



## News from the Chief Executive

I think it's fair to say Harrogate Week 2008 has set a new benchmark for the event. The number of visitors was a record and in these troubled times the event provided the lift to everyone's spirits that was desperately needed. Thank you to all those who supported the show, either as a visitor or as an exhibitor, and the only question that remains to be answered is 'How do we do better next year?'.

If there were any doubts about Harrogate being a suitable venue then those doubts were dispelled as turf professionals from around the world came together to share their experiences, take part in education or visit the largest indoor exhibition of its kind in Europe. Despite the success of 2008 some of the major manufacturers will keep to their earlier strategy and will not be rebooking a stand for 2009. This is of course disappointing, it's a decision that affects the 'feel' of the show and has a large detrimental effect on the finances of the Association. There is already a queue of exhibitors waiting to move or expand into the space they will leave and the real dilemma arises when we try to integrate them into the event for 2010. It is highly likely they will not be happy with what is on offer since, in line with tradition; existing exhibitors will be given priority. Planning now begins for next year and by the time you read this I will have posted on the BIGGA website an invitation for members to contribute their ideas.

At the AGM Cecil George put forward a well reasoned out case for the creation of a Golf Course Development Fund that received the support of the majority of members attending. Over the coming years efforts will be made to raise the funding to buy some land upon which can be built a golf course and clubhouse that could not only serve as the Association's headquarters but could also become a centre of greenkeeping excellence. Following the adoption of the proposal Cecil made the first donation and any members wishing to contribute should send their cheques to me made payable to 'BIGGA Golf Course Development Fund'. Donations can also be made by credit card by contacting a member of HQ staff. In due course the minutes of the meeting together with a copy of the Annual Accounts will be available on the website.

In general the golf market is coming under more and more pressure as golfers expect higher all year round standards. Some of this pressure is being passed onto the Course Manager/Head Greenkeeper and I will be looking at how greater support can be given to those finding themselves in this situation. It is apparent there is a management skills shortage and during the coming weeks Sami Collins, in consultation with David Golding of the GTC, will be looking at devising a series of short management training courses. The Education and Development Fund will continue with its policy of career development grants and I am pleased to confirm that Ransomes Jacobsen have agreed to renew their funding for grant aid to those members pursuing higher education. More details of these schemes can be obtained from either Sami or her assistant, Rachael Duffy.

Finally I would like to thank my fellow members of staff for their efforts before and during Harrogate Week. It is often overlooked that we carry out many of the tasks along side our regular jobs and in fact only two members of staff have the event as their main role.

**John Pemberton**



### SCOTTISH REGION – CENTRAL

Not much to report this month in the Central Section. The Committee is meeting with Elspeth Coutts, formerly of SGEG, around the time you will receive this magazine to see if there is any way we can utilise Elspeth's skills and knowledge to the advantage of any clubs in the area. So if there are any of you out there who feel they could benefit with some input into any environmental points then please contact either myself, Andy Mellon, or any other Committee member and we can perhaps put you in touch with Elspeth.

Best wishes to Richard Cutler and his family on his move from Montrose to Jersey where I am sure the weather will be much warmer. Another who may be on the move shortly is Gordon McKie, Head Greenkeeper on the Old Course at St Andrews as he considers many of the offers from Hollywood which have come his way since his appearance on the BBC Scotland documentary "Behind the Greens" about golf in St Andrews, which was shown on the BBC on St Andrews day. Although the programme as a whole got poor reviews, the greenkeeping aspect of it came across as very professional and many people have commented on how interesting that aspect was. Gordon came over extremely well and, along with his team, was a credit to the industry.

We are in the process of arranging a couple of educational evenings for late March/early April and as soon as anything is finalised we will be posting it on the website. [www.biggacentralsection.org.uk](http://www.biggacentralsection.org.uk) The Spring outing will be at Lundin Links GC on Thursday, April 24.

A newsletter will be sent out with the mailshot for the spring outing around the end of April which will have details of other education events for the year.

Finally, if anyone in the area would like a few thousand pitchmark repairers for their Club free of charge, then please contact me on 01334 466676.

*Gordon Moir*



### NORTH

Hope Harrogate went well for you all and it fulfilled your expectations. Certainly with Toro and John Deere there it swelled the numbers. It's a great social event too, many friendships have been struck up at Harrogate.

It is with regret that I have to report the death of Ian Marsh who was a greenkeeper at Fraserburgh GC. Ian worked there for 13 years and enjoyed his job greatly. It was a tragic accident and he leaves behind family and partners who will mourn his loss. John Geddes and Hugh McClatchie represented the north Section at his funeral and Peter Boyd attended on behalf of BIGGA.

Simon Donald who was an apprentice at Peterhead GC has left the job to