



News from the Chief Executive

As another year draws to an end let us look back at 2007, at what has been achieved.

There seems to be a number of members dissatisfied with the performance of the Association voicing opinions on not only the BIGGA website but on other parties' websites. I am disappointed these people do not feel able to contact HQ and air their views, sometimes there is a simple and logical answer. I do not have any excuses and the buck stops with me for the efficiency of the office. My only wish is it had not been necessary to make the staff cut backs we did - we are now missing those extra pairs of hands. However, like all commercial operations we need to balance the books - we reduced a budgeted loss of £133k down to an actual loss of £1,800 in 2007. I'm accused of being out of touch with the grass roots membership but no one knows better than I how tough it is in golf today, and HQ staff and myself try to attend as many Region and Section events as time allows. Please also remember the RAs are members of HQ staff and I speak with them on a regular basis.

I get accused of not communicating with the members however I find it equally frustrating that members do not communicate with me! Let's look at what we have achieved this year: tens of thousands of pounds spent on subsidising Regional, Section and National training and education, over £15k spent on education grants to individual members, RA support to members at disciplinary meetings, financial support for families following the accidental death of several members, a better than expected financial result thereby helping medium term stability, in my view a much better acceptance by the other bodies in golf of the professional standing of the Association and its members, a new website - the list goes on. I'm sure many of your golfers expectations could be realised if you had a large enough budget, well I'm in the same position as Chief Executive. I have 6,500 members many of whom have differing views on life, views that sometimes are unachievable.

2008? There is no doubt in my mind golf as an industry is starting to feel the commercial squeeze. Course Managers/Head Greenkeepers must address their management training needs if they are going to cope. It's no good just being a good greenkeeper any more, in order to survive those with responsibility need their skills honing. BIGGA has helped in the past and aims to provide more 'bite size' management training modules in the future. It will be teaming up with the GTC, the Home Unions, the GCMA and potentially the PGA to address training issues, in particular at management level. This doesn't mean we will be abandoning those below CM/HG - suitable training courses will be arranged where there is sufficient demand.

Learning and Development is no longer an option but a necessity, part of BIGGA's aim is to get better support for this by the employer. I've been proud to represent the Association at various meetings and conferences during 2007 where I have always been treated with respect. Times have moved on and so must we but we can only succeed through unity.

I wish everyone a trouble free 2008. Let's hope the sun shines, the puts drop and golfers recognise the difference between 'nice to have' and 'achievable'!

John Pemberton



SCOTTISH – AYRSHIRE

Firstly, hope you're all well and had a great time over the Festive season. It's been a while since you've heard from me but never mind eh!

To catch up on last year's relevant news I'll start with the classified results from the Autumn outing at Shiskine GC which were as follows: Middlesbrough 0 , seriously now!

Harry Diamond Jug – G. Morrison – 1.1 G. Morrison; 1.2 B. Aitken; 1.3 B. Gray; 1.4 I. MacDonald; 1.5 S. Higgins. 2.1 G. Taggart; 2.2 R. Bunting; 2.3 I. Barr; 2.4 D. Gray; 2.5 M. Sloss. Trade Prize- Alistair Taylor

Our thanks to the club for allowing us the tee times, to the friendly staff who served up some delicious fare and refreshments and to the Head Greenkeeper and his crew for presenting a fine course on a dry day with a touch of gale force winds added for extra effect!

The BIGGA National Championship, sponsored by Kubota, held over The Dundonald GC and Kilmarnock Barassie GC in October, I am told, was a resounding success with a couple of local boys picking up top prizes! Clandeboye GC hosted the second playing of our match v the County Down Greenkeepers and although we only had four from the Section it seemed like eight or was that just the Guinness? No, we managed to hire four mercenaries who did a grand job. Before the result I would just like to say a massive thanks to Terry Crawford for arranging all the tee times and pub crawls and everything! Cheers pal! To the club and all the staff who made the trip so memorable we really had a great time, thanks! And last but not least the greenkeepers themselves who made us most welcome. Oh! And that rep who insisted on getting the first four rounds of drinks in for all! Nice one!

The result ended 3 – 1 to the home side, but came right down to the wire with myself and Colin Shanks just missing out on a half at the 18th and Duncan Gray and his partner, Ronnie, losing their match after being 3 up with 4 to play! I ken! It was all in good spirit and Duncan made up for it by holding an impromptu lecture at the hotel at 2am that night - much to the night porter's delight!

On to recent news then, George Morrison, Largs GC, and John Wilson, Bogside, are the Patron's Award winner's this year. Congrats lads! The Portland course at Troon will be the venue for the Spring with the date in April to be finalised. The Pines GC, in Dumfries, will host the Autumn Outing where we will also be trying to arrange the match with the Irish Greenkeepers, but it's a long way off so watch this space every few months or so? Adios mis amigos and remember "Let's be careful out there"

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CENTRAL

Hi, I hope everyone has recovered from the excesses of Christmas and New Year and have a quiet spell before it all starts up again at Harrogate towards the end of the month.