



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



Alyth. I am sure there will be a good attendance at these outings and I'm also sure that Neil and Brian will put on a good show for us all. The dates have yet to be confirmed but they will be posted at a later date.

The Patrons' Award Dinner took place on December 4, in Stirling. Our Patrons this year are Dale Robertson and Jim McCormack. Well done guys. They have a trip to Harrogate to look forward to now. To win the Patrons' Award you have to turn up at outings and seminars which are scored as a points system and you've guessed it, the two with the most points win the Patrons' Award.

We also have in our Section, The Scottish Chairman. He is, of course, John Geddes, from McDonald Golf course, in Ellon. Well done John and we hope that everything runs smoothly over the course of your stint as Chairman.

Two of my old mates have become dads again! Firstly, Stephen Brown, Deputy Head of Hawkhill, and his wife, Terri, had another boy, Thomas. Well Done. Is that it now or will you be going for the girl? Also Head Greenkeeper, at Huntly, Ross Macrae and his wife, Nicola, had another boy too; baby, Jonathan, only this was their 7th! Congratulations to both of you and your families!

Kevin Strachan, of Strachan Plant Hire, has asked me to put out the feelers regarding a demonstration of his recycling equipment over three days in March. The 3rd, 4th and 5th to be precise. This will hopefully be taking place at his depot in Echt in Aberdeenshire. I will have more definite details in next month's edition but in the meantime you can contact him on 07801297070 if you need to find out more.

That's it for this month. It does tend to die down over the winter months so any news is much appreciated.

Ben Brookes
07813889374



CENTRAL

Hopefully everyone had a good Christmas and New Year and many of you are now looking forward to Harrogate.

The Section had a committee meeting at Elmwood, on December 3, where a number of items were discussed with regards to staging both educational and social events for members. The committee is willing to try and put on anything the members would like but do require a commitment from people to attend because most things have a cost implication and we cannot afford to run anything at a loss. All we want to do is break even on each event. Many of the courses we are considering are pitched at different levels, from the practical ones such as chainsaw certification, vermin control, A1 assessors qualifications, irrigation repairs and manual handling to more managerial ones for Deputies and Head Greenkeepers/Course Managers such as disciplinary training, writing risk assessments, team building or an environmental workshop, etc.

Some members would just like a social event so we are willing arrange a ten pin bowling evening or a curry night with a guest speaker, whatever is suggested - just contact your committee. For all the latest developments, please visit the website: www.biggacentralsection.org.uk Something we have re-introduced are the two competitions last held a couple of years ago, a photo competition and a funny story competition. There will be a £25 prize in each category to be decided in April and again in October, full details of both, the rules and how to enter are on the website. Many of the trophy winners from last year's golf outings will be contacted by members of the committee and asked to return the trophies to Andy Mellon, at Elmwood, as

soon as possible. This is because many haven't been engraved for a number of years and we would like to get them up to date as they are an important part of the Section's history.

Finally, we intend sending a newsletter out around the end of March, along with the entry form for the spring outing which will be at Scotsraig GC, on April 30. Hopefully, by then we will have a list of events with dates and costs for next autumn and winter.

Gordon Moir



NORTHERN REGION - NORTH WEST

First things first the North West committee would like to wish everyone a very happy new 2009. We hope the weather is a little kinder this year.

In December we were to hold the AGM and Bert Cross Memorial Golf Day but unfortunately the weather beat us and with Wilmslow Golf Club closed the golf was cancelled. The AGM went on and 13 brave souls had a very informative meeting. We came up with a few ideas for 2009 and we are busy working on these plans now. We have also got a few new faces on board and here they are: North West Section committee 2009, Secretary, Chris Sheehan, Chairman, Alan Donlevy, Treasurer, Billy Merritt, Clive Poole, Colin Denny, Adie Holt, Peter McVicar, Nick Gray, Phil Dewhurst, Dave MacAvoy.

I hope that everyone can visit Harrogate Week. There is plenty for everyone this year and the education side is fantastic so please make an effort to attend if you can. I am still finalising the fixtures for this year and as soon as I have them all I will send them out to everyone. You can access any forthcoming fixtures in the member's Section on the BIGGA website: www.bigga.org.uk - under Your Pages.

Chris Sheehan



NORTHERN

Just a quick note to wish you all a very Happy New Year, I hope you had an enjoyable Christmas and that Santa brought you everything you asked for!

With the Christmas Golf and AGM on December 11 having to be cancelled due to the weather, the AGM has been rescheduled for Tuesday, January 13 at Cookridge Hall Golf Club, with a 7pm start. Anybody wishing to attend please get in touch as soon as possible.

You will all hopefully by now have received a full fixture list for events and the annual seminar in 2009. If you haven't received yours by the end of January please let me know and I will arrange to send one out.

I hope to see a few of you at Harrogate this month and again, a very happy new year to all.

Adam Speight

Section Notes -
Can all notes be emailed to: melissa@bigga.co.uk
by the 5th of the month prior to publication please.
Suggested word guide: 500



Around the Green



SHEFFIELD

Welcome everyone. Hopefully you all had a fantastic Christmas and the New Year has started well. I have quite a bit of news this month which is very welcome. So here goes.

Firstly I would like to thank everyone who attended our Christmas golf, I am sure you will all agree that it was a fantastic day. I would like to pass everyone's thanks on to Tim and his staff at Worksop, for once again presenting a wonderful course for us all. Once again there were some quite amazing scores from our members. The results are as follows: 1. Steve Pickering, 40pts; 2. Darren Coup 38pts; Trade, Dave Smith.

Congratulations also to everyone who won a prize. Once again a big thank you goes to Mike Brear and Mark Robinson from Rigby Taylor for sponsoring the day and all the other trade members for supporting the Section so well.

The AGM was once again well attended and things ran very smoothly, unfortunately this year we have had two committee members leave. On behalf of the Section I would like to say a big thank you to John Lax and Chris Astle for their commitment to the Section. All other committee members will be carrying on in their roles. Ian Whitehead agreed to fill one of the vacant positions on the committee and I would like to welcome him to his new role and we on the committee look forward to all his fresh new ideas. As a committee we will once again work to ensure that we have a successful year and move the Section forward once again.

Finally, I have a big congratulations and a get well soon. I would like to offer big congratulations to Mick Gillet, from Hallamshire Golf Club, on the birth of his first child. Good luck Mick to you and your family.

A big get well soon goes to Dave Chappell, from Rotherham Golf Club, who has recently had a hip operation. Get well soon Dave, I know your staff at Rotherham are missing you loads.

That is all from me this month, I will speak to you all again in February and hopefully have a lot more news to give to you.

James Stevens Section Secretary



NORTH WALES

Happy New Year! 2009 beckons us in with open arms and with the current financial situation I'm sure it will bring loads of challenges too, although I'm also sure that as resilient as we greenkeepers are, we will ride the coming storm with flying colours.

The Christmas tournament took place at Prestatyn Golf Club and on a suitably seasonal frosty day we played a course that was set out as expected, beautifully, the sun came out and made the day even more exceptional. We need to thank Dave Parry and his team for the amazing course, the catering for the mouth-watering food (some found the turkey so succulent they had a whole leg on their plate!) and we must also thank the other staff at the club and their members for making us feel so welcome.

The results were: 1. Leasowe team, 88pts; 2. Abergele Wanderers, 85pts; 3. Stuart McCall's team, 84pts.

The bus to Harrogate will be running as normal the only difference is we

will be going on Wednesday 21st instead of the normal Tuesday, as always the coach is free for members with a nominal fee for non-members, if you have any inquiries or want to book seats please contact Jeremy Hughes who I'm sure will do his best to sort you out.

We seem a little short of local news again this month so please feel free to contact Either myself or Johnny Evans if you have any local news.

Here's to a happy and prosperous new year to all. All the best until next month.

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MIDLAND REGION - MIDLAND

Well what's your New Year's resolution then? Give up the dreaded weed, the demon brew, spend more time with the lovable brats/wife or husband (in most cases). Mine being, after coercion and advise, to compile our notes/newsletter with the same enthusiastic and literal obscurity that (by my own omission) has dwindled with the familiarity of the passing of time. To those who feel my obscurity is foul I suggest a dictionary, to understanding souls. Unfortunately, no room for such this month. Normal service shall be resumed next month. May your god help you?

Our Christmas event was held at the lovely South Staff's Golf Club. I'm sure all were looking forward to playing such a prestigious course in its fullness. Unfortunately due to frost and snow, temps were rightly enforced, it was a miracle that the course was open at all. However it was evident that the course was in superb condition as presented by Course Manager, Mr R.Thomas and his fine team - Our thanks to you gentlemen. The results of the day were: 1. G. Turner & P. McCrainor. 2. R. Hayhurst & M. Chamberlain. 3. P. Mills & J. Parlmer. 4. A. Folds & M. Gilgreast. 5. M. Hughes & M. Gash. 6. H. Middlebrook & S. Harvey. Our thanks to M. Chamberlain, of Tacit, for sponsorship of the main prize table. Nearest the Pin in 2 went to G.Turner and N.L. to D.Fellows - thanks to Sherriff Amenity. Also our thanks to Turners, John and Kev for the halfway house tea, coffee, and sloe gin.

Our greatest of thanks to South Staffs Golf Club for affording us their very gracious hospitality, and also thanks to Peter Baker for his very honest, informative, humorous and personal accounts of his experiences of Ryder Cup and Pro Tour golf.

Our very successful Scotts Doubles tournament was played between S.Harvey/N.Smith and P.Nixon/T.Cheese at the magnificent venue of Wentworth and the former were crowned winners. Well done gentlemen, but surely all are winners. Our thanks to Scotts for sponsoring this fine event. For next year's final we have been fortunate enough, via Scotts, to play the final at the lovely venue of the Oxfordshire Golf Club, our thanks to Scotts for their continued support of this great competition. Don't forget to get your entry in before the spring competition. I shall give you more details of this year's events next month.

Our annual match against the East Midland Section was played at Kedlestone Park Golf Club and the course was in great condition as presented by Course Manager, Dave Leatherland, and his fine team. Yet again the East



Midland Section were the winners, congratulations to them. Our thanks to Tony Cheese/Rigby Taylor for their continued sponsorship of this match.

May I wish all a very Happy New Year, and let's hope for a dryer season this year.

Sean McDade



EAST OF ENGLAND

Happy New Year everybody. Hopefully Santa brought you everything you wanted this year, in greenkeeping terms that would be a cold, dry, windy Christmas period so there are no worries about disease kicking off during this traditional down time.

So as 2009 dawns we can look back on 2008 and firstly say, "Where did it go!". It doesn't feel like a year since I wrote my first scribbles for these pages.

So what have we learnt from 2008, well we have been hit by the "credit crunch". This means many things to many people however as far as we are all concerned it means golfers becoming more careful with their money, which in some cases can lead to falls in membership numbers and golf club revenue. Societies are lessening in both amounts that are out there and the numbers that play in them, again leading to a fall in golf clubs income. So where does this leave us humble Course Managers trying to maintain our precious golf courses in these turbulent times? Well for all but the very lucky few of us I guess it means a tightening of the belts and finding cheaper more cost effective ways of producing high standard golf courses.

2008 was a good year for growing grass, there was never an excessively hot spell, and warm dry spells were always followed by periods of rain. Never good working conditions, but always a relief when the greens begin to dry out and the hose pipes are dug out the back of the sheds. Winter this year has brought frost in October and three snowfalls before mid December, none of which have been experienced in the last few years. Whatever does Mother Nature have in store for us next?

2008 was a good year for the East of England Section. All golf days were well supported and the Section continues to be a fun and friendly place to be. The fixtures are being finalised at the moment, but any golfers out there that have not joined us before please feel free to do so.

Our final golf day of the year took place on Monday, December 8, at Holme Hall Golf Club, in Scunthorpe. A good turnout enjoyed a golf course well prepared by Jim and his staff, the frost that morning and the rain that joined us on the back nine did nothing to dampen peoples spirits. After everybody had dried off, the catering staff served the first Christmas dinner of the season up to us. After the meal was our traditional Christmas bring and win prize draw. Once again there was the usual selection of wacky, rude, useful and edible gifts in store for the unsuspecting person unwrapping them. Once again, many thanks to Holme Hall Golf Club and to LMS for sponsoring the day.

The results of the golf were as follows: 1. Gary Salisbury, Adi Kitchenson, Russ Latham; 2. Steve Beverly, Graeme MacDonald; 3. Tito Arena, Rob Bemment.

Nearest the pin - Allan Walker (although there is a school of thought that he may have took "placing" a bit too literally and placed his ball nearest the pin and not 30 foot away where it landed!) Longest drive - Dave Coupland.

May I also pass on congratulations and best wishes of all in the Section to Dave Coupland with his golfing career. Everybody knows he made a very

respectable appearance at The Open at Carrnoustie, last year and hopes to follow this with amateur success next year, followed by a trip to the European Tour Qualifying School at the end of next year. All the best, and if you are available for the match vs the trade next year then let Allan know asap.

A quick date for the diary of 2009 is Wednesday, February 18, at Newark Golf Club where our winter seminar will be held. Details are yet to be finalised, however part of the day will include presentations from Barenbrug's Neil Pettican and Jane Leyland on the subject of how grass seed gets from plant form into bags, the processes involved, and methods of breeding different cultivars. Full details will follow.

I will finish with a quick mention of a change at committee level. After 20 years of serving on the Midland Region board, Graeme MacDonald is standing down. On behalf of the committee, many thanks for all the hard work and time you have put in to representing us over the years. Rob Welford has stepped in to join Allan Walker as our voices at regional level.

Looking forward to seeing everybody at Harrogate.
Steve Beverly



BERKS/BUCKS AND OXON

Happy New Year! Another year bites the dust, Christmas is over, new resolutions begun, the credit crunch has emptied our pockets and we are all ready to rock and roll for 2009.

I am trying to reflect on the past year and realise that not all have had it given to them on a plate - indeed the crystal ball seems to cast doom and gloom. The economy is always making the headlines and then more rain for those who have already had enough to bring them to breaking point with the possibility of yet more flooding. So I hear you all say - what's the future for us in the Chinese Year of the Ox.

This year is one in which success will escape without a sustained mindful effort. The sort of problems that are encountered in the year of the Ox tend to be home front problems that seem to be never ending. The Ox year needs discipline and it is not the time for unruly behaviour or taking short cuts. In this year success is achieved solely through hard work.

"So, is this going to be a tough year?" I hear you all ask. With the credit crunch always making the news, only the Ox seems to know, but judging by the words of Chinese wisdom I feel we need to tread slowly and see that our courses prosper in an ever changing climate that will be testing enough for us and difficult to navigate in the year ahead. On arriving at Frilford Heath Golf Club for this year's Annual Turkey Trot, any doom and gloom soon disappeared.

Frilford Heath Golf Club is situated near the "dreaming spires" of Oxford and in the heart of the Cotswolds.

The courses are designed in classic golfing country and provide 54 holes of championship golf with heathland characteristics that will test the most accomplished golfer to his limit and frustrate those who can only wish that they were immortal.

As part of Frilford Heath's centenary events, the England v France International Golf Match returned back to the club in May last year. Consequently, victory was assured, France defeated and sent back across the channel without the trophy that has been strongly contested by the two nations biennially.

The delightful old clubhouse provided excellent facilities and a first class restaurant which was managed by Steward and Mandy Wood, who ensured



Around the Green

gastronomic delights were enjoyed by all who attended the day.

Thank you to Frilford Heath Golf Club who in their centenary year provided us with the courtesy of the course and Steve Styles, Executive Director, ensured we all had a great day at the club. Our thanks go to Sid Arrowsmith and all his staff for providing first class playing conditions on the Blue course which challenged the winning teams all the way to the finish line. It is no wonder that at this event we had a record turnout just short of 100 greenkeepers who competed with good spirit to make the day a good one.

Our thanks to the main sponsor of the day – Avoncrop Amenity, and to Barry McCloskey and Darren Homer who presented the prizes to the following winners: 2. Team Two Hopes: Chris Lomas, Philip Ryder, Mark Hancock, Richard Davies. 3. Team The New Crooks: Alec McIndoe, Eric Kinlon, Andy Thrift, Graham Glen. Sean Haymer and Joe Newman won the Turner groundcare putting competition. Various others, too good to mention, won the 9 long drive and near pin prizes that were in abundance on every other hole.

Thank you to all our sponsors throughout 2008. We have had great support from all the trade which has included Sheriff, Avoncrop, Tacit, Vitax, Rigby Taylor, Turner Groundcare, Golf & Turf, Browns, Gem Professional, Headland, Greentech and Banks Amenity. A special mention to Jon Beck and Ian Richardson who served us well at the halfway house with their usual flair and wished us Bon Appetit.

The AGM commenced and the following officers were elected: Sid Arrowsmith, as Chairman for the Section; Adam King, Secretary; Frank Booth, Treasurer; Alec MacIndoe, Education; Jake Japie Snyman, Website. Simon Marsh, Matt Smith and Eric Kinlon were elected as committee members with yours truly as the scribe for another year.

A special thanks to Alistair Higgs, the new Head Greenkeeper for Donnington Valley Golf Club, who throughout 2008 co-ordinated the golf days as Match Secretary. Alistair, as well as Dan Lightfoot, will be standing down this year due to work commitments and the challenges that await. Dan and his wife recently gave birth to their second child. Congratulations and thank you both for your support.

If any member has any news or views they would like to share, or would like more information about the Section and forthcoming events in 2009 you only have to log your cyberspace details and e-mail address with the new Secretary, Adam King, Radley College, who will only be pleased to keep you informed and up to date. Adam can be contacted at ajk@radley.org.uk

See you all at Harrogate Week in a few weeks time and wishing you all a great New Year and hope the Ox keeps any greenkeeping gremlins at bay.

Mark Day
mark.day@tacitgolf.co.uk



MID-ANGLIA

Happy New Year one and all. Hopefully, you have had a peaceful Christmas with no real problems during the busy holiday period. Not much news this month, I'm afraid, so I'll keep it brief.

Golf Meetings 2009 are as follows: Spring – in discussion, Summer – tba, Autumn – October 7 at Mid-Herts Golf Club, Winter – December 7 at John O'Gaunt Golf Club. Thanks to Simon Banks, from Banks Amenity, for sponsoring Golfer of the Year this year. The spring tournament will again be the qualifier for the National Championship. Entry forms must be in at

least one week before the competition is due to be held to allow Richard Saunders to organise the events properly and there will be no exceptions, thank you!

Please also visit the "Your Pages" Section of the BIGGA website as you can find out all the latest information for the Mid-Anglia Section. As venues for golf and training courses etc are arranged, they will be posted on these pages first.

The Section has recently organised several successful training programmes which have been fully subscribed. If you are interested in attending any of the training days please see the BIGGA website ("Your Pages" link) to see what courses are on offer or contact Gerald Bruce by emailing gerald@berkhamstedgc.co.uk.

Congratulations to Dunstable Downs Golf Club's Luke Burman and wife, Becky, on the birth of their first child, Oliver David Burman, on November 25. Both mum and son are doing well.

The Winter Texas Scramble was also held at Dunstable Downs Golf Club and Frank Scullion and his staff had produced the course to an excellent standard. Snow had been forecast and despite it freezing hard in the early part of the night and then heavy rain first thing in the morning, the sky lightened at tee off time and underfoot conditions were very good. Thanks Frank, Gary and the rest of the lads. Also, sincere thanks to Dunstable Downs Golf Club for kindly hosting our event. The food was also excellent and a big thank you to the caterers too.

Barry McCloskey, from Avoncrop, was the generous sponsor of the day and provided an excellent prize table. Winners this year were Nigel Broadwith, Kevin Armstrong, B. Gaynor and M. Stakeman, John O'Gaunt Golf Club, 56.1pts; 2. Trevor Dealey, Dale Housden, K. Housden and A..Henderson, Caddington GC, 56.2 pts. 3. Simon Banks, Mark Ely, Rob Catlin and Phil Gibson from "Trade Bandits & Phil" 56.5pts. Longest drive winner was Dale Housden, again, (somebody check his balls) and Nearest the Pin was Rob "get inside that" Catlin. Golfer of the Year was Myles Wood, from Berkhamsted Golf Club, which was kindly sponsored by Simon Banks, of Banks Amenity. Thanks to everybody for organising, sponsoring and supporting the event, it was most enjoyable yet again.

Finally, the committee are looking into the possibility of having a Section Golf Tee Shirt with our logo embroidered onto it. If there is enough interest then it can be taken to the next stage, please let me or anyone else on the committee know if you would be interested in this idea.

Any news or items of interest are always welcome. Hosts for Golf Meetings would be very much appreciated as well. Look forward to seeing you at Harrogate Week.

Craig Spooner
craig.spooner@limagrain.co.uk



SOUTH EAST REGION - KENT

Happy New Year! Firstly a quick report on our annual Turkey Trot at Birchwood Park.

Thorough preparations prior to the event ensured that the day ran like a well-oiled machine. Some of the attendees, presumably in some form of homage, were equally well oiled later on in the day but nothing could detract from this great occasion and I certainly won't be naming names in this column!

After meeting early to discuss the day's format with the assembled we



all headed down to the first tee in anticipation of a great day on the well-presented course (though I say so myself!). Months of intense preparation saw the course in fine fettle and there was an air of optimism on the tee as our determined group set about their business. The gloom cast by the heavy cloud cover was negated handsomely by the Christmas cheer being dispensed by the ubiquitous Vic Maynard and the Ernest Doe party bus.

Kev was doing his best David Bailey impression on the 1st tee taking photos of each group before the off. These shall all be adorning our webpage by now so have a look. After a couple of holes the threat of rain lifted and we were all able to take advantage of the now ideal conditions. High scores were the order of the day for most but, ultimately, none could come close to matching that of our website guru, Danny Stunt, whose winning score of 48 points off of a 24 handicap was nothing short of daylight robbery! Worryingly, that's two years running that a 48 point total has taken the prize!

Full results as follows: 1. Danny Stunt, Chislehurst; 2. Paul Rudkin, Sundridge Park; 3. Russ Bain, also Chislehurst - They obviously get a lot of time off to practise!).

After a great game an equally great Christmas dinner followed served by Birchwood's finest. Our AGM followed and I would like to thank Peter Todd for joining us at this point to explain the proposed constitutional changes to our Association. The rest of the AGM was whizzed through by Kev with the status quo being preserved for another year. A fun raffle with some very comical, seasonal prizes ensued raising plenty of laughs (see website photos!).

At the end of the night everyone who attended was given a bottle of wine together with next year's fixture card with details of another five events for you to enjoy. Many thanks to everyone who helped make the day a success, Birchwood management for their hospitality, the waitresses, my guys on the course and all our sponsors for providing so much to keep our Section alive and well.

Lastly, I'd just like to wish you all the best for the coming year and hope to see some of you at Harrogate, if not at Walmer & Kingsdown, on March 19.

Best of British as always guys.
Rob Holland
www.kentgreenkeepers.co.uk



ESSEX

What a day! We ended the season as we started at Upminster with rain. The Essex Golf & Country Club hosted the Christmas Progressive Stableford and AGM. The day started with heavy rain, which dampened the course, so much so that at 9.30am half an hour before we were due to face the shotgun start the greens were flooded. But it eased as we left the confines of the clubhouse and rain in the wind was all we had to contend with for the first holes, after that the day turned out quite well with the opportunity to discard the waterproofs and swing the club around a bit better.

The golf was interesting and entertaining due to the format of two scores counting on the first six, three on the second six and all four on the final six - with par for the team being 108.

The AGM was held after the golf and was attended by around 65 members and Guests and our Sponsors. The proceedings were chaired by Don Clark our out-going Chairman who was later returned to the position for another year. Don thanked all of the Committee, our sponsors and Clive Osgood for their support over the past year. He also congratulated all of the

winner of our Section competitions and the Pairs Knockout, plus our teams that represented the Section at National level and the team that played the Surrey and Sussex Sections in the annual three-way battle.

The Treasurer, Tom Smith, announced that we had made a small profit over last year but the end of year audit is early and not a true representation of where we are really at. We still had two Section events to run and our new Seminar - the money for these should really be out of the 2008 accounts. So we do not have as much in the coffers as would appear. He hopes that the 2009 season will attract the same if not more sponsors for our Section, as we would like to run a bigger education seminar in our 2009 season.

Antony Kirwan, our Competition Secretary, stated that we had had a good turn out of members throughout the year but we will try next year to encourage more to both join and play in our matches. Next season we are to play at the following courses. spring: Colne Valley, summer: Burnham-on-Crouch, autumn: Cannons Brook, winter: Stapleford Abbots, Christmas: Orsett. Antony expects the tee off times to be a bit earlier next season due to the late evening finishes and as most of our members have early starts the next day the committee feels that the earlier starts would be better for everyone. We intend to send five members to the National Championship later this year, the format of how we select the players will be decided at our next committee meeting (watch this space).

Clive Osgood outlined the proposed changes to the constitution to be put forward at the National AGM; these he stated were available to read in last month's Greenkeeper International. He thanked the committee for their hard work over the past year.

All members were last year elected for a two year term so after Don Clark was returned as Chairman for a further year and there was no any other business the meeting was closed and dinner was served.

There were after dinner speeches and thanks to the Essex Golf and Country Club for entertaining us for the day, Chairman Don thanked the club, Food & Beverage Manager, Chris Hill, and Chef, Kelly Smith, for a fine meal, and for looking after us so well. Seniors' Captain, Ray Mabbut, replied for the club, he was joined by his Vice Captain, Roger Farson - they both accompanied Course Manager, Martin Forrester, in his team on there own course, having dined with them I know that they enjoyed the day and Ray spoke very well of his adventures in I think to him a new format of play.

After the speeches Ray presented the prizes to the winners. Spring Trophy at Upminster - Richard Linin, Summer Trophy at Warley Park - Antony Kirwan, Autumn Trophy at Three Rivers - Sam Anderson, Winter Trophy at Bentley - Andy Cracknell, and the Matchplay Knockout - Mark Stopps/Mark Keysell. Trade Golfer of the Year went to Mark Keysell (Rigby Taylor) and Golfer of the Year - Antony Kirwan.

There then followed the presentation of the Christmas winners: 1. Bentley - Mark Stopps, Neil Peachey, Dennis Johnson, Alan Levett; 2. Channels - Richard Dunmow, Malcolm Smith, Kyle Smith, Nick Tutton; 3. Orsett 2nd Team - Jeff Taylor, Stuart Rodger, Michael Hockley, Richard Herring.

The Longest Drive and Nearest the Pin were both won by Daniel Hughes, Forrester Park.

Thank you again to The Essex for a nice day.

Next season I'm hoping to have a new look website for you, so watch out for that.

Please contact me at essexbigga@talktalk.net
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Arnold Phipps-Jones
Press Officer



Around the Green



SOUTH WEST & WALES REGION - SOUTH WEST

Happy New Year to everyone. I hope that the new "email invite" system worked for everyone last year, and you all got an invite to the Christmas Tournament okay. Please can anyone who didn't get an invite let me know so I can add your name to the lists. Similarly, if you change Providers or Addresses - again, please let me, and Justine at HQ, both know.

Might I suggest a New Year's Resolution for us all - visit another club nearby to you, where the greenkeepers may not be active members, tell them exactly what's on offer here in the South West, and persuade them to come to at least one meeting this year. Tell them that there is a committee of local greenkeepers - who are giving up their time and working hard to improve conditions, status, stature, and prospects within their industry. Tell your friends - it can't be done alone - full support is needed, now more than ever. Join your Association and support the industry.

Thanks and congratulations to Jane Jones, Chris Sealey, and all the Regional Board for the excellent Regional Seminar at Cannington, back in November last year. The STRI "Disturbance Theory" guys were on top form - and I certainly felt a lot less disturbed by the end. The theory has evolved significantly in a year, and I was really glad I attended. It was also very nice to see John Pemberton and Tracey Maddison join us for the day, and it was interesting to hear John explaining how the Association needs to move forward, and how we all need to carefully consider the future direction.

Further Excavator Safety Training days are available in the New Year, as are Chainsaw Training Courses. Do please let me know any other issues or training that you would like covered or arranged.

A Section Seminar is planned for early March featuring major industry issues. Watch this space!

And finally - Back at 'Minch we've had yet another break-in at the New Course - (three in 18 months now). The work's mobile rang at 9.30pm on a Monday night - I should've known better than to answer but rashly picked it up without thinking.

Yep - it's the alarm monitoring company - the New Course greenshed intruder alarm's gone off and as the named keyholder, could I get over there and sort it out. My sons and I jump into the car and drive straight there. When we arrive, we pull down to the sheds - pitch dark in the middle of the golf course, and can immediately see (a - the door's been forced open, (b - the alarm box's been smashed off the wall, and (c - the lights are on inside. As we turn the car, the lights inside the shed promptly go off. Ah...

Had it been at home - we might've attempted to storm the building - however as it's at work - we retire to a safe distance up in the main car-park and dial 999 on the car phone. The police come on immediately saying there's been a rash of break-ins that evening and they're very stretched, but the helicopter's in the air and it'll be sent to the area asap. "Stay on the line in case there's a problem," ordered a terse voice. "Wow" we think, suitably impressed. Within a couple of minutes we can indeed see the helicopter - the only slight snag being it appears to be hovering over the Old Course (four miles away). We check on the phone - postcodes and all. The response is at once patronizing and insistent - "Of course we're in the right s*dding place - and the helicopter can see a single person making off on a pushbike". "We've got some ground forces moving in - is anyone authorised to be in the immediate vicinity of your premises at this time of night?" "No certainly not" we chime - "don't let him get away".

Things got a little blurry after that - we could clearly hear the slow rhythmic

tick-tick-tick of a bicycle being ridden carefully into the night, which was harshly interrupted by the multiple slamming of car doors, the hasty drawing of truncheons, and someone yelling "There he is Lads - GO - GO - GO!!" (By now there's the sound of panting and heavy running footsteps, and the bicycle's suddenly going tick tick tick tick tick). This was followed by the muted sounds of a scuffle, and someone screaming - "place the shopping bag on the ground, and move away from the bicycle!" followed a little less certainly by - "keep the walking stick where I can see it".

At this point a new, forceful, and outraged voice was heard bellowing phrases such as "Young Whippersnappers" - "Dunkirk" - "El-Alamein" - "Why did we bother?" - "Dinner with the Chief Constable" - "MP" - and - "My Solicitor...." Finally we hear a sheepish "Well - ahem - thank you for your assistance with our enquiries sir - do enjoy the remainder of your ride home".

With that the voice comes back on the line - "The New Course you say?" "Yes" we chorus wearily giving the postcode yet again. Within seconds, the helicopter's overhead and no less than seven squad cars come screeching into the car park, and completely ignoring us trying to direct them, disperse all over the golf course in mainly the wrong directions in a spray of mud and loose grass - before someone reverses back into the car-park and asks us where the buildings are. Just when we thought things were settling down, the dog unit arrived complete with baying Alsatians and Rambo in control. It was difficult to tell who galloped into the sheds the faster (scattering valuable Forensics and DNA everywhere) - Rambo, or the dogs.

Unsurprisingly, by this time the villains were nowhere to be seen.

Have a very peaceful New Year and enjoy Harrogate Week. If anyone has some proper news - please, let's have it!

Paul Worster paulw@mgcnew.co.uk



DEVON & CORNWALL

Hello everyone, hope you all had a relaxing and peaceful Christmas. With another year underway one of my initial thoughts is that we have a drier more seasonal summer generally as the last three have been somewhat wetter than average!

The 12th was the date of our November meeting at Bowood Park Golf Club at Lanteglos, on the edge of Camelford in Cornwall. The weather was very pleasant, somewhat surprisingly as recent days had been mainly rainy ones! The course was presented in an excellent condition by Rob Cook, Course Manager and his team, with the fairways - I'm sure Rob won't mind me mentioning, surprisingly dry and firm given the recent weather, a credit to him and his team! I myself normally play golf but on this occasion was unable to get there early enough so I caught up with the course walk at the greenkeepers complex.

Barenburg and Cornwall Farmers sponsored the day and the golf was won by Tony 'Jacko' James, Head Greenkeeper, Killiow Park, 39pts; 2. Richard Antenen, Bigbury GC, 35pts; 3. Richard Shapland with 31pts. The winner of Nearest the Pin was Jim Sheehan, Head Greenkeeper, Truro GC, and Shaun Warren won the Longest Drive.

A big thank you to Bowood Park and all the staff, especially the caterers for the wonderful meal!

A special thank to George Sheils, our guest speaker for the day, for his 'How to keep your course open during wet weather' topic on the course walk and 'How Green's staff can help your club survive the credit crunch' speech after our meal.

Thank you to Graeme for a successful 'Communication' course, and thank



you to Launceston GC for the free use of their facilities, the feedback was very positive but a shame more senior greenkeepers didn't take advantage, especially considering the low cost. A reminder the spring workshop will be held at St Mellion Golf Complex on March 4 on the subject of Machinery set up, fault diagnosis, health and safety and a grinding practical and theory session. If there are any subjects you would like covered please contact Graeme or myself.

Jerry Cole 07764 224582 greenwaysjrc@aol.com



SOUTH WALES

Hello everyone. Hope you all had a great Christmas and a Happy New Year. A quick update, Henry Stead who has been writing for this column has been very busy recently and has passed the responsibility on to me, so a big thank you to Henry for the work he has done in the past.

Ok, firstly the Christmas competition, which was held, as is the tradition, at Pyle and Kenfig Golf Club. The weather held off to enable a reasonable turn out to play on a golf course that was in superb condition. Well done to Paul (PJ) Johnson and his staff for all their hard work.

The results were: 1. Andy Roach, Haverfordwest GC, 33pts; 2. Darryl Bray, Morriston GC, 30pts; 3. James White, 29pts. The silver salver prize for best scores throughout the season was one by Andy (I'll have to get a bigger mantelpiece) Roach. Nearest the Pin was won by Alan Abel (who narrowly beat Andy Roach's shot) and the trade prize, for which Andy thankfully doesn't qualify, was won by Peter Holstrom.

One of the golfers playing that day was Ian Kinley, who has recently been appointed as Course Manager at Royal Porthcawl Golf Club. Ian announced his arrival in Wales by blasting a huge drive down the 18th to win the Longest Drive competition. Croeso i Gymru Ian! Welcome to Wales.

A big thank you to the sponsors for the day, namely Vitax, who have sponsored this event for as long as I can remember. To Joe Crawley, UK Sales Manager for Vitax, for taking the time to think of different prizes every year. This year it was cases of wine that Joe thought would make people forget about the credit crunch, and everything else for that matter!

Thanks again to Paul and his team for the excellent golf course, to P & K's Captain, Mr Jeff Vincent, for attending and presenting the prizes, to Pam and her staff for the excellent Christmas dinner and to Julian Bartlett-Jones for being a more than capable MC.

On the education front, the winter series of lectures starts again in January, details of which will be sent to you shortly. Your support is vital for their continuation so get yourselves down there! If you require a lift - phone a rep!

A get well soon message now to an old colleague of mine, Andy Matthews at Mountain Ash Golf Club. Andrew has been fighting the big 'C' for a few years and just when he thought it was gone it came back with a vengeance, leading to major surgery in 2008. So get well soon Andy, and when you are well enough to return to work, have Phil Huish give you some easy jobs to do i.e. the ones he normally does!

Also get well soon to Gary Humphries at Llanwern Golf Club. Not sure what's wrong with him but the words 'two bricks' was mentioned.

Thanks to all our sponsors for the golf events of 2008. Here's to seeing you all again in 2009.

Ceri Richards celticceri@aol.com 07831168645

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