



News from the Chief Executive

July and the golf season is already half over, or so it seems to me. Because of injury I have not struck a ball in anger since January 3 and my wife is now wondering why I loyally paid my subscription earlier in the year. I too am calculating how many rounds I will need to get in before the end of the year to justify to her a renewal in 2009. The reality is that I will not be able, or allowed, to play the number of games now needed to bring the average cost per round down to an acceptable level. The more I talk to friends and other golfers and the more I communicate with other bodies within golf the more I realise that I am not alone.

The halcyon days of demand exceeding supply are over and will not return in my opinion. The golfer now has greater choice of venue, equipment, but less time to play and certainly an increasing demand on his financial resources. It is estimated that less than one in three golfers now pays a subscription, the preferred option being to adopt a 'Pay and Play' approach. Does that impact upon BIGGA? Yes, and in a big way.

We are all well aware of the financial constraints that many clubs are facing as they vie for members and visitors. The greenkeeping staff are all too often expected to produce better and better results with a budget that is at best, frozen. Greenkeepers become pressurised, stressed, disillusioned or perhaps in conflict with their employer and in extreme cases face legitimate, or fabricated, redundancy. The Association, which is after all your Association, is working with the other bodies in golf to resolve friction and wherever possible address issues before conflict arises. It is also in the process of putting in place a more effective and better publicised welfare and benevolent support system and I encourage any member who would be prepared to offer help to contact either myself or Tracey Maddison (Head of Membership Services at HQ). Our details are in the front of Greenkeeper International.

As less money changes hands in our part of the golf industry so companies spend less with BIGGA on advertising or the exhibition - an old chestnut that is not getting any better. None of us are exempt from the change in golf but the trick is to learn to adapt and develop wherever possible, in being prepared to take advantage of educational opportunities to develop one's ability to manage change and accept that change is inevitable. Greenkeepers often seem to be the sole victims of the changing face of golf but I assure you that they are not alone. Many golf club secretaries and managers are suffering the same pressures and gone is the day of it being a cushy second career, that's if it ever was in the first place!

Training and education is available through BIGGA and if you don't see what you want then contact your Section Secretary, your Regional Administrator or BIGGA HQ. Please view education as a lifelong experience and be proactive rather than reactive. We can help from basic literacy or numeric skills to perhaps higher education. There are grants and scholarships available and there is money in the industry sponsored BIGGA Learning and Development Fund but you, the member, need to take action.

John Pemberton
Chief Executive



SCOTTISH REGION - CENTRAL

As I sit and write this at the beginning of June, the weather appears to have taken a turn for the better and the growth looks to have arrived. How much longer before we hear the cries from our members "Aren't you going to cut that rough down!" Strange how they always want the rough cut but when it's gorse bushes or trees you cut back they hate it.

I'm sure everyone is busy at this time of year with the competition season in full swing but we have just had a hectic weekend in the St Andrews area with the Scottish Police Championships on the Devlin Course at St Andrews Fairmont Hotel, The Scottish Stroke Play Championships at the Dukes, a local Club's Championship qualifier on the New Course, an Open on the Jubilee Course and the Curtis Cup on the Old Course which attracted 4,000 spectators trampling over the Links.

Elmwood have just opened their full course after the alterations made there and the Castle Course opened on June 28. Now it is Fairmont's turn with the Torrance course closed for the rest of this year as it gets a complete revamp.

The Autumn Outing will be held at Dunblane New Golf Club on Thursday, September 4, when we have the tee from 1pm until 3pm. Entry forms will be emailed to those whose email address we have and they will be available to download from the website: www.biggacentralsection.org.uk

Alternatively, if anyone requires an entry form sent to them by post, please contact the Secretary. By not doing a standard mailshot the Section will be saving close to £100.

Gordon Moir



EAST

I start this month's report with the news that Ian Kinley currently working at The Glen Golf Club in North Berwick has been appointed Course Manager at Royal Porthcawl in Wales. He commenced his career at Royal Birkdale working under the guidance of Chris Whittle, before moving to The Old Course at St Andrews and then to Lahinch as Deputy in 2002. In June 2004 he was appointed Head Man at The Glen where he has made many improvements during the past four years.

On taking up his new position on July 14, he will have achieved a quadruple by working in all four home countries. I am sure everybody in the section will join me in wishing him every success in the future.

The big event in The Borders in May was held at The Macdonald Cardrona Hotel with the marriage of Jane Anderson from Innerleithen to Robert Hogarth the former Head Man at Cardrona who is now at Remedy Oaks in Dorset. Many well known faces from the world of Greenkeeping were in attendance and included Ian Macleod from Tain, Paul Murphy from Downfield and the current Course Manager at Cardrona Donald Campbell.