



News from the Chief Executive

I would like to start my column by paying tribute to the late Alex Millar, whose funeral Billy McMillan and I attended last month. Alex was a retired groundsman and Chairman of the IOG at the time of his death.

I had the pleasure of first meeting Alex during the talks in 2007 between BIGGA and the IOG and his passion for the grounds care industry was immediately obvious. He was astute, likeable and a role model for others and anyone who spent time with him quickly appreciated being in his company. Alex was someone for whom I had the highest regard and he was the perfect gentleman who will be sadly missed by his friends and colleagues in greenkeeping and groundsmanship.

On a lighter note at last there are signs of spring being just around the corner, the daffodils are coming into bloom, the crows are nesting and the daylight hours are slowly increasing in length. As we emerge from a more traditional winter all our hopes are pinned on it being a better summer than experienced over the last couple of years. I sympathise with greenkeepers everywhere who annually suffer from the Augusta syndrome, how the industry can get the golfer to appreciate that not all clubs have the ability (or budget) to create Augusta like conditions remains one of our most difficult challenges.

Who knows, perhaps a weaker pound may help the UK holiday industry, a bit more sun may encourage golfers out onto the golf course a little more often and some good weather should help greenkeepers in their quest to produce better playing conditions, despite the budget constraints that we are all experiencing.

There is no doubt that the current world economic crisis will do golf, both as a sport and as an industry, no good. The major tournaments are coming under scrutiny from sponsors who are having to make soul searching commercial decisions, possibly for the first time in many years. BIGGA is no exception and the downturn in advertising revenue in particular is having an adverse impact in our profitability, requiring some close scrutiny of our overheads. It's not all bad news though. Stand bookings for our own exhibition in Harrogate next year are coming in steadily and Halls A, B, C and M are filling up. Once fully booked we have several options for expansion including Halls Q and D but it's too early to commit at the moment.

Plans are well under way in the restructuring of BIGGA into a company limited by guarantee and the intention is to have the new company in place so as to enable trading with effect from July 1. In due course members will receive formal notification of the changes but in the meanwhile anyone requiring further information should contact HQ.

During the coming months I and some of my colleagues at BIGGA HOUSE will be attending some of the Section and Region events around the country and we look forward to meeting members. Please take full advantage of the opportunity to discuss Association matters, we welcome your views!

John Pemberton
Chief Executive



SCOTTISH REGION - CENTRAL

Over 50 Course Managers, Greenkeepers, Golf Club Committees and members from some trade organisations attended a seminar at The Castle Course - organised by STRI and supported by The Scotts Company. Entitled "The Art of Objective Greenkeeping" those present heard some excellent deliveries from Richard Windows, Henry Bechelet, Andy Cole, Alistair Beggs, Lee Penrose and Kelly Harmar. As well as a brief course walk at the end of the day there was also a demonstration and explanation of a few new tools which will shortly be available to help put objective figures to turf firmness and surface smoothness.

The next event we have planned is an evening seminar from Stan Zontek, of the USGA Greens Section, John Kaminski, of Penn State, and Lane Tredway, of North Carolina State Uni. They are over in the UK on a fact finding study tour (it involves beer and golf) and have kindly agreed to come along to the training room at Elmwood College at 7pm on April 23. These three have a wealth of knowledge in research and experience and some of the subjects they hope to cover would be how putting green management influences disease activity, how management has changed over the past 20 years and the effect climate change is having on our greens. This should be a great night with plenty of opportunity for questions.

You should shortly receive our annual newsletter (if you haven't already done so) along with the entry form for the Spring Outing at Scotsraig. The Committee would again ask you reply quickly if you plan to attend the outing and please send your cheque with your entry form as we will not accept money on the day, no pay = no play!

Finally, we have a number of events lined up for the autumn. On October 26, on the morning of the AGM, we have a training course on disciplinary procedures, how to structure them and follow the correct procedure. On 17 and 18 November we plan a two day Ecology Course with assistance from STRI, and on December 2 a half day course on carrying out staff appraisals. We are hoping to secure some funding for some of these but most of all we need your support.

More details can be found on: www.biggacentralsection.org.uk

Gordon Moir

Section Notes

Please email your notes to melissa@bigga.co.uk, or scott@bigga.co.uk by the 5th of the month.

Suggested word guide: 500