



News from the Chief Executive

Harrogate Week 2007 – a week to remember for all the right reasons. There is no doubt that this event has grown to be the major turf management Conference and Exhibition in Europe. The support by members was unprecedented while exhibitors extolled the virtues of being there with many rebooking for 2008 at the show. I was pleased to witness crowded halls and very busy education workshops and seminars, proving to those sceptics that predicted a poor attendance that there is a healthy demand for an annual event and that Harrogate is a viable venue.

Harrogate Week 2007 will produce a good profit, however, not good enough for this size of event to be acceptable for the long-term success of the Association without some sort of cut to overheads. Plans for Harrogate Week 2008 are already under way and the major machinery manufacturers have expressed a wish to exhibit in accordance with their marketing strategy. Just where they will be allocated space will need careful consideration and full consultation however exhibitors in 2007 have been assured priority booking until February 28.

FEGGA is playing a pivotal role in the development of greenkeeping across Europe, especially in the 'emerging' countries. BIGGA, once a founder member, withdrew its membership several years ago, mainly due to a difference of opinion between the two organisations. Times have moved on and differences have been resolved. Unification is the way forward and BIGGA has applied to rejoin following discussions with the executive of FEGGA. The application will be considered in February at FEGGA's AGM and Conference in Slovenia.

FEGGA, BIGGA and the GTC are in discussions regarding the introduction of Pan-European greenkeeping qualifications that will facilitate a better understanding of the skill levels of those wishing to work outside their native country and Ken Richardson, BIGGA's Education and Training Manager, will be able to give you more information.

10 years ago we were expressing concerns about increasing pressure relating to environmental issues. Today those issues have been developed into major political agendas and golf is very much in the forefront. There is no doubt that resources such as water and chemical treatments will come under more and more scrutiny and BIGGA is working with or represented on several focus groups in an attempt to manage change rather than be driven by it. Golf as a business is also changing and the boom period of the 1990's is now behind us all. Golfers expect to be able to play 365 days of the year on courses that are in their opinion perfect. In general there is keen competition between clubs for members and visitors to the point where more and more clubs are becoming heavily reliant upon casual green fees. Those that have so far escaped this treadmill are fortunate.

Like it or not we live in a climate where numbers count and the larger any organisation can become the more chance it has of having an effective voice both commercially and politically. To this end, as you may be aware, representatives of the BIGGA Board of Management recently met with representatives of the IOG and it has been agreed that the two organisations will look at the potential of a strategic merger for the benefit of their respective memberships. I am aware that this is a very emotive issue and there will be a diverse range of views. There will be transparency of operation and detailed consultation with the members at all stages. I would urge your patience and ask that you consider matters fully rather than adopting a 'knee jerk' reaction. Reservations by members of both the IOG and BIGGA will be addressed and it is the intention to be able to put a detailed proposal to members of both organisations in January 2008. The Board assures the membership that no binding agreement will be made without their approval. There is no doubt that a merger would bring new challenges, however, it will also bring new opportunities that will benefit both greenkeepers and groundsmen. I will be happy at any time to discuss the proposals with members who can either ring me at Headquarters or send me an email. During the course of 2007 my colleagues and I intend visiting many of the Section and Region events and I hope that members will take the opportunity to speak with us on this and any other matter. Your views are important and will help us develop the Association.

John Pemberton

SCOTTISH REGION

CENTRAL

First things first, I hope you all had a good Christmas and a Happy New Year.

It's the time of year when we all have our Christmas nights out, go for a meal and a drink and thank your staff for their support and commitment over the past season. This year we (The Scoonie Boys) met up with the Leven Links Lads for a games night, pool, darts, and bowls, Scoonie went down 2-1 – I think we were at a disadvantage as I have heard that the Leven lads have a pool table and darts board in there booth, true or not? Mind you there's always next year.

By the time you read this BTME will have come and gone - a great place to meet old friends, make new ones, eat good food, and have a few shandies. There is a great opportunity to learn something new from the excellent workshops and seminars on offer. Anyone that hasn't been to BTME should make a point of planning a trip down next year.

I'd like to extend a warm welcome to Alistair Tough, (Auchterarder GC), James Wilson, (St Andrews Links Trust) and Stuart Harley, (Royal Burgess), who all joined the Section recently. I look forward to meeting you at future events.

As for Section news the spring outing this year is at Panmure, a qualifying course for the 2007 open at Carnoustie, to be granted permission to play prior to the qualifying is a major coup for the Section. Many thanks to all involved in achieving this. This will be a superb test of golf for all and places will be on a first come first served basis, so please return forms as soon as you receive them. The Central Section looks forward to seeing you on the day.

Frank Newberry, who many of you may know already, presented the evening seminar, at Elmwood last month. 14 guys turned out to listen to Frank's enthusiastic presentation which kept everyone entertained, and the topic (The Influential Greenkeeper) was of great interest to us all.

Let's get involved, it's your Section

The Section are arranging various workshops in 2007 dates and time can be found on our website, If there are any subjects you think we haven't covered and would like to have, please get in touch and the committee will endeavour to arrange one. The website is growing all the time with good articles and interesting pictures, but we need your help, please send anything you would like added to the site i.e. pics, articles, any news you want to share with the Section, lets get involved it's your Section.

Well that's me, I better go dry off my wet clothes, this rain! When will it snow? (Just joking)

Bye for now

Derek Scott

Chairman

www.biggacentralsection.org.uk

EAST

I write this report with the festive season fast becoming a distant memory and Harrogate looming large before my eyes!

The weather, apart from a few days of sharp frost during Christmas, has been unseasonably mild with high winds and torrential rain falling during December and the early part of January - The exception to the rule being the Aberdeen area where less than 60mm of rain fell during December.

On Friday, March 2, Ratho Park GC, in conjunction with the Scottish Golf Environment Group, are holding an Open Forum to discuss climate change and environmental issues affecting golf clubs. The organisers are hoping for a good turnout from Greenkeepers and Groundsmen, as well as their own club members. The speakers on the night, which starts at 7.30pm, are as follows; Carolyn Headly – SGEG; Stuart Smith – Lothian Bat Group;