

Welcome



Surviving the Downturn

As our Chairman, Kenny Mackay, states in his column this month, you are all going to have to become good accountants. His comments come as the world faces up to a recession the likes of which we haven't seen since the early '90s. Whether it will be as bad as then - a time when negative equity entered the language of all too many, including my good self - remains to be seen, but as Kenny says it's going to require some sound financial decision-making to ensure you can maintain your courses to the best level your budgetary levels allow.

This month there are two articles which touch on the subject. Robert Clive, of 360 Golf, gives some thoughts and advice on the credit crunch, while Peter Jones, starts a series examining how a new course can be developed in such a climate and looks at the decision which will have to be made to ensure sustainability from a commercial perspective.

I believe the next 18 months or so will be very much a time for batoning down the hatches but it will also be a time for trying to manage the expectation levels of members. By definition less money coming into a golf club means decisions will have to be made on how best to use that money. Robert Clive is adamant that compromising on the quality of the golf course is not the way forward - reputations are hard to earn and easy to lose - and cutting back on budgets and manpower is a quick way to see a course deteriorate. However, it may be the case that projects might have to be shelved until sunnier times return.

We can always hope that the doom mongers around have got it wrong and the fact that employment is strong, and interest rates relatively low might mean any slump is minor compared to previous downturns. However, there is nothing better to remove the gloom than to lose yourself in a competitive fourball on a Saturday morning. So, you never know, golf might be fine.

The news of Bert Cross' death took the wind from my sails. I'd known Bert from very early in my BIGGA career and he was present at just about every major BIGGA event. He was a mini bus driver for the Irish teams which played in the Hayter Challenges - he had some tales to tell after those experiences. He was the Official Starter at the National Championship; a key member of the BIGGA Open Support Team; a regular at Harrogate Week; a National Board member for many years and Section Secretary for the North West Section. Always, always, he had a smile on his face and was happy to help in whatever way he could.

He was one of those guys whose first name was all it took to identify him and it would be fair to say that, to many, there was only one Bert in BIGGA.

I shall miss him as will his legion of friends and colleagues.

GOLF IN HISTORIC PARKS & LANDSCAPES



Many colleagues in golf, historic environment, landscape and nature conservation professions helped English Heritage develop its guidance on golf in historic parks and landscapes. English Heritage has now published a new leaflet.

The leaflet sets out English Heritage's position and criteria for assessment development proposals. Further guidance to support this leaflet and the leaflet itself is available at two websites: www.english-heritage.org.uk/parksandgardens and www.helm.org.uk

ROYAL MID-SURREY GREENKEEPER IS NATIONAL KARATE CHAMPION



17-year old Harry Cannon, Assistant Greenkeeper at Royal Mid-Surrey Golf Club in Richmond, has recently won a Gold Medal at The English Karate Federation National Championships in Sheffield.

This follows up Harry's recent success at The World Championships in Istanbul back in September where he represented England and lost in the quarter finals to the eventual winner.

Karate is not yet an Olympic sport and consequently there is not much investment available for it. Harry's expenses for his trip to Turkey were kindly sponsored by R&K Kensett Ltd and Steve Jones Consultancy.

Harry has been training for 11 years and achieved his black belt four years ago. With an increasing tournament and demonstrations schedule he is about to go for his 2nd dan black belt.

Harry joined Royal Mid-Surrey as a seasonal greenkeeper in July 2007 coming straight from high school. He was employed full-time as an assistant greenkeeper three months later in September. Karate has instilled a composed discipline in Harry and a ruthless determination which is now being reflected in his professional life.

Harry talks excitedly about his greenkeeping and turfgrass science career and enthuses that, "I hope to launch a major assault on the turfgrass industry over the next three to five years and am happy that Royal Mid-Surrey gives me the most dynamic platform of some world renown from which to build a successful and fulfilling career."

Doug Tate, The Inner Course Head Greenkeeper at Royal Mid-Surrey offers an insight into the unique skills Harry brings to the RM-S course management team.

"Harry's 'no-fear' attitude and intense application to his work ensure that he is well equipped to achieve his short and medium-term career ambitions. And he is useful if ever any sales reps call by without an appointment."