



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

changing career. I hope you will all give them the opportunity to sample what a great occupation we have. Please encourage them to join the Section, where they can gain access to a great network of colleagues to help them progress in their career. Summer's on its way (I hope) and I for one, can't wait. Will we get the drought of last year? Who can tell, but the challenge of presenting your course the best you can, regardless, is one I still relish, and on behalf of the committee I wish you all the best for this season.

Andrew Mellon www.biggacentralsection.org.uk

EAST

As I write this report in early February, winter has finally struck with several nights of consecutive hard frost being enjoyed by those awaiting the chance of commencing construction works. If you are feeling hard done by, by all the wet weather, a look at the following rainfall figures for Scotland as a whole will make you think again:

December rainfall: Loch Lomond - 380mm; Gleneagles - 240mm; West Linton - 138mm; St. Andrews - 29mm.

I have been advised by Stevie Dixon that the Spring Outing to The Glen GC, North Berwick is on Tuesday, April 17. Entry forms will be with you shortly and the committee are hoping for a good turn out from members of the Section. I am sure Iain Kinley and his staff will have the course in pristine condition by that date.

The BIGGA Conference and show in Harrogate has come and gone, and although numbers were slightly down from last year, I for one felt that with one less hall, there was a greater throughput of visitors to the various stands.

Finally during Harrogate week Cecil George (West) celebrated his 80th birthday in style ably assisted by three East members, Jimmy Neilson, Stuart Greenwood and Graeme Wood.

Mike Dooner

NORTH

How's it going folks, how are we coping with the winter so far? The weather has been reasonable so far but who knows what will come this month. There is very little happening anywhere in the Section at the moment, so if you have any news or stories to tell give me a shout.

There are two new members to the Section this month, Brian Williams, who is Deputy Head at Inverurie GC, and Bryan Littlejohn, who is Deputy Head at Portlethen GC. Welcome to the North Section lads.

Scotts have very kindly agreed to sponsor the 200 club again this year, so our thanks go out to them and also Gary Smith in particular for their continued support.

The Scottish Conference will again be held at Lauder in early March and there is a good cross section of speakers on the day. Well done to Peter Boyd for the organisation on the day.

It will soon be time to dust down the golf clubs again and start playing. Hopefully there won't be too much rust on the hinges before the counting medals start.

Have any clubs in the Section got any major events this year that are worth a mention? I know Dornoch has the Scottish Stoke Play Championships in June, so good luck to Eoin and his staff with that one and I'm sure the course will be immaculate as always.

Not much more from me I'm afraid, just to remind you all to buy your 200 club tickets so that we can boost the funds for the Section. I would imagine by now the SPL trophy will be tucked up under Gordon's bed with a space beside it for the Scottish Cup.

Robert N Patterson

Royal Aberdeen GC

WEST

Well that's Harrogate over for another year and I must admit this year was a great show. I attended most of the seminars which were of a very high standard, the show seemed to be very well run with lots of members and guests in attendance.

Congratulations to everyone at head office for their hard work making the show

such a great success, Long may it continue.

It was good to see Cecil George and Jimmy Neilson down, they seemed to enjoy themselves as I met them in the bar on a few occasions.

I travelled down with Bryce Houston, John Barr and my Apprentice, Alan McVey, Many thanks for your company and for behaving yourself. We had a great few days meeting up with some old friends and making some new ones.

On a personal note, I would like to thank the Section on behalf of myself and Steven Sheehan as we attended the show as part of our Patrons' Award. Also many thanks to all our Patrons for their continued support.

Peter Boyd once again put together a great package for the Scottish Region and everyone who attended had a very enjoyable time, it's much appreciated Peter - the hard work you put in on behalf of the Scottish Region.

On a sad note I report the passing of Raymond Day. Raymond served his Apprenticeship at Erskine GC and later became Course Manager at Gleddoch GC. Over the past years he had also worked south of the border.

The Section would like to pass on their condolences to Raymond's family and close friends at this sad time.

Alec Donachy has left Erskine GC after seven years service, we would like to wish you all the best with your future employment.

Notes from Section meeting - We are looking into holding some half day health and safety courses with subjects ranging from manual handling to fire safety, Stuart Taylor, our education convenor, is trying to arrange these courses over the next couple of months. Members will be notified of any progress.

Football season - Brian Hillan has offered to organise this year's football calendar. Brian, being a past player, will do his best to take our team on to great heights. There will be trials for team selection during March, anyone interested please get in touch.

You can contact Brian at: brian@hillen69fsnet.co.uk

Annual Dinner - We are open to suggestions for this year's annual dinner, one being the comedy club in Glasgow, we hope to have something arranged as soon as possible.

The fixture diary for the year ahead is being drawn up at present and once again is being sponsored by Aitkin's, many thanks to Richard for his continued support.

Dates for the trip to the Carrick GC at Loch Lomond are either March 19 or 26, members will be notified when dates are confirmed.

We have still to confirm the Spring Outing, we hope to have a course in place over the next couple of weeks.

It's good to see some decent weather for a change hopefully this is a sign of things to come and allow for a better start to the season.

That's all for now, more news next month

Fraser Ross 07970 366 355 karen.ross@tesco.net

NORTHERN REGION

NORTH EAST

Well it was that time again at Harrogate in January, it was good to see many greenkeepers from our Section there, especially the lads from South Shields GC (Glen Baxter, Wayne Reid) attending the workshops on Sunday and Monday as were James Storey and his Deputy Colin Pearce, both from Alnmouth GC, It's a pity it's always the same ones attending.

I would like also to thank the greenkeepers from Stocksfield GC and Ravensworth GC for looking after me on Tuesday night - the entertainment was first class - it's a pity that Roy and Andrew are leaving the profession but I still expect them to go to the show next year.

Another person I bumped into at the show was David Cuthbertson, from Slaley Hall GC, and he tells me that they are looking for qualified and unqualified greenkeepers, so if anyone wants a job up there give him a ring regardless of when you read this - whether it's in the March or April issue.

More recent news heard was that Stocksfield GC have appointed the Deputy Greenkeeper from Consett to take over from Roy White, we wish him well.

Craig Parkinson, Course Manager at Matfen Hall GC, has recently been promoted to Director of Golf, therefore Derek Miller (Course Mechanic) has been appointed as Head Greenkeeper - good luck to the both of you. Other congratulations go also to young Stuart Armstrong on passing his level 2 and Michael Harrison and David Thompson on almost completing level 3 - they also have a new greenkeeper, he is Nick Armstrong. Having moved from Ponteland GC, Nick had worked at Matfen last summer.

Jimmy Richardson

NORTH WEST

Quite a lot of news this month. I hope everyone who attended Harrogate was pleased this year; it was noticeable that there was not the usual amount of big trade there, but I don't think it affected my enjoyment in any way, I just spent my £100,000 with somebody else.

A few movers this month. Bolton Old have appointed Steve Hemsley as their Head Greenkeeper - he was formally the Deputy at Reddish Vale GC. A lot of you will know Tom Wilkinson who was at Mottram Hall GC, well he is now in charge at Shrigley Hall GC in Macclesfield - good luck to both of you and indeed to anyone who has taken up a new position recently.

A lot of you will know about Stuart Bridge having a terrible accident recently, I hear he is recovering slowly but surely and we wish him well.

Bert Cross, our Section Secretary, is out of action at the moment and has been for a while after breaking his ankle, again he is making slow but steady progress and we all wish him a speedy recovery. On Friday, March 9 at 9.15am, we will be holding a Joint Seminar at Wilmslow GC, this has been organised by the North West and the North Wales Sections, and thanks go out to Stuart Varwood, Jeremy Hughes and Steve Oultram for finding the time and having the patience to organise this event for us all. The subject for the seminar is

Sustainable Golf which judging by the BIGGA website was the hottest subject at Harrogate. As I said before it will start at 9.15am and include, at 9.45am - Pathway to Sustainability by Steve Oultram; 10.15am to 11am - Natural Greenkeeping and Disturbance Theory by Alister Beggs; 11am to 11.45am - Legislation and Sustainability - it affects us all by John Albutt; 11.45am until noon - The Gingerbreadmen - you are not alone by Stuart Yarwood. After lunch, 1.15pm to 2pm - Ecology Management by Bob Taylor; 2pm to 2.45pm - Achieving Sustainability by Steve Isaac, then question and answer time and close. The cost will be: BIGGA members - £20 and all non-members £25. As you can see this is going to be a very popular seminar and places are limited, so if you have not already booked, please do so as quickly as possible.

I have just received some of the golf venues for this year and they are as follows, North West versus North Wales at Sutton Hall GC on Wednesday, May 28, 1.30pm tee - we require a team for this match. Spring tournament at Prestbury GC, April 19, we are restricted to 38 maximum so please enter early. Summer tournament at Denton GC, Thursday, June 14. The Whitelaw Bowl at Penrith GC - Friday, September 14. The Stewards Match - T.B.A. Autumn tournament T.B.A. and lastly the Presidents Cup and AGM at Wilmslow GC on Thursday, December 6 - please bring a bottle to the value of £5, so everyone goes home with a prize.

If you have any news, please contact Bert Cross on: 0151 7245412 or myself on: 0151 2894625 my email is: jsheehan@blueyonder.co.uk

Chris Sheehan



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MIDLAND REGION

MIDLAND

Well I must admit that one is overwhelmed by the response to the Thought of The Month feature, and the amount of emails received via our very convenient source as provided by your Committee, me, and of course you the members. Don't you dare ever state that the Committee has not tried or is not serving you. To date I haven't received any emails from the Members, only from our many trade friends wishing to support our Section. My personal thanks to those that have. Please remember that my email address and mobile phone number is listed on each month's calendar page.

The Sponsor's of this month's calendar page are Complete Weed Control/ Richard Minton. Our greatest of thanks to them for their continued support of the Midland Section. Also please remember that many of these sponsors also fund prize tables, education seminars, refreshments, and of course our long standing Mr. Starter, John Hammond. Please support our very varied array of events, without such they are of no use to our sponsors, and indeed the kind efforts of your Committee.

It is with the greatest of sadness that I must inform you of the passing of Mr. Trevor Blake, who worked at Broadway GC and in his latter years at the hotel there. I was fortunate enough to have met him twice. He was a gentleman and true caricature, whose legacy is unquestionable via his fine sons within the greenkeeping field. Our sincerest of condolences to his family and friends. Rest well Sir.

Well I never thought that the following would come to pass. Steve" sexy boy" Harris (H.G.C.) has gone down on one knee and proposed to Rachael. She has foolishly agreed. Congratulations to you both.

It gives me great pleasure to welcome seven new members to our Section: A.Wood, I. Lloyd, M. Love, C. Roberts, M. Turner, G. Chilton, and K. Macnab. Finally, our Spring Tournament is to be held at Ludlow GC on May 9. You will have received a fixture list and entry forms by the time you read this. I hope to see you at our many events throughout this year.

Sean McDade

EAST OF ENGLAND

Happy new year one and all, it's been a couple of months since my last report so if you do have any news or views, give me a call, otherwise I will have to write about Scottish rugby. I know that won't take up much space, but at least the tries we score are tries!

I will start with Harrogate. What a week, the show was just as busy as ever, if not busier. I did not have time to miss the big three! And as for the education side, first class well done to all concerned. Congratulations to Dave Walden for being awarded his Life Membership - thoroughly deserved. Dave has been involved with EIGGA and BIGGA since God was a boy, serving on committee at every level as well as being education officer, best wishes on your retirement mate.

The final seminar of the winter programme will be held at Belton Park on Wednesday, March 14 in conjunction with BLBC and Bernhards, should be an enjoyable day.

Finally good luck and best wishes to Nigel, from Elsham, who has taken the Course Manager's position at John O Gaunt, Also a little bird tells me we have another Scotsman coming into the Section, an old college buddy of mine - Angus MacLeod, who has taken the Course Manager's position at Bolton Woods. Good luck and welcome to the Section mate.

P.S. I believe they are filming the sequel to Blazing Saddles at Grimsby, Telegram for Mongo. Sorry Gareth couldn't let that one go.

Allan Walker 07974816927

SOUTH EAST

SURREY

Saturday, January 3. I'm sitting in my understairs cupboard/study/office, waiting for my computer to connect to, what or who these things connect to, in order to read my emails. I'm not on that broad thing, I'm on dial up so I'll just have to wait a little longer for the wonders of modern science to be at my fingertips.

Three hours later, I have tried again and I'm in, if that's the correct expression. My first email is a report from my official outside Sports Reporter and Midfielder Adam Watts, regarding those Titans of the turf, Surrey and Sussex, and their second clash in 2006. Earlier in the year Surrey had beaten Sussex easily by five goals to nil but word had it that Sussex, with some new young blood in their team, were looking forward to getting their revenge. Even that old rep chap from Worthing had been dropped to reduce the need for medics and stretcher-bearers, much to the regret of Dave Langheim and Billy Martin. John Ross, it's impossible not to mention his name although I do try, was once again the target of some very unfair abuse but with his natural determination this pre match banter did not stop him from donning his usual black number and running onto the pitch sporting a new whistle and showing no panty line.

The following is Adam Watts, unexpurgated report.

It was on a foggy night that Surrey and Sussex battled out a 3-3 draw at Colliers Wood football ground. Surrey, showing stunning skill, soon had two goals but Sussex with only a few minutes to half time managed to get one back. Moments after half time Sussex scored again and with a 2-2 score line both teams battled to take the lead. 10 minutes from time Sussex, after some dazzling football, scored their third goal. Surrey then showing grit and determination straight from the restart had Dave (Dangerous) Langheim go on a mazy run and the shot which rebounded off the bar was bundled in. Sam Bethall from Cuddington GC scored twice. Both teams now look forward to the third encounter.

The Programme of events for Surrey have been finalised and are as follows: Friday, March 9, Walton Heath GC - Gentleman's Dinner; Thursday, March 29, Dukes Dean GC - Texas Scramble; Thursday, May 17, Gatton Manor GC - National Qualifier and Spring Tournament; Tuesday, July 3, Cuddington GC - Cresta Cup; Monday, July 30, Sunningdale GC - McMillan Tankard; Monday, August 20, Tandridge GC - Autumn Tournament; Wednesday, November 7, Hankley Common GC - England vs Scotland; Wednesday, November 28, The Berkshire GC - Match vs Secretaries; Thursday, December 13, Tyrrells Wood GC - Turkey Trot and AGM.

Details of the above will be sent to all members shortly and any suggestions or comments members wish to make, please write on the back of a 50 pound note and send direct to me and I will personally guarantee it will be used in a charitable way next year at Harrogate.

Best wishes go to Mark Openshaw and his move from Sunningdale GC to North Hants and also to Billy McMillan in his addition role as Chairman of BIGGA for the coming year.

Brian Willmott

KENT

Firstly, on behalf of everyone in our Section, may I pass on our deepest condolences to the family and friends of Ray Day, a long time active member in our region who sadly passed away recently. Ray was a great ambassador for our profession, he will be sorely missed by all who had the fortune to know him. My usual, light-hearted, column would not be appropriate at this time so I shall merely inform you that our first golf event is on March 28, at Kings Hill GC. We shall be meeting for a full English breakfast at 10.30am followed by 18 holes of golf and an informal buffet afterwards. Entry forms will soon be downloadable from our website but if you have any trouble getting one or if you just want to ensure your place early, then please contact any of your committee members directly. Spaces are limited to 40.

The new website will be re-launched very shortly at the old address of: kentgreenkeepers.co.uk so keep an eye out for all the latest news and events there.

Rob Holland

ESSEX

Another (BTME) Harrogate Week is under our belts and although smaller than in previous years, it was still worth the trip. A few stalwarts from Essex made the trip, John Sinclair, Thorp Hall; Don Clark, Orsett; Doug Fernie, Upminster; Adrian Cornell and Jon Goodman, Stock Brook Country Club; Ray Goodsall, Saffron Walden; Tom Smith and Paul O'Kane, Colne Valley; Ben Scrivener, Benton Hall, plus various members of staff from courses around the area. Sorry if I have missed anyone.

Other news is that Steve Crosdale has returned to the greenkeeping ranks having worked with Headland for the past few years, has decided to come back into the fold so to speak. He has joined Lords Golf Group as Course Manager overseeing what were Hanover and Notley GCs.

Steve Denton, Rigby Taylor, has taken on the new roll of Grass Seed Development Manager for the company, plus retaining some of his original golf accounts.

Mark Keysell has joined the Rigby Taylor and looks after accounts in the Essex and Suffolk areas.

On the education front, Paul O'Kane has informed me that he is in the process of arranging some courses for our section in the following fields: First Aid, Spraying, and Chain Saw. Anyone who needs training should contact Paul. Watch this space for more information in future issues of this magazine.

As promised, his season's fixtures are as follows: Spring Tournament, Wednesday, May 2, Gosfield Lake. Summer Medal, Wednesday, June 27, Theydon Bois. Autumn Tournament, Wednesday, August 15, Colchester GC. Winter Tournament, Thursday, September 27, North Weald. Christmas Texas Scramble and AGM, Tuesday, November 27, Orsett. Please remember to let Antony Kerwan have your entry in good time, as there are no entries on the day. Anyone who has any news for inclusion in the Around the Green section can email me at: highwoods.photographic@virgin.net or call me on: 01206 852353 Arnold Phipps-Jones

SUSSEX

Hello again, I must start with the sad news of the passing of Ray Day, who died on Sunday, January 21. Ray is well known in the greenkeeping industry, turning out for most Sussex golf events and doing a lot of good work behind the scenes for BIGGA. Ray's funeral was on January 26 and over 170 friends turned up. Everyone went back to East Sussex National where Ray was Course Manager.

At a recent AGM, Ray turned up and was always looking to the future for our Section, even though he knew his time was limited. This shows the kind of man he was, never selfless and always there to help if you ever needed it. Our thoughts are with his wife Gill and their family. Ray will be missed but never forgotten.

There are a few dates for golf this year so far: May 24 - Ham Manor; early July - Copthorne; August - Surrey v Sussex; September 13 - Cooden Beach

I hope to see you at some of the golf days this year.

If you need to contact please call me on mob: 07776223234 or email me on: robert.hudson77@btinternet.com

Rob Hudson



SOUTH WEST

Congratulations to everyone in the Southwest for supporting Harrogate Week 2007. Many thanks to Jane, Chris, and the Regional Board for organising the sponsored trip, and ensuring we were really well represented. I should

mention our Patronage Partners, whose support makes it possible to sponsor some of the costs. The week seems to grow in stature every year, despite some notable absentees on the exhibition floor, and the 2007 event was a shining example of what this association can achieve. Thanks to all the exhibitors, speakers, and staff. No stories of riotous partying – well almost no riotous partying (you know who you are) but the less said about that the better. I thought Frank Newberry's opening address hit all the right notes, even more so as Frank was brought in at relatively short notice. I did try out some of his recommendations on personal presentation in the exhibition afterwards. Always be positive, always ask leading questions, always establish eye contact etc. Eventually, people were asking, "Are you alright?"

Straight after returning, my wife and I whisked off to Paris on the Eurostar for a very nice, if rather expensive, weekend birthday celebrations. One of the big attractions was of course the Eiffel Tower, and I made a dramatic discovery on the top floor – I still can't stand heights. Hazel has a great photo of yours truly, white-faced, clinging on for dear life to the topmost railing. The first stage – straight up no probs, the second stage – bit high but nice view – the lift to the third stage, just a sheet of Perspex and a couple of flimsy looking girders between me and oblivion. My knees went, I had to take a firm grip, and not show panic in front of a load of bored looking kids (who'd obviously been torn away from their Playstations). It took a good couple of hours and several pints of lager to get over it. Interestingly, construction of the Tower was completed in the same year (1889) that our Old Course opened. Gustav Eiffel won a competition to design it for the World Trade Fair in 1889, and only had a 20 year commission (after which it was to be dismantled). In the event it was so hugely successful – during the first two weeks of the Trade Fair, 28922 persons climbed to the first and second levels and after the lifts opened a total of 1.9 million visited in the 173 days of the Fair, and a further 70 year concession was granted.

Back at Minch, Abbots are now about two-thirds of the way through the irrigation installation on our second course – I'm crossing the days off until they've finished. Not content with making life difficult outside, they've recently started on my office so there's no place to hide. The new lake is filling nicely but took 47 and-a-half pallets of turf to turf the banks. The lads are still speaking to me, but only just. I might just take this opportunity to pay a tribute to their effort and commitment – we have in fact laid 130 pallets of turf on the Avening Course this winter in all weathers, with the lads developing a new list of extreme sports activities - ice turfing, bog turfing, even hurricane wind-assisted turfing. Sorry guys. I might also mention our suppliers Teal Turf from near Worcester – in all the 130 odd pallets, and despite the worst of weather, Teal have never been late, never missed a delivery, and the turf has been in tip top condition throughout - I've yet to see a single weed. Let me know how your winter's going - has anyone else completed a winter programme, or spring renovation. Lets have some news. In the meantime, the Spring Tournament at Cotswold Hills in April is the next event, and I know Course Manager, Wayne Vincent is looking forward to showing off his course. Please support your committee by attending. Finally, I had the very great honour of speaking at a meeting of Minchinhampton Committee of Commoners and graziers the other night. The purpose was to inform them about a management plan for the Old Course that we are developing with Bob Taylor at the STRI. The venue was the Vestry Rooms in Minchinhampton, which are attached to the church. "Just go into the churchyard, you can't miss it" I was told. In the event, Sarah Allcock and I stumbled around a pitch-dark freezing cold churchyard for what seemed like ages before making out a chink of light coming from under a distant door. "Thank God for that" we thought, only to go blundering in and inadvertently crash a meeting of the Church Council. There was a stony silence, and we had to be escorted out by the vicar – fortunately he was very good about it. The Vestry Rooms turned out to be up a steep flight of stone steps set in the side of the church – no safety rail, and no light either come to that. The rooms were quite fascinating - oak panelled with the original Parish Charter inlaid in gold leaf all around. Happily the introduction to the Management Plan went pretty well, and I've been invited back to expand at the next meeting, (presumably when they've thought of some really tricky questions). My next talk is at Box Gardening Club in late March. Box is a

pretty little village on the edge of Minchinhampton Common, and I'm particularly looking forward to question time there – because my wife would like to know why ours is the only forsythia in the street with twisted brown sticks rather than a cascade of golden flowers, and could it be something to do with my husband pruning it with a strimmer every year? They'd better mind their own business on that one.

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

SOUTH COAST

Hello everybody, I hope that all is well and winter work and programmes are all up to date and on target. At this time of year we all often start to dream of the spring days (hopefully) around the corner.

The South Coast Seminar will take place at Canford Magna GC on Wednesday, March 14. By now you should have all been informed of this event. If you have not yet booked please contact Chris Bitten on: 0779 688 7633 or email him on: chrisbitten@btinternet.com. The cost to attend for BIGGA members is £17.50 and £20 for non-members. Please make your cheques payable to BIGGA South Coast.

The format for the day is as follows: Coffee and Registration at 9.15am onwards. 10am until 11am Marcus White from Irriplan will talk to us on the subject of making the most of your irrigation water in relation to good storage, effective use and licensing in regard to water abstraction. From 11am until 11.30am Jim Whatley from the Environment Agency will be speaking. 11.30am to 11.50am will be a break. From 11.50am until 12.30pm we welcome Andy Cole, Agronomist from the company PSD, and he will present on the subject of Soil Water and its effects within the root zone. All of these above speakers and subjects link to the important theme of managing fine turf in a changing climate, with water becoming a rare and costly resource. Lunch is from 12.30pm and we will resume at 1.30pm with Peter Craig, from the Hurlingham Club speaking about the very many different sports surfaces and managing a successful team. Peter is a member of the IOG and also of BIGGA Surrey Section, and will briefly talk about the importance of both organisations and the necessity of them working together. At 2.15pm we welcome Eddie Seaward, from the All England Tennis Club, who will tell us about the all year round maintenance of the lawn tennis courts and of course the build up to the all important Wimbledon fortnight. The day will finish with an open forum and questions to all of the speakers. Close of play at 3.30pm. A huge thank you to our sponsors for the day, who are Tower Chemicals, Banks and Vitax.

Chris Bitten will soon be sending out the fixture cards for this year if you've not already had them. We would like to thank Tacit for the sponsorship of these cards. The first date for your diary in regard to golf will be the Spring Tournament held at Romsey GC on May 3. Chris Sturgess will contact you soon with details.

Joe Crawley 07721 389200

DEVON AND CORNWALL

It is imperative that I start this month's report on behalf of our Section with three big thank you's. Firstly to Martin Ward, of Symbio, for sponsoring the coach to enable 17 members to visit Harrogate this past January, and secondly to our Chairman, Steve Evans, for driving the coach there and back in one piece - it just goes to prove that miracles do occur on the odd occasion.

Last but not least to everyone at BIGGA for making the Exhibition such a success, long may it continue.

Our Past Chairman, Richard Whyman, in one of his articles in the magazine asked all members to march with their feet to support the show, well with some 45 delegates from the South West, and Devon and Cornwall Sections I would like to think we all carried out his wishes, well done to all members who made the effort.

Our first meeting of the new year was held at The Carlyon Bay GC on Thursday, January 18, in Cornwall and it has to be said that I have never seen such strong gale force winds for a very long time, and as the course is on the

coast it was a miracle that members were able to play, it was so bad that golf bags were being blown over not to mention the golf pins that were virtually bent double, I asked the Professional what he thought would be a good score, and he replied that he thought it would be very difficult to reach 30pts, the winners score was 34pts, needless to say his handicap will be cut by one shot.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Brian Summers, the Course Manager at the club, and his staff for preparing the course in such excellent condition in spite of the heavy rain fall the day before, the greens were dry and firm, and a big thank you to all the staff who made us so welcome.

The guest speaker in the afternoon was Colin Wheatcroft, the Head Groundsman from Plymouth Argyle, who entertained us with a very amusing talk on pitch maintenance, and the various managers that he had worked with in his career.

Finally, a huge thank you to David Singleton, the Area Manager of Barenbrug, for sponsoring the day.

Results of the Barenbrug Competition as follows: 1. Chris Ralph, Hele Park GC 34pts; 2. Chris Pearson, Newquay GC, 30pts; 3. Gordon Tamlyn, Mullion GC, 29pts.

I will look forward to seeing you all at Trethonte GC on March 7 for the Workshop, the day will consist of Drainage and Construction, Health and Safety, and Environmental Issue.

Donovan O Hunt

SOUTH WALES

Hi everybody, it's your Prez speaking (Henry Stead), yes, Angus MacLeod has left us for bigger things. He has taken up the post of Course Manager at the Belton Wood Golf complex, nr. Grantham in Lincoln - a big challenge but we know he can make a big impact up there as he did here, good luck Angus you will be greatly missed, keep in touch.

It's with much regret that I write the next two sad reports. On Sunday, January 28, a great friend of mine Mr Colin Murphy passed away. I am sure I speak for everybody in the turf industry in England and Wales, who knew Colin, who wish to send our deepest sympathy to his widow, Rosemary, and the rest of his family. I have known Colin for 30 years and always found him helpful and friendly, always ready for a laugh and joke. He had been involved with BIGGA since the early days when it was BGGG and always seemed to hold some official position, he held the post of President of the Association for many years and later became our Section President. At golf days Colin could always be seen sitting at a table, writing or checking scorecards, or taking money, he never played golf, but he never missed many meetings up until last summer when his health was poor. Colin will be greatly missed.

News from Wenvoe GC of the death of Jim Bond, he passed away on Christmas Day. He was Head Greenkeeper at the club from 1970 until 1985 that's all I know at present. Ty Laurence and the rest of the staff at the club, and all the Welsh Section members send our deepest sympathy to his family.

The first of the winter educational seminars organised by our IOG colleges was held at Pencoed College on Wednesday, January 17. It was very well attended and those off you who did not make it missed a very good talk. The presentation was by Neil Baldwin and Garry Adkins of Amiga Science, and it concerned stress in turf, dry patch, fairy ring and drought related problems from which most of us suffer at some time or other.

Congratulations to Cerri Richards and his partner Donna on their forthcoming wedding which takes place on April 28, son Taylor and baby daughter Scarlett will be in attendance, we wish you all the very best for a long and happy life together.

On a last note, our old mate Julian B Jones is breaking into ACTING, he will be appearing in BBC Wales Belonging, he will be standing by the bar drinking Strongbow and eyeing up the birds, (nothing changes then Jinks!). I have no information on when it will be broadcast.

If you have any news or views, then please send them to me at (henry@henrystead.wannadoo.co.uk)

Henry Stead