



News from the Chief Executive

Augusta and St Andrews, two names that when mentioned will immediately bring images of golf to a great many people. Both great sporting arenas at completely different ends of the golf spectrum. One a highly manicured, magnificent but exclusive showcase the other a sensitively managed area of coastline, largely as nature made it, for the pleasure of the public as well as the golfer. I wonder what pops up in your mind? For me it is the view from the 12th tee at Augusta looking down over Rae's Creek to a tight, slightly sloping, green that is framed by pine trees and a mass of colourful azaleas. At St Andrews it is standing on the 1st tee looking down on the links in the early morning sunshine, trying to imagine golfers of a bygone age 'knocking one down the middle'. Not that I have personally played either!

I have this year had the pleasure of visiting the Masters as a guest of the PGA, to whom I am eternally grateful. I have often watched this tournament on TV, never thinking that one day I would be witnessing it in person. I have until now been somewhat cynical of the lush green fairways, the carefully prepared, lightening fast greens and the splashes of colour more fitting of a botanical garden. I am a convert. There is a place for Augusta as long as we realise that it is maintained somewhat regardless of cost, it is in an area with the climate needed to grow the grass species, it is exclusive and it is largely prepared over 51 weeks for this one tournament. How we get this message over to the average UK golfer who watches his or her TV and then expects greens staff over here to replicate such conditions I do not know. My visit to Augusta was special and I brought back memories of a unique golf course as well as having had some very productive talks for the Association.

Back in the real world I am working on the voting papers for the forthcoming Extra-Ordinary General Meeting (EGM) that has been scheduled for Tuesday, June 16. The meeting is being convened for the express purpose of voting on changes to the Constitution that will allow access to fuller membership by groundsmen involved with the maintenance of sports turf. This matter has been debated over many, many months and the changes, if adopted, will aid advancement of the Association. This motion has the full support of the Board and I hope that after due consideration members will support it also. There is a fear that BIGGA will be taken over by groundsmen and that the greenkeeping profession will lose its identity. I, and the Board, do not share those fears. The greenkeeping aspect of the Association is highly regarded and respected and while we hope to recruit groundsmen I do not see a massive influx of new members happening overnight. We will merely be offering everyone in the sports turf industry a wider choice and a great number will continue to support the IoG or perhaps no single organisation.

Finally as we move out of spring into summer let's hope that we enjoy better weather than in previous years and that the golfers come out to play wearing sensible heads, with realistic expectations. We can but hope!

John Pemberton
Chief Executive



SCOTTISH REGION

AYRSHIRE

Hope you're all keeping well and your courses are taking shape. Just a few things to let you know about. Firstly, the Autumn Outing has been confirmed for Thursday, October 1, at Powfoot GC. Although I've never played the course, I have heard good things and will be looking forward to our visit!

Another confirmed date is September 11th for our trip to Northern Ireland, and Royal Belfast GC, where we will be defending the Shield we managed to wrest from the County Down boys last year! We are looking for some courageous souls to join some old stalwarts as we endeavour to hold on to the spoils taken in Dumfries! Get in touch if you're up for a wee adventure and the opportunity to play some excellent golf courses! I will be looking to take a deposit of £40 to help with bookings.

Our football match against the West was played on Saturday, March 21. The Alloway ground saw a competitive but fair game played to a 3 - 3 draw. Both sides seemed happy with the result although we had been leading 3 - 1 at half-time. I believe match referee, Euan Grant, has compiled a small report on the day so I won't go into too much detail except to say I think Specsavers have a deal on the noo boss! Seriously though, thanks to all the guys that turned out for the match, it was good fun and hopefully we'll have a return match towards the end of the year.

That's all folks! Any news or queries contact me at: denis.t@hotmail.co.uk or: 07939 104701

Cheers!

Denis Tweddell



CENTRAL

The season is now well underway and at the time of writing, the weather through early spring has been with us for once so far in this part of the country. Although dry, it has probably been warmer than average with soil temperatures slightly ahead of normal. For the third year in succession we have had to apply water earlier than we would have ideally liked, purely to prevent the surfaces drying out too much.

However, all indications are that it looks like it is going to be a tough year financially, with advance bookings of visitors down at many Clubs. Many Course Managers have reported their budgets at best have been frozen, if not cut, and I know a few courses where greens staff have left for various reasons and have not been replaced.

The Section held an interesting seminar in March where Geoffrey Davison explained the principals of drainage, this was fairly well attended and I am sure everyone went away having learned something of value. I found his advice on the critical tension of sands particularly interesting.