

# Welcome



## The Future is Bright

Here we are in 2008. Can you believe it? It doesn't seem so long ago that the Millennium seemed a few years off and now we're nearly through the first decade of the current century.

So what does the New Year have in store for us? Well, for a start it's a Leap Year so we'll have to work an extra day for no extra cash! That's the downside, the upside of a Leap Year, for sports' lovers, is that it's an Olympic year and we've got the Beijing Games in the summer to look forward to. I'm sure they will be spectacular, but with China having been preparing athletes for these Olympics for years behind closed doors, and craving success we may find a lot of events being won by sportsmen and women who are currently unknown to the western world. That won't detract from the performances, but it might just make them slightly less interesting for the average television viewer in the UK.

Just after the Olympics, another of the world's top sporting events, the Ryder Cup, will take place at the Valhalla Golf Club in Louisville, Kentucky, and I think we can expect a more closely fought contest than the last couple of meetings when Europe has romped away. A far cry from the old days before GB&I brought in the might of Continental Europe when it was a cake walk for the US every time. With The Open being held at Royal Birkdale golf is sure to have a high profile this year.

I once heard the late athletics' commentator, Ron Pickering, speak at a golf dinner and he said that he always considered athletics to be the greatest sport in the world, but that golf was the greatest game. Quite a nice way of looking at it and it does mean we're in for quite a sporting year.

Back at BIGGA, preparations for Harrogate Week are all but complete and you can be sure that any time spent in Harrogate will be time very well spent indeed. The education programme is second to none and the opportunities to network, strike deals and socialise are quite simply unmatched.

It will be my 13th Harrogate and I've looked forward to each one more than the one before and I'm proud to be involved in the development of an event that any Association in any industry would be delighted to produce.

If I might finish on the merger talks with the IOG. I firmly believe that the aim of forming a new super organisation out of BIGGA and the IOG was something well worth investigating. Indeed, not carrying out the work, as I've said before, could have been seen as a dereliction of duty on the part of both Boards of Management. The fact that agreement could not be reached does not make the exercise any less valuable.

Both organisations will now move forward independently and you can be sure that the future of BIGGA will be bright and exciting in 2008 and beyond.

## IRRIGATION WORKSHOP

Over 30 Midland Section members attended a pretty intensive and wide ranging Irrigation Workshop at The Belfry in late October. The weather could not have been better and the sun shone down which seems quite ironic when discussing the subject of irrigation during 2007. One might wonder what on earth greenkeepers were doing looking at sprinklers or evaluation irrigation requirements when we have just had one of the wettest summers on record. The truth is that irrigation systems still need to be maintained so it is ready when you need it. So any chance to broaden understanding and get practical advice from industry experts was lapped up during this heavily oversubscribed course.

Btliia Secretary, Martyn Jones assembled a superb array of lecturers and the delegates were split into small groups for a 'round robin' of workshops of which the five subjects were: Tony Ware (Tonick Watering Ltd) Electrical faultfinding and repairs; Nigel Wyatt (MJ Abbott Ltd) Pipework malfunction and repairs; Adrian Handbury (Evenproducts Ltd) Sprinkler and solenoid valve maintenance and repairs; Jeff Mountford (Grundfos Ltd) Pumps and pump house maintenance; Martyn Jones (BTLIA) Determining irrigation requirements.

The workshops were designed to cover a range of advice and skills which certainly wetted the appetite of the delegates for further education. The co-ordinator for the event, Paul Woodham said "following some excellent feedback, we recognise that we were only just scratching the surface of irrigation training. We hope to set-up some further courses which will look at some of the finer detail involved with irrigation. The facilities and warm welcome from Kenny McKay and his team at The Belfry have been second to none and the Midland Section have once again benefited from subsidised training offered by BIGGA".

The event was attended by Sami Collins, from BIGGA HQ, in her debut at a section training event. Not only did Sami administer the event but she was also responsible for some great photographs, all 122 of them so there should be no shortage for the calendar next year!

*Paul Woodham, Midland Section*

