



## News from the Chief Executive

It is now 10 years since we moved into BIGGA HOUSE and as I reflect over those years I realise how so much has happened to change the Association and to change the industry in which we all work.

BIGGA has continued to establish itself as a key body within golf and through the development of closer working relationships it has grown to become an integral part of the management of the game.

Greenkeepers are at long last beginning to be recognised for their professionalism and their value to the club and, while there is still much work to be done, I would ask you to cast your minds back and look at how things used to be in the so called 'Good old days'.

The Association has enjoyed a period of growth on the back of the development of golfing facilities and its improved positioning has enabled it to influence conditions of service and the general education of all greenkeepers, not just those of its members.

However, the halcyon days of the early to mid 90's are over and golf is facing some serious challenges with a changing attitude towards club membership, environmental pressures, the demand by the golfer for better value for money and latterly a sharp decline in the economy to name but a few.

There is no doubt in my mind that some greenkeepers will lose their jobs through redundancy and as long as the employer acts in accordance with the law then there is nothing anyone can do. I also see some golfing establishments closing down over the coming years, there are simply too many golfing facilities in relation to the number of players. There is a drive by the game to recruit and retain golfers but in reality this is not having much effect.

It seems a gloomy outlook for the next 10 years and 'where do we go from here?' you might ask. I believe that there still are opportunities for BIGGA and that while there is no doubt that it is not going to be easy, I remain positive in my thinking both for the Association and for its members.

As you will read elsewhere in this issue of Greenkeeper International, the Board has approved draft proposals on the inclusion of groundsmen within the Association that will be put to the members at the AGM in January. BIGGA has come from traditional roots from a very traditional thinking industry, it must now think wider than golf and look at developing into the key body for those people employed in the Sports Turf industry.

Working with the Greenkeepers Training Committee, and in fact as part of its Board structure, we have made the greenkeeper education system the envy of many other industries, both in the UK and overseas, and have created a model that they strive to emulate.

As an example of this I am hoping that very soon we will be in a position to announce the launch of an industry specific national qualification that carries the logos of the Association, the GTC and its constituent members.

If the members approve the change in the Constitution then is there any reason why BIGGA and the GTC, working with key industry partners, could not develop Aldwark as the National Centre for Sports Turf?

During the coming weeks you will be reading and hearing much more of the proposed changes to YOUR Association and I ask you to consider very carefully the consequences of not embracing a change that your Board sees as being in the best interest of you and your professional organisation.

Your support is vital to the future success of your industry, think back to yesteryear and then hopefully realise that we must move with the times and embrace change not resist it.



### SCOTTISH REGION - AYRSHIRE

Hello everyone, hope you are all well and have not succumbed to pneumonia or any similar condition due to the ridiculous summer weather! Can't wait for winter as it has to be better than our previous weather, surely?

Went to the doctor because I thought I had that SAD (Seasonal Affective Disorder) but he told me I was just depressed because the weather's crap?

On the bright side, we had good weather and a great time meeting up with the County Down Greenkeepers, at The Pines, on September 19, for our annual match, now in its third year. Although the recent wet weather left the course soft in places, the greens were firm and dry - a credit to Duncan and his staff.

At our third attempt the Ayrshire Section, lads prevailed 5 1/2 to 2 1/2. The match was played in good spirit, as always, however, it was definitely the spirits that prevailed later that evening!

I just want to thank Duncan for the use of the course and facilities and his son, Bruce, and staff for the catering at the club. I also want to thank all the players for making it such an enjoyable day, especially the lads traveling over from Northern Ireland. Thanks guys. I am already looking forward to defending the Shield across the water next year.

The following Thursday saw us at the Pines once more for the Autumn Outing and Second and final leg of the Daval sponsored Harry Diamond Jug. Numbers on the day, it must be said, were disappointing especially considering we'd had a dry week and weather on the day was glorious. There was a great atmosphere in the club after the golf and I am sure those present had a good day.

Alec really must learn some new jokes though! Only kidding buddy! Again our thanks to Duncan, Bruce and the staff there for keeping the beers and soft drinks (was still not feeling too good from weekend celebrations!) coming and for serving up some delicious food.

Results were as follows: Harry Diamond Jug - M. Lothian, 64pts. 1.1. R. McBeth, Pines GC, 33pts; 1.2. R. Adams, Turnberry GC, 28pts; 1.3. S. Higgins, Ardeer GC, 27pts; 1.4. G. Morrisson, Largs GC, 27pts. 2.1. M. Lothian, Turnberry GC, 31pts; 2.2. D. Gray, Pines GC, 27pts; 2.3. P. Tulloch, Irvine GC, 25pts; 2.4. G. Ross Royal, Troon GC, 24pts.

Trade Prize - Peter Boyd, BIGGA Regional Administrator.

Recently, not for the first time, I have become aware that some members feel they get little or nothing out of their BIGGA membership apart from their monthly magazine, which on the whole doesn't justify their subscription. While I can understand why some may feel this way, I believe one must look at the bigger picture to Membership. The management of BIGGA from HQ, Board of Management, Regional Administrator's, through to Section Secretaries and Committee member's are, I believe, all working for the advancement of greenkeepers by showing the profession to be pro-active in its approach to among others, educational and environmental issues. The Association shows the greenkeepers' commitment and allows us to take our rightful place as an integral part of the golf industry.

I like to think of membership in terms of those immortal words of John F. Kennedy who stated, "Ask not what your country can do for you, but, what can you do for your country!"

Bye for now

Denis Tweddell (denis.t@hotmail.co.uk)

07939 104701