



News from the Chief Executive

The Chairman and I recently had the pleasure of attending the annual FEGGA conference, that this year was hosted by the Slovenian Greenkeepers Association.

The event was attended by over 70 delegates who represented 18 countries as well as some of the sponsors. The two day conference had a separate theme for each day, one day related to education and the other day dealt with environmental issues.

One of the topics covered was an explanation of the proposed Pan-European Greenkeeper Education Unit and its intended qualification system. BIGGA has been involved with the development of this concept along with the GTC, FEGGA and representation from Elmwood College. The working party has determined the Standards necessary to fulfil three categories of job: Manager, Supervisor and Greenkeeper. These will then be adopted by the Education Unit when it has been formally set up and a European Certificate will be awarded for achieving the required Standard. Individual countries will continue with their own education process but this can be matched up to the European Standard for award purposes. In essence the holding of a European Certificate should give a better appreciation of competency levels when greenkeepers look for employment outside of their native country. At present an NVQ/SVQ qualification may mean very little to an employer, in say Slovenia, however the holder of such a qualification can apply for a European Certificate using his/her N/SVQ as evidence of achievement. Depending on the standards in each country some additional units may need to be studied to match the appropriate European Standard. In time this should help raise and consolidate standards across Europe as well as bring about a better understanding of greenkeepers individual abilities.

Following the Conference FEGGA held its Annual General Meeting during which BIGGA was elected to membership. Some members will recall that BIGGA was one of the founder members of FEGGA in 1996 but decided to resign several years ago when the Board did not agree with the direction that FEGGA was taking. Time and events have moved on and if greenkeeping is to progress then more can be achieved if organisations work together. To this end the Board is delighted to have become a member once more and look forward to making a positive contribution.

My nomadic life took me to Anaheim, California where I attended the GCSAA's flagship event that has developed into the Golf Industry Show. This is run in partnership with the Golf Course Owners Association and the Club Managers Association of America. In talking with the staff of GCSAA and the Superintendents I quickly realised how similar problems are in our two countries it's just that the scale of operation is different. The Golf Industry Show is always an important international meeting place and British greenkeepers are always talked of with great respect. It disturbs me that there are those among us back home in the UK who almost seem to take pleasure in picking fault when we as an association have a lot to be proud of. Anaheim is eight hours behind the UK and so I was sat there working at 4.30 am, thinking it's mid-day, and very much looking forward to getting back to my own bed and enjoying a proper cup of tea!

John Pemberton

SCOTTISH REGION

AYRSHIRE

Hello everyone, hope your courses are starting to dry out and didn't suffer too much during that wild spell of weather we had. I've just a few bits of news to relay so here goes!

Lochgreen (Troon) will host our Spring Outing on Thursday, April 26 with tee times starting from about lunchtime.

Tuesday, September 25, sees us set sail for the Isle of Arran to contest our Autumn Meeting at Shiskine GC. We should be leaving the mainland around 10am, more details will follow nearer the time. Hopefully we can continue with good turn-outs this year. I for one will be aiming to get my name on the Harry Diamond Trophy this year!

Some plaudits are in order for a couple of Ayrshire lads, firstly to Iain Barr for his photography skills in obtaining 3rd place in the BIGGA photographic competition. Is there no limit to this guy's knowledge? Secondly to Barry Crawford for securing a place on the Bernhard's trip to Anaheim, California. Hope you had as great a time as I did a couple of years ago. Well done!

The Section would like to send best wishes and hopes for a speedy recovery to Jim Paton after his recent illness.

Any news or constructive criticism gladly accepted at: denis.t@hotmail.co.uk or: 07939 104701

Denis Tweddell

CENTRAL

Most of you will know our Associate committee member, Jim Finlayson, who travels the country far and wide providing us all with an array of services. Unfortunately Jim is quite ill at the moment. Jim is a stalwart supporter of the Section and I know you will all join me in wishing him the very best. Get well soon Jim.

You will have received your application forms for the Spring Outing by now, and also the newsletter produced for the Section. It would be advisable to send applications as early as possible as demand for this venue is likely to be high. Panmure is a qualifying venue for this year's Open at Carnoustie and the opportunity to play this fantastic course should not be missed.

Recent new members to the Section are Gordon Mitchell, of Greenmaster, and John Thomson, from Lochore Meadows. Welcome to you both. I hope you are able to attend our events, and your contribution to the Section will be appreciated. If we can be of any assistance to you, let us know.

You will notice that we are still actively arranging as many educational events as we can. Full details can be found on the Section website. (See below)

Seminar: March 1, 2.30pm to 7pm, Pilmour house, St Andrews Links. Topic: Disturbance Theory & the Thrill of Real Golf Presented by Richard Windows and Henry Bechelet, STRI Agronomists.

Workshop: March 22, 1 day course, Elmwood Golf Course. Topic: Using Water Wisely, Every Drop Counts. Presented by Adrian Mortram B.Sc (hons) Irrigation Consultant and Director of Robin Hume Associates.

Seminar: March 28, 3pm (location to be decided). Topic: Rules Relevant to Course Set-Up presentation by Grant Moir, R and A rules official. One hour presentation, One hour networking!

Seminar: April 12 and 13, Elmwood GC. Topic: Leadership and Management Skills Workshop, presented by Frank Newberry.

There are other presentations in the pipeline. Please contact us with your feedback if there are any areas you would like us to investigate for you. Any other comments on how you would like the Section to operate will be most welcome and discussed by the committee.

Many of you will be hiring seasonal staff soon. Some of them will have come through college, or are just leaving school, some even possibly