry. This was definitely the positive feedback from last year's event. The cost per team is £90. The prizes include individual rewards plus £200 of Scotts products for the winning Golf Club. Jane Jones will, if not already, contact you with further booking detail.

The final of last years or this years or - I'm sorry I can't keep up with the Jim Fry Pairs Competition - is between Tony Gadd and Fred Deamen vs Steve Privett and Simon Justice. Good luck to all! Joking aside, the organising of this competition has been an absolute nightmare for Phil Wentworth. I'm sorry to report from Phil that teams are not organising and completing fixtures on time. This is an superb competition which really gets you guys mixing with other Section members and visiting golf clubs within the South Coast that are not on the current years fixture list. So come on people if you are going to enter this year, please complete your matches on time. This year's organiser for the Jim Fry Pairs is Alan Magee. Thank you very much to Phil Wentworth who has done a tremendous job with this event.

And now, to finish on a positive note, many congratulations to Martyn Bennett, of Basingstoke Golf Club for winning the NVQ Student of the Year in Amenity Horticulture and Sports Turf as awarded by Sparsholt College. Well done mate, keep up the good work and hope to see yourself and the lads from Basingstoke at this years golf days.

That's all for now folks. I will see you on the first tee at Romsey,

if not before.

Joe Crawley 07721 389200

Devon and Cornwall

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate Michael Wannell, who is a Greenkeeper At Bovey Castle GC who has just won the 1.0.0. Groundsman Award for the Wales and South West Region, it is the first time that a Greenkeeper has won this award. Michael has been in the profession for two years working under the guidance of Mike Symons the Head Green Keeper, before becoming a Greenkeeper he worked for the National Trust, at present he is working on his NVQ 11 at the Duchy College in Cornwall, his aim is to be come a Head Greenkeeper in the future - On behalf of our Section we wish him good luck. The award was presented by the IOG National Chairman at Newcastle.

We are very sorry to be losing one of very active members, Chris Pearson, who has been Head Greenkeeper at Newquay GC, in Cornwall, for the past three years, he is returning to Scotland to become Head Greenkeeper at the Dunblane New Golf Course, in Stirlingshire, where I am sure he will be very successful. We will all miss you, Chris, but on behalf of the Section we wish you and your family all the best. I would like to wish Andrew Lunston, who is taking over from Chris. Good luck.

On Wednesday, February 14, the Section held a meeting at East Devon GC, sponsored by Avoncrop, a total of 55 members attended, on yet again a very windy, and blustery day.

Paul Newcombe the Head Greenkeeper took the non-golfers on a course walk while the Golfers played for the Avoncrop Trophy. After lunch we had an Educational talk presented by Steve Isaac the Assistant Director-Golf Course Management from The R&A, which to say the least, was very entertaining, and very educational especially as some of our members brought along their Secretaries, and Greens Chairman, and a Club Captain, I know they were very impressed with the talk

The Result of the Golf Competition is as follows: 1. Mark Evans, RN.D GC, 31pts; 2. Andy Parker, Ilfracombe GC, 28pts; 3. Steve Elliot, West Cornwall GC, 25pts.

Donovan O Hunt Administrator

South Wales

Hi everybody, I don't know about you lot but I've had just about enough rain to last me all summer long, but I expect by June we'll have a hosepipe ban! Dry patch, I could do with a dry patch right now so I can move my machines around, the grass is growing and its to wet to cut it, except for you lucky old links boy's.

A date for your diaries, the annual BIGGA Spring Seminar will be held on May 3 at the Royal Porthcawl GC in the Common room and the day will be sponsored by Farmura Environmental and STRI will be in attendance, details will be finalised and sent out to the members at a later date. This fixture is usually very well attended so please return your forms early to avoid disappointment. That's it for this month nobody has any news for me so I will go back to my very wet course, if you have anything you think we should now about ring me on: (07889792190) or email me at: henry@henrystead.wanadoo.co.uk. As I write this, the newscaster is telling us we could have a hose pipe ban in the summer good old Britain! Keep on smiling.

Henry Stead