



News from the Chief Executive

It hardly seems five minutes since 31st December, 1999, when we were all anticipating the arrival of the new millennium and the prospect of computers everywhere suffering millennium bug problems on the final stroke of midnight. What happened - nothing, and we all breathed a sigh of relief and looked forward to life in the 21st Century.

Who would have thought though that nine years later the world would be in such a state of economic crisis. Share values around the world have been decimated, financial institutions are going into receivership and retailers are resorting to desperate measures to tempt us to part with what few savings we may have. However for all of us the collapse of the Stock Market is devastating, whether a shareholder or not somewhere in our lifestyle we will all be affected. It all sounds rather gloomy, and I suppose it is, but no matter how badly off you are there will always be someone who would swap places with you. Those of us that enjoy good health, the support of a close family and have good friends should recognise how comparatively well off we are.

I do not however wish to underestimate the consequences of stress at home or at work due to financial or other pressures. As from this month members of the Association will have access to a new benefit in the form of a stress advice and counselling helpline, available all day every day, something that has been recognised as being a vital addition to the existing range of member support services.

The knock-on consequences for golf are only just starting to have an effect and I fear that 2009 will be a year when we really start to feel the recession bite. What, therefore, can members do? I suggest that we all look at how we contribute towards the success of our employer and what we could do to improve our own performance, the performance of the business and perhaps gain that competitive edge. There will inevitably be winners and losers but to some extent we can all influence our own destiny. We can sit back and watch and wait or we can look for new opportunities to do what we do better, taking advantage of training and education along the way.

As Chief Executive of BIGGA one of my roles is to try to help the Board move the Association forward on a secure foundation. An increasingly difficult challenge! The full inclusion of groundsmen as members would help with the building of this base and may present new opportunities, but it is not vital to the ongoing survival of the business. Survive we will but develop we may not, unless we are all prepared to accept change in one form or another.

During 2009, I and key members of the team here at BIGGA HOUSE will be making more effort to attend Region and Section events in order to improve the link between the membership and its Headquarters. Better use will be made of Greenkeeper International and the BIGGA Website as communication tools and a series of surveys and focus group meetings are planned with the ultimate intention of increasing the value of being a member. The services and contacts at Headquarters are not fully appreciated by the membership and I would hope that Members come to identify the Staff as being their first point of contact when they need help, advice or information. It is your Association, so please use it!

I encourage as many of you as possible to get to the Association's event in Harrogate later this month which presents not only the opportunity for education (much of it at no cost to you or your club) but also the chance to catch up with news on products and suppliers as well as providing a rewarding once a year networking opportunity.

I wish all members a healthy and successful 2009 however don't forget that you are part of a professional organisation that wants to help you and the industry go from strength to strength. Be a part of it and not apart from it!



SCOTTISH REGION - AYRSHIRE

Hope you've all had a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year, just a few lines and dates for the diary!

The Section AGM was held at Bogside at the end of October where Derek Wilson agreed to stay on as Secretary, much to everyone's delight! Yours truly has taken up the reins as Chairman from Stephen Higgins, with George Morrison in as Vice-Chairman and Duncan Gray is back on committee!

Tracey Maddison, from HQ, also attended the meeting which added a bit of freshness while subtracting the usual language!

The Patrons' Award Lunch took place at the Terraces Hotel, in Stirling, on December 4, where this year's recipients, Martin Lothian, Turnberry GC, and Marshall Sloss, Beith GC, partook of fine food and drink while also enjoying an excellent speaker, or two, if you include Mr Cruickshanks who was at our table - apart from that the day was great!

Cathkin Braes will host the Scottish National Tournament, on June 11, and the National Championship is to be played at Burnham and Berrow, in Somerset, on October 5 and 6.

George Brown is to receive the Lifetime Achievement Award at Harrogate this month so if any of you can make it down to help him celebrate this special accolade, not many possess, I'm sure you'll have an enjoyable time.

We're looking to get a footie match with the West in March sometime so if anyone is interested in avenging our unlucky defeat a few years ago then give me a bell on: 07939104701 or email me at; denis.t@hotmail.co.uk more news next month, I know, you can hardly wait! Auf Wiedersehen!

Denis Tweddell



NORTH

I am sure you have heard it a hundred times over the past week or so but let me, on behalf of the committee, wish you all a very Happy New Year. How many of you woke up on the 1st with a cloudy head? Who had to go into work on the Thursday morning? Nae Luck!

The AGM finally went ahead in November, at Meldrum House. There were 23 members attending in total, which I don't think was too bad considering it was word of mouth. On the day the golf was of a Stableford format with local bandit, David Stephen, coming in 3rd place with 34 points, 2nd was Alex Cruickshank on 34 points, but with a better inward half and coming in, in 1st place was Paul Marshall, from Cruden Bay, with 36 points. Well done Paul! Thanks go to Kenny Harper and his squad of lads for getting the course in great nick despite the weather. A big thank you from the committee for all those that attended, it really is appreciated.

The final 200 club was drawn at the AGM too. My work colleague, Mikey Fullerton, finally won £30. He came running through into the bothy with his cheque. His eyes nearly popped out of his head. He was so pleased he said, "About time I won something on the 200 Club." He only bought the ticket in March. Some people haven't won in 10 years. Ross Macrae, of Huntly Golf Club, won £30, as did George Patterson, from Lossie Golf Club. The big prize of £100 went to Ian MacLeod, of Tain Golf Club.

It has been decided that next year's outings will be at Portlethen and