



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 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

Around the Green

work in the oil business. This is another example of good greenkeepers leaving the trade to earn more money elsewhere. I think in years to come this is going to be a major problem in the profession because these young guys are the future Head Greenkeepers but there may be shortage if the current trend doesn't change.

There's not much else happening in the Section at the moment, except it's bloody cold.

If you have any stories or news let me know on grassman351@aol.com.

Robert Patterson



WEST

Well a warm welcome to the New Year, I hope all members enjoyed their time over the festive period.

As I sit and write this report I can hear hail stones hitting off my window and after 90 mile per hour winds last night my fence is down again, I

hope the next couple of months weather is kind before the start of the season.

I'm just back from visiting Gordon Kerr at the new course being built on the Erskine Hospital grounds, Marr Hall. I was very impressed how the course is coming along at this early stage, I think the course will develop into a fine challenge for the future.

I hope to arrange a course walk over the next couple of months so anyone interested give me a phone.

This year's Patrons award winners are Michael Maxton, East Kilbride, and Barry McCulloch, East Renfrewshire. Well done lads on winning your awards.

The Patrons' dinner was held at the Terraces Hotel in Stirling and dinner and entertainment was its usual high standard, well done to Peter Boyd for arranging such an enjoyable day, and to the patrons for there continued support. I hope the boys enjoy their trip to Harrogate.

I would like to welcome Ken Seims, from Loch Lomond Golf Club, on to the West Section committee and hope you will enjoy being part of the team.

The fixture diary for 2008 will soon be ready so you can plan your dates for the rest of the year.

The first outing will be East Renfrewshire for our Spring Outing on April 24, this is a fantastic Golf course so get your entries in early.

We have a new member this month, Andrew Orr, from East Kilbride Golf Club Welcome to the Section there will be plenty of things happening over the year so come along and meet some of your fellow members.

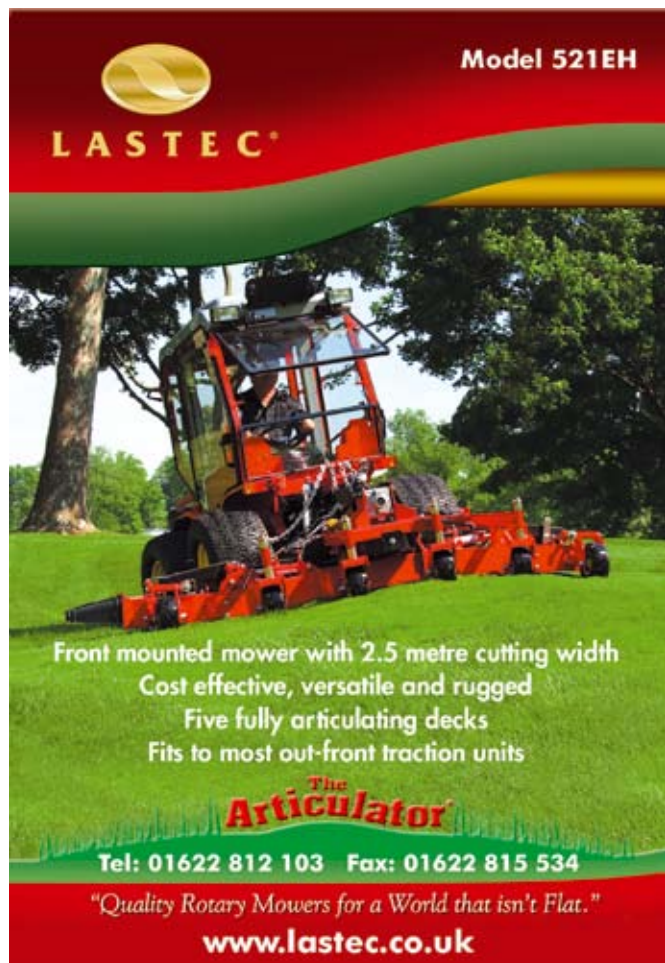
I will be arranging a couple of seminars over the next few months and information will be available on the BIGGA website.

There are also training courses that can be arranged to suit your needs so please get in touch for further information.

Well that's all for now, by the time you read this report Harrogate will be over for another year and I'm sure it will have been a great one.

Fraser Ross

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NORTHERN REGION – NORTH WEST



By the time you are reading these notes Harrogate will have come and gone. I hope everyone who attended thought it was worth the effort and enjoyed the experience.

Around the Green

We will shortly have a list of all the golf days and these will be sent out to you all. I also hope that a few more of you get in touch and contribute to the Section notes, if you have any tips (horses included) or anything you think the Section might be interested in please get in contact with me. If you have any news you can contact me on 0151 2894625 my email is jshieehan@blueyonder.co.uk or the Section Secretary, Bert Cross on 0151 7245412.

Chris Sheehan



NORTHERN

I will start this month by wishing you all a belated Happy New Year for 2008. I hope that it is a very successful for you all, both on and off the course.

December 6 saw the last competition of 2007, which was held at the extremely windy Crosland Heath Golf Club. I understand that only Nigel Coultish was blown over, which, considering the weather conditions - wasn't bad going! The course itself was in marvellous condition and a true credit to Philip and his team, so a huge thank you to all of them and to everyone at Crosland Heath Golf Club for their hospitality on the day.

A massive thank you also to County Mowers and Toro for sponsoring the day and providing such an excellent prize table.

The AGM was also held at Crosland Heath and there are a couple of things which came out of the meeting to inform you of. Firstly, the cost of entry to Section golf days for trade members will be rising to £20 with effect from the Spring Tournament. Secondly, the Section is looking into running a coach to this year's Open at Royal Birkdale. If you are interested in joining us for what should be a fantastic day out then please get in touch as soon as possible and we can start planning pick-up points and costs.

The Committee are also planning another seminar, and the date we are looking at will be sometime around the end of March; I will confirm date, location and speakers in next month's report, which hopefully will also include a full finalised fixture list for this year,

If anyone has any news that they would like to pass on via the magazine then please just let me know.

Adam Speight 01274 638366 07739 319060



NORTH WALES

I don't believe we've had Section notes in Greenkeeper International since October last year so there's a little bit of catching up to do. Royal St David's Golf Club at Harlech was the venue for the Christmas competition and AGM. The day went off swimmingly even though it was blowing a hoolie. A big thank you to Royal St David's for hosting the

event. Congratulations must go to John and Roger Kerry and the greens staff for the beautifully presented course (thanks lads it was in great condition) and the catering for the gorgeous food.

The competition was won by Aled Hughes' team with an excellent 77 points, 2nd was Rick Sinker's team with 74 points, 3rd was taken up by Haydon Jones' team with a very respectable 71 points, Nearest the Greens where taken by Lion Kerry on the 14th and Adam McColl on the 18th .

The AGM saw Darren Anderson MG and Wendy O'Brien stand down and three new members taking up places these are Jonny Evans, of Carden Park, BIGGA stalwart Don Pemberton, of Bryn Morfydd, and Peter Maybury, of Vale of Llangollen.

The job of writing the Section notes has been jointly taken over by me and Jonny Evans after Andrew "Acorn" Cornes has done such a wonderful job of trying so hard to fill the column - Thanks it's a lot harder to do than it looks!

The spring seminar will take place at Abergele Golf Club on March 13. The main subject will be the new BIGGA Safety management system (SMS), an all round approach to golf club safety management. Booking forms will be with you soon. Don't miss out this will be essential material to know!

The Spring Competition will take place at Llanymynech Golf Club on May 14, your booking form for this and all other competitions this year will be with you soon, please return your entries to Jez Hughes ASAP.

Harrogate as always was an education in everything material and cerebral. I hope you came away as I did, with a lot of new machinery, equipment and management ideas to mull over, although it's always good to meet up with old friends at the same time.

It is planned to make more of our own Section news, whether it be marriages, promotions, retirements or news you think would be of interest to, or you want to share with the Section. Johnny's and my own email and phone numbers will be published in this year's fixture list in due course if you want to contact us. Belated congratulations to Darren Anderson on his marriage, Henlle Park opened their new club house at Christmas - Quite an edifice it's supposed to be as well by all accounts - and The Vale of Llangollen golf club celebrate their centenary this year

*Peter Maybury 07756001187 or Petemayb66@Aol.Com
Jonny Evans 07917584728 or Johnny.Evans@Tesco.Net*



MIDLAND REGION – EAST MIDLANDS

Our Section Christmas Tournament took place on Thursday, December 13 at Longcliffe Golf Club and was played there as a tribute to their retiring Head Greenkeeper, Walter Cole. Walter was due to retire in January from Longcliffe after over 40 years service and our best wishes go out to him for his retirement.



We had a good turn out of 32 for the golf, including Scott MacCallum from Headquarters, and although Walter did not play on the day he spent the time walking round the course catching up with old friends. The winners of the day were Ian Abrahams and Chris Bates with 43 pts, 2, Andy De Wet and Gary Thurman 42 pts. 3. Asa English and Peter Larter 42 pts and 4. Paul Frith and Tim Allard (In the Prizes Again!) 41 pts. The Longest Drive was won by Stuart Raybould and the Nearest The Pin was won by Scott MacCallum (won't be inviting him again!) Our thanks go out to Walter and his staff for presenting the course to its usual high standard and out thanks go to the club for courtesy of the course and the caterers for an excellent Christmas Meal. Just to remind everyone that the annual Go-Karting is booked for Wednesday, February 20 at 7.30pm, and there are still a few places remaining if you are interested. Please contact Dan Rodgers, Secretary 07745 227224 to reserve your seat!

Dan Rodgers



MIDLAND

Due to a technical error, I sent January's notes a week too late for publication (at least P.Woodham was on the ball with his excellent education opportunities). However they were posted on the Section's excellent website. Please forgive me for reiteration within February's webpage. If you are using our website then the committee and I would like to thank you for utilising this service and indeed perhaps contributing to such. Our thanks must go to Leigh Swan for his great efforts in producing our superb website. The easiest way to visit our site is via the BIGGA website and click-on Midland Section website.

I would like to begin this month's notes with an apology to T.H.White Email: grassredditch@thwhite.co.uk as I forgot to thank them in December's notes for their kind sponsorship of the calendar. While we are at it our thanks to Abbey Mowers: www.abbeymowers.co.uk for January's sponsorship. Also our thanks to this month's sponsor's www.turnergroundscare.co.uk Please consider them when making purchases in their relevant industries. Without the sponsorship of our many kind friends our Section would not be served as well as it is. Our thanks to all our sponsors.

Our Christmas event was held at Whittington Heath GC. The course was in superb condition, and the greens were as good as you can get at that time of year. Our thanks to Mr.T.Morris (C.M.) and his fine team for preparing the course to such a high standard. Such is a credit to you all. Furthermore, our thanks to the Captain Mr A Jarrot for his very warm welcome. The results of the day were: 1. H. Middlebrook & S. Scott; 2. J. Ganley & P. Rainsford; 3. A. Jones & D. Fellows; 4. N. Couchman & R. Thomas; 5. T. Morris & A. Jarrot. Our thanks to the main prize table sponsor's M. Chamberlain/Tacit. Longest Drive & Nearest the Pin were won by S. Thompson & A. Jones respectfully. Our thanks to N. Tyler/Alpha Amenity.

Now then, we have of course four events for 2008. Such being the great venues of: Spring Kidderminster, Summer Stourbridge, Autumn Fulford

Heath, Christmas TBA. The efforts of our Comp. Secretary and by the grace of the aforementioned Clubs cannot be underestimated. If we are to enjoy the benefits of such great opportunities we must utilise them, if not we shall lose such grace as afforded to us. So please support the Section's golfing events by attending them. To aid such we have cut the cost of entry down to £20, however such shall still include a three-course meal. What great value for money, 18 holes of golf and a great meal, with a superb prize table (£250) and great company. What more do you want?

Wishing all a suburb New Year from your Committee. Yes, your committee, so use them. Remember that they give their time freely. It gives me great pleasure to be able to welcome two new members to the committee: Richard Beacham, of the Wrekin GC and Adam Jones of Penn G.C. Finally, I would like to thank Keith Swan Penn GC for his sterling efforts as our handicap calculator. Handicaps and scores can also be found on our website. Please send me any news or thoughts on the usual lines as found on the calendar.

Sean McDade



EAST OF ENGLAND

Hello all. Hopefully this will find you all well recovered from Harrogate Week. I am sure many things will have been learned to help us through the forthcoming year and all will have had a successful show. Full report next time.

Tuesday, December 4 saw our Christmas Tournament at Market Rasen Golf Club, where a large inflatable Santa and a snowman greeted us in the car park. The course was in excellent condition and our praise and thanks goes to John Hewson and his staff. Sponsorship was provided by LMS, many thanks to Dave Hampshire and his guys for an excellent prize table and also for their halfway house sponsorship right throughout the year.

The format was betterball pairs Stableford. 1st place went to Gary Cooper and Chris Wilkinson with 46 pts. 2. on countback went to Bruce Hicks and Tito Arena with 44 pts. 3. Dave Smith and Ian Batty with 44 pts also. Longest Walk went to Allan Walker and Nigel Marshall.

The East of England Section has decided to sponsor a greenkeeper through an NVQ college course. This is open to greenkeepers from all courses at all levels that do not qualify for free education. Anybody interested in this is asked to write to Allan Walker with reasons why they should be chosen.

The chosen applicant will be based upon dedication to the job support for our Section and BIGGA and have the backing of their golf club.

All interested applicants should contact Alan Walker on allan@jaxbaby.plus.com. Office: 01733 380883.

We are looking at arranging a social evening in the summer, go-karting has already been suggested.

Around the Green



Any other ideas should be sent to Allan at the above addresses. Everyone is reminded that our website is up and running and make full use of the service that it provides.

A seminar is being organised by Rigby Taylor to be held at Elsham Golf Club. This will be held in February, however the exact date is not known at this point. The main topic of the day will be "The Disturbance Theory". Further details will follow.

The first three golf days of 2008 are: April 16 at Pottergate, May 20 at Burghley Park; June 12 at Cleethorpes. Regular golf day reminders will be put on here and on the website, a full list will be sent out before the season starts to put on your mess room walls.

Finally many congratulations to Les Howkins, of Cotgrave Place GC, and his wife Julie on the safe arrival of baby, Aimee. All nappy-changing tips will be gratefully received as I count down to March 17! Many thanks.

Steve Beverly *Immingham Golf Club*

Steveimmingham@aol.com www.eastofenglandbigga.com



SOUTH EAST REGION – SURREY

Tuesday, January 8. The Turkey Trot and AGM were held on December 13 at Tyrrells Wood GC. The frosty start meant that everybody had balls bouncing all over the course and most scores reflected the difficult conditions. Many thanks to Billy McMillan, and Tyrrells Wood GC, for allowing play so that we could all enjoy a lovely Surrey course with its superb and picturesque views of the surrounding countryside. We only had one player wearing a sombrero which enabled Craig Mills to win with 40pts. Jim Russell, that now, not so well rounded figure from over the border, came 2nd with 35pts. Dave Gibbs crept into 3rd place with 33pts and also won Nearest the Pin. The Longest Drive was delivered by Gavin (now that's a long one) Kyle. The day was sponsored by John Shaw Machinery and we thank them for the excellent prizes.

The AGM was held before we sat down to a culinary delight produced by the clubs chef and catering team - Many thanks to them for an excellent Christmas dinner.

The acting Chairman, Tony Bremer, gave his year's report and thanked the outgoing Chairman, Anthony Freeman, for his many years of hard work for Surrey. Tony also noted that it was a pity Anthony could not use his electric trolley, presented to him by Surrey committee, due to the frost. No written questions were received prior to the meeting and the committee was returned en bloc with the addition of Ron Christie, who will take over the role of Secretary from John Ross who will be our new Chairman.

I hope you all had a good Christmas and if you are going, I'll see you at Harrogate.

Brian Willmott

KENT

Well here we are well into 2008. How many of us, I wonder, have stuck to our New Year's resolutions? Have you cut out those saturated fats, midnight treats and excesses of the demon drink?

More importantly, how many promised themselves they would shave a significant number of strokes off their golfing handicaps and resolved to go up the range or play a few holes after work each and every day in order to reach an impossible target?!

At least if an improved handicap was your New Year's resolution you won't necessarily need to stick to all the other things you promised to cut down on. Golf differs from every other sport in that an individual's size and shape isn't too important. You don't need to be 12 stone, be seven feet tall or do 100 metres in 10 seconds flat. No, there are some very fine and happy golfers out there who are anything but athletes!

We constantly strive to perfect our individual games yet never attain it. At least we don't blame the greenstaff though!

Here on the Kent Section we are doing all we can to improve your game by plying you with as much golf as possible this year. Our much-lauded five event golfing calendar kicks off in earnest next month at The London Club on March 25.

We are expecting a big turn out so get your applications in early!

Well, I'm off now for nine holes followed by a pie and a pint. Good luck to all of you who are blessed with more willpower than me!

Rob Holland



LONDON

Firstly from all of us at London Section we would like to thank Martin Smith, his team of Greenstaff and all in the Clubhouse and Pro shop at Porters Park GC for providing a great days golf for our last fixture of 2007.

The results are as follows: 1. Northwood GC, 2. Sandy lodge GC 1, 3. Sandy Lodge GC 2, 4. Brookmans Park, Longest Drive - David Badham and Nearest the pin – Ben Burnham.

Thank you to Mick Fance and Scotts for their sponsorship and providing us with some great prizes. The Scotts trophy has been going now for four years and the attendance gets better year on year.

For those that aren't aware the London Section website is now up and running so please visit us at www.biggalondonsection.co.uk and let us know what you think.

The websites aim is to provide you the member with all the latest news of what's going on in and around our section, if there is something that



you feel is missing that you would like to see posted on the site, then please let us know via our Contact us page.

Our First fixture of the year will be the A.T Oliver Toro Trophy (spring cup) at Northwood GC on Thursday, April 10; the book is now open for entries.

For 2008 we will no longer be sending out entry forms, reminders only.

For booking please either contact us through our website or if you do not have Internet access then please call us on the following number 07903121760.

The Avoncrop Amenity Knockout Competition is now open for entries. You are required to enter a team of two. Trade members are also welcome.

The competition will be played either at your home club or away at your opponents.

A full description of the competition will be posted on our website. To enter please follow the same instructions as mentioned in the previous paragraph.

Aaron Percival



EAST ANGLIAN

Well, here we are again then. Another year older and deeper in debt - 'St Peter Don't You Call Me 'Cause I Can't Go' Some will know the rest. I digress – hope you are all well, ready for another battle with the new committee. Don't forget to give the Chairman a "Be Your Own Lawn Expert" book at the first meeting, then at least he'll know what a daisy looks like! Happy New Year.

It was a lovely day at Thorpeness back in December, only –4 degrees c (greens were a bit firm!) 120 plus souls turned up, those that played, which was most of them, teed off at 9.00 am sharp for the shotgun/SAM start and we didn't launch the lifeboat. We were all back for the quietest AGM on record at 2.15 pm (ish) and Christmas lunch was served at 2.45 pm (ish).

In between all that, some golf was played, and if the loo seat was being played for, Tomo would have won it yet again, before we had started. His wolfhound 'Toby' had wandered off and just as our main sponsor for the day, Mike Moss, from CMW, was about to tee off, Tomo called "Toby" quite loudly from a nearby tee. Mike stopped, looked around and addressed his ball again. Yet again, Tomo called. Mike stopped as before, swore briefly, started again. All was quiet until Mike had reached the point of no return. "Toby" came the shout. Mike's ball went in the bushes, followed by a lot of Anglo Saxon and 'Toby' came running up the fairway like nothing had happened. Happy Days!

The more serious among us did manage to scrape together a few points: 1. Rookery A Team with 56.2 pts; 2. Rushmere with the Eaton B Team

(not me – surprise, surprise) with 56.7 pts; 3. Rushmere Hackers with 57.5 pts. The free for all Longest Drive sponsored by Earnest Doe was won by Michael Buck (2'6"). The 0 – 15 Handicap Longest Drive sponsored by Prime was won by Chris O'Dowd (3'). The 16 – 28 Handicap (proper golfers) longest drive sponsored by Ben Burgess was won by Rob George. Nearest the pin: 2nd Hole – sponsored by Aitkens, was won by Adrian Brown.

7th Hole – sponsored by Tomlinson Groundcare, was won by John Squirell (must be a joke about nuts there somewhere). 10th Hole – sponsored by Lely UK, was won by Dennis Smith. 16th Hole – sponsored by Bartram Mowers, was won by Danny Perring (fix!) Nearest the Pin in two shots on the 6th hole – sponsored by Tacit, was won by Terry Mills.

David Morsley, Club Captain, presented the prizes and once again our friends from the trade did us proud. Our main sponsor for the day was CMW – followed by: Bartram Mowers, Textron, Tacit, Rigby Taylor, CMW, Sisis, A & K Supplies, Midlube, Collier Turf Care, Aitkens, Scotts, Earnest Doe, Ben Burgess, Sherriff (of Nottingham), Toro, Tomlinson Ground Care, Consultant Clarkson, Headland, Atterton & Ellis, Lely UK, Baileys of Norfolk and Tower Chemicals.

Our thanks must go to Ian and the lads for a super course (one day I'll play it in the summer). Also thanks to Stefan and catering staff for 'lully grub' – and thanks Thorpeness for putting up with us once again.

By the way, all officers were elected en bloc (that's French for 'as you were') – and dear old Ernie's bottle of port was presented to 'Scottie' for persistence in greenkeeping. Sorry for the nickname, but no one seems to know his real name. I'll find out and let you know in the next edition of 'Men Only'.

Mick Lathrope



SOUTH WEST AND WALES REGION – SOUTH WEST

Hard to think that by the time this hits the shelves, it'll be mid-Feb, and we'll all be thinking about the new season, coring greens, top-dressing, making the first fertiliser applications and hitting the ground running for the first full club comps of 2008. Scary.

The first Section meeting of the year will be at Kingsdown GC on February 21 – we're hoping to incorporate some education from Bernhards Grinders with it, so watch out for your invite.

Back in December of last year, we were made very welcome at Burnham & Berrow GC for the 2007 Christmas Tournament. On a beautiful winter day, the course looked at its sparkling best, with newly revetted bunkers, big fast greens, narrow winding fairways, and spectacular views across the Bristol Channel. Links golf at its very best. Richard Whyman took time out from his busy schedule to give us a course walk to show off his handiwork. The greens are slowly being converted from bent to fescue – forget Poa Annua - I hardly saw any on the greens. Richard overseeds with a fescue mix twice per year spring and autumn, and aerates his greens every month using a vertidrain with pencil tines in

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winter, and a hydroject in summer. He feeds monthly with liquids using 45 kg\Ha of both N & Potash, and includes compost-tea in the mix. He top-dresses monthly, and verti-cutting has been reduced from 10 passes to 5 passes per annum. He hosted the English Ladies Championships, the West of England Championships, and is preparing for England Boys in 2011. The height of cut on the greens is 5.5 in winter (Richard tries to cut every day in winter) and down to 4.5 in the summer. This regime easily achieves speeds of 10.5 to 11 feet. Richard proudly showed us the new practice green facility which was constructed by Mike Smith and finished by the greenstaff, as well as a look at the new maintenance facility with its impressive vehicle lift. Thanks very much to Richard for putting so much time and thought to the tour.

The tournament was won by Wayne Vincent with 38 points despite his recent handicap reduction to 12. The full result was as follows: 1. Wayne Vincent, Cotswold Hills 38 pts; 2. Lauchlan "Jock" Millar, Burnham & Berrow – 35 pts; 3. Gary Cook, Enmore Park, 32 pts. Wooden Spoon - Mike Harris, 0 points. (Still out there somewhere).

John Keenaghan also presented the Order of Merit prizes for 2007.

Thanks very much to Richard and the team for the outstanding condition of the course, to the caterers for preparing such a nice meal for so many people, and to Jock Millar for welcoming us on behalf of the club. I might also mention Nobby Knight, who put in his usual immense amount of work to make the event such a success, and last but not least, to all our Patronage Partners and the Trade, who put up so many of the raffle prizes – I should think everyone went home with something.

Back at Minch, we recently were treated to a very interesting members evening entitled "An Evening with Angwin". We had an hours' talk on Meteorology from Richard Angwin, who was every bit as smooth in real life as he is on the telly. After spilling the beans on David Garmston's wig collection and Alex Lovalls love-life, Richard told how he progressed from a lowly weather observer to TV forecaster by taking an Open University Course, and how when he was recruited to appear on the BBC he insisted on giving the forecast a local flavour by blending in news of local events etc as well as the actual forecasting. He gave a comprehensive history of Meteorology and early weather forecasting, with examples from ancient Egypt (such as seven years of feast and famine around the Nile Delta), through to the need for weather forecasting in Napoleonic times when more warships were lost to bad weather than due to enemy action, and WW2 when bad weather forecasts prevented Hitlers invasion.

He came right up to modern times after reminiscing how the Met Office used to rent the Lyons Cakes computer in the 60s to run simulations and make calculations – unbelievable in this day and age they didn't have their own, and how the computers were eventually installed at Bracknell to modernise forecasting. The Met Office rent out services (and forecasters) to the BBC, the Armed Forces, and to Energy Companies (it's very important to know when a cold snap is coming so that energy such as imported gas can be purchased on the futures market at reasonable prices, rather than having to be purchased at the last minute at high rates). The Met Office even provides services to such diverse groups as farmers, pheasant breeders, and pigeon fanciers. Richard closed with how times are changing – from a mini-ice age in the 1600s – through to the current "global warming" phenomena. It is an interesting thought, that we are now breathing gases which have been locked away in frozen ground for millions of years. The most sobering thought of all was the

Siberian Bog – a huge tract of Siberia which is still permafrozen (just) - but should it continue to thaw will release staggering amounts of methane into the atmosphere, and drastically accelerate global warming. All of it inconveniently true. How about some details of your winter & spring programmes etc?

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DEVON AND CORNWALL

The members were greeted with a hard frost for our Christmas meeting at Okehampton Golf Club. The competition still took place, albeit on temporary greens, and the hospitality afforded us by the Club was second to none. Our sponsors for the day were: P J Flegg and Irritech and I would like to thank Paul Watson for organising everything, especially the traditional beer tent out on the course. I would also like to thank Roger Davey of Irritech for his continued support of our Section.

A fantastic Christmas lunch was enjoyed by everyone and we were entertained afterwards by The Somerset Paddies.

The competition was won by Adam Bridgewater, of Yelverton, and Patrick Twitchin, of Teignmouth. The day was rounded off by the famous Devon and Cornwall raffle, where just about everyone won a prize.

By the time you guys read this, BTME would have come round once again and I'm sure you would have all had a wonderful time. There is always a good turn out from the Devon and Cornwall Section and with our trip being a total sell out since October last year, this year is no exception.

Important dates for your diary: Wednesday, February 13 - Section Meeting, Tavistock Golf Club; Wednesday, March 5 - Spring Workshop based on Sustainability, Fingle Glen Golf Club; Wednesday, March 12 - Section Meeting, Royal North Devon Golf Club.

After several years, this will be my last "Around the Green" column and my successor is Jerry Cole. I wish you luck Jerry as these Section notes can sometimes be a bit of a brain drain, especially on a cold Winter's night. Good luck mate!

Steve Evans

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