



## News from the Chief Executive

I was saddened to learn of the sudden death of Bert Cross who has been a leading light in greenkeeping and an example to all for a great number of years. I have enjoyed Bert's company on many occasions and he will be missed by many people, not only in the UK but also in Africa, where he and his wife did so much unsung charitable work. Our sympathy goes to the family that he leaves behind.

The building work at BIGGA House is progressing well and the completion deadline of the end of April should easily be achieved. We are already surprised by how much more space the development has created and we eagerly await the time when we can see if the office furniture fits as we have planned.

There has been some concern by the Board regarding the Association's vulnerability should I not be able to carry out my duties for some unforeseen reason and there have been suggestions of the appointment of a Deputy, or someone who may aspire to that role in due course. After full consideration it has been decided to strengthen the roles of the Heads of Department so that they have joint and several responsibility for the general management of the office while still reporting to me. By improving the communication between them and me I should be able to devote more of my time to developing and reviewing the Business Plan to ensure that the Association is able to face the challenges of the industry as they exist today as well as improving its overall position. This will incorporate greater use by the Board and the Management Team of the sub committees and details of scheduled meetings will be advertised in both Greenkeeper International and on the BIGGA website. Additionally the Board has created an Environmental sub committee that will look at the Association's own policy as well as developing initiatives for the industry.

The annual selection of a new Vice Chairman has become increasingly difficult in recent years as the demands of the role increase but so do the demands of the job held by suitable candidates. Several members have expressed an interest in being considered and so in order to make the process more democratic the Board will in future invite the Sections to make nominations through their respective Regional board. Nominations will then be reviewed by the main Board and assessed for interview by the Chairman, the Past Chairman, the Vice Chairman and myself. A job description will be available to anyone interested together with broad details of the amount of time required throughout the year. No nominations will be considered without the candidate having received the prior approval and unqualified support of their employer.

Despite the breakdown of talks with the IOG the Board still feels that the Association has something to offer groundsmen and that a suitable category of membership for could still be appropriate. To this end a review panel has been set up that will look at the potential for developing this initiative and it is the intention that a report be submitted to members for their consideration in the not too distant future. This will detail the advantages to both exiting and potential members and may well incorporate a strategic alliance within the industry. While any such move does not need to be put to a meeting of members it is never the less considered by the Board to be in the best interest of the membership to allow for a process of full consultation. Once published I will be pleased to try to address any concerns that members may have.

**John Pemberton**



### SCOTTISH REGION – CENTRAL

For anyone who isn't aware, I start this month's report with the sad news of the death of Jim Finlayson who passed away on March 16. Jim was a great supporter of greenkeeping over the years, always keen to lend a hand at Section events and a good friend to many in the industry. Our thoughts are with his wife, Margaret, and his family.

Weather wise, It has been a strange old start to the year again up here on the East coast of Scotland with what feels like even stronger winds than normal for a sustained period and light snow falls both over Easter and early April. March was so dry that many Course Managers were hand watering greens during the day just to keep the grass alive.

Thanks go to Elliot Small for the work he has done in writing up the early history of the Greenkeeping Association in Scotland which is available to view on the Central Section website: [www.biggacentralsection.org.uk](http://www.biggacentralsection.org.uk) It is fascinating to discover that greenkeepers were getting together in the very early 1900's to discuss their situation. I am told there is no truth that in the first picture on display Elliot is the guy second from the right in the front row!

The first week in April saw the American Golf Course Architects hold their AGM in Scotland along with a tour of some of our country's finest courses. While in St Andrews they also took the opportunity to visit the Castle Course which is due to open in June and were extremely positive in their feedback, both in the layout and the grow in conditions they saw.

*Gordon Moir*



### EAST

I write this report in early April with Primula Drummondii's and some of the dwarf Rhododendrons in full flower in our garden, despite the artic conditions outside. The Fine Turf industry is at present extremely volatile with price increases almost becoming a weekly occurrence. Hopefully prices will stabilise in the not too distant future.

Our congratulations this month go to Scott Poole on his appointment as Head Greenkeeper at The Hirsell Golf Club, in Coldstream. I am sure his previous employers, Duns Golf Club, will wish him well! He commences his new appointment on the 7th April. The new Head Greenkeeper at Duns is Scott's former Deputy, Wayne Ford. He joined the club as a trainee in January 2000, working initially under the guidance of Ian Aitchison and latterly under Scott. I am sure he will prove a worthy successor.

The previous incumbent at The Hirsell, Geoff Logan, has departed after many years loyal service to set up his own Landscape/Garden Maintenance business in Prestonpans. I am sure all in the section will join me in wishing him best wishes for the future.

I also have changes to report at Melrose with John Christie departing to join the grounds maintenance team at Borders General Hospital. He has worked at Melrose for a number of years after learning the trade at Minto Golf Club.