



## The European Family of Greenkeepers



I have just returned home from Slovenia, where I was representing you all, along with John Pemberton, at the FEGGA conference. Your Board have decided to re-join our association once again into the European family of Greenkeepers. I was overwhelmed by the welcome we both received from our friends in Europe and it was evident we had been, I believe, missed by them over the past number of years.

Topics that were up for debate were the environment and, of course, our impact on its well being. I am always amazed to hear what it is that we do wrong at these events and sometimes I want to jump up and beat my chest and shout from the hill tops "WE'RE NOT THAT BAD". You know what, we're not perfect, and yes we do require some help in terms of chemical control from time to time, but let's stop beating ourselves up here. Nature actually flourishes in abundance on the golf course because we're a golf course and not, as commonly suggested, by chance.

Another thing you might like to consider is this. If we don't, in fact, get our act together we will be told just what to do by politicians, and those without a fraction of our passion for the well being of our natural habitat, unless we can convince them all that, in fact, we are all good custodians of the land used for golf for now and into the future.

Now that's off my chest what else is going on in the life of your Chairman. Well, I am, I'm sure, just like you all trying to wind up all those winter renovation works and get prepared for the spring. A few years' ago at Tyrrells Wood we agreed with the club and members some dates, within the very busy golfing calendar, for some course maintenance days. Now these were intended not to close the course for play but change the bias from play to maintenance and allow these necessary works to be carried out without the burden of golf getting in the way of the operation. So we have agreed for three days in the spring, autumn and winter totalling nine days when we have priority over the golf of the day. It has been a revolution for us and if we are working on a green complex or any part of the course the golfers play to that point pick their ball up and move onto the next hole. It's been a win win for us all they can

still play and we can uninterrupted carry out the required course maintenance programmes quickly and efficiently.

I have become an avid reader of our bulletin board on the website and am always pleased to see the members' comments held within its pages. The subject matter is varied and certainly topical at all times and I would recommend to anyone, who has a particular problem or point of view, to have a look and see what goes on. I would like to suggest that we all have a positive input and refrain from what can only be described as tittle-tattle with no real substance or intention for the betterment of your Association. We live in an electronic age and I look forward to seeing your input over the coming months.

I was asked what my intentions were for my year in office and I think the young man was expecting great pearls of wisdom and foresight that would bring immediate change to the life of us all as Greenkeepers. If that were true we could be lumped into that old golf club doctrine of a year in office and feel compelled to leave a lasting monument of our time in office. So, I replied by saying this! I see my year of continuing the good works of my predecessors and continue the philosophy of building bridges that will stand the test of time. Key people doing key things is the way forward, no one person can, on their own, do it all. God, I used to be that arrogant that I never needed the help of anyone and then I grew up and realised I'm not so able or clever that I can do it all on my own. So I will try my best to put the right people together and I'm sure that together they will progress our Association to greater heights than ever before.

We live in a world of amalgamation and fusion of minds recourses and efforts for the common good of everyone involved and it's very true that

there is strength in numbers. So it's with that in mind that we have entered into discussions with our friends at the IOG to explore the possibilities of common ground for both bodies to flourish into the ever-changing future. This is no light undertaking on anyone's part and who knows where it will lead, but this I do know, it's just another positive development for our industry that two such organisations have the courage and wisdom to at least explore the future.

Your Board will need your input to make any informed recommendation that would be brought to you all to have your say on, so please become engaged into the process by saying what you think. I urge you all to discuss locally and keep the communication flow coming to Region and, of course, then your Board will be an informed one that can take on (sorry about the pun) board your views.

So, in closing, I wish you all a warm slightly wet spring sprinkled with a dash of good luck and, of course, we all have the Masters to look forward to don't we?

Billy McMillan  
Chairman