

work – I'd sneaked into the local pub on the way home and someone bellowed "Oi. I want a word with you" – (Bob the Barman) sounding unusually belligerent. "I want to make a complaint – I was playing round the Common yesterday, and your blokes were there shovelling cow pats off the fairway. I got into that nasty little quarry on the 10th and had four or five shots trying to get out (not much of a golfer, Bob the barman) when one of your blokes handed me this horrible old shovel with cow muck dripping off it and said "Ere, 'ave a go with this" and then split his sides laughing." "Sorry Bob," I muttered – "S'pose a free pint's out of the question?"

A really sad story cropped up in summer 2006 - Four players came into the clubhouse bar at one of our local clubs after an evening game. One of them was bragging loudly about encountering an adder on one of the fairways and actually chopping its head off with his sand iron. Apparently there was a little old guy listening at the other end of the bar, and he asked how long this particular snake had been. "Well over two foot-six, grandad" came the smug reply, "or at least it was until it met me - har har" "Do you realise," continued the elderly gent, "if that adder really was two foot six inches long, it was well over 80 years old, and you've just killed it with a golf club for no good reason at all". There was complete silence - the bravado just melted away, and the golfer was apparently inconsolable.

In 2007 there was a nasty explosion at one of the chemical works at Avonmouth (30miles to the south). The police rang at lunchtime to inform us that a cloud of potentially toxic chemicals had been released into the atmosphere, and was heading our way so we'd be well advised to clear the course. We toured around advising players of the situation and offering lifts back in. Yep, you've guessed it – most of those faced with a choice between near-certain death, and missing their afternoon's golf, decided to risk it and play on. One player however, sniffed the air and said – "Yes – I thought there was a funny smell – quick, take me in". We did so, but I didn't have the heart to tell him that he what he could actually smell was the TX10 fertiliser

we'd put on the greens the day before!

I also had a nasty experience on the course. Standing by our lake in a quiet moment I noticed a snow-white swan soaring through the air to make a magnificent landing on the water. I was just thinking "wow" - when my mobile rang (unfortunately not a nice purr-purr ringtone, but an annoying beedle-beedle-beep). This enraged the swan, which emerged from the lake, wings beating and hissing menacingly towards me. I'm now in full retreat, and for some reason, still trying to take the call. When I finally got the phone near enough to my ear to hear I realized there was an even bigger menace on the line – Angela – from Alpha (name changed) Paints. I could just make out disjointed phrases like "order six cases before Xmas" and "15% discount". "I'm terribly sorry" I blurted, "but I'm out on the course, and I'm having a little difficulty with a swan". "Oh dear" muttered Angela – obviously miffed that I'd deflected her sales patter – "a swan – what is it?" "Well", I panted – " it's a stonking great white thing with a wing at each corner, and at the moment it's running across the grass towards me". "My God" said Angela, (now sounding quite concerned) – "You want to watch out for that – they're strong enough to break your arm". "I couldn't care less about my arm" I bellowed, "it's certain other parts of my anatomy I'm more worried about" – and then she hung up. Women!

Okay – enough. The Section held its 2009 Autumn Tournament and Annual General Meeting at Saltford Golf Club in early October. Course Manager Darren Moxham, Lucy Sellick and Matt Devlin were the undoubted stars of the day – the course was in fantastic condition with scarcely a blade of grass out of place, and yet due to illness, these are the only three greenkeepers currently available to work on it. They are my heroes, and definitely win this year's prize for Course Presentation. Thanks very much guys we really appreciated it. The competition results were as follows - 1. Matt Worster, Minchinhampton, 42pts; 2. Simon Kew, Shirehampton, 40pts; 3. Darren Moxham, Saltford, 39pts.

The AGM itself was held



John Pemberton
Chief Executive

Firstly, I would like to welcome Jill to the Team at Headquarters, she joins the Sales Department following the departure of Sharon in July.

Her arrival is very timely with work on Harrogate Week starting to pick up pace. The exhibition is filling up nicely and as with everything it could be a lot better, but I do feel that in the present climate it could also have been a lot worse!

Learning and Development is a major part of what BIGGA is about and watch out elsewhere in this edition of Greenkeeper International for details of the show seminars. A quick reminder that full information on these, and all aspects of Harrogate Week including exhibitors, can be found on www.harrogateweek.org.uk which can also be accessed through a link on the home page of the BIGGA website.

Many of you will be aware that the Association has been approached by Pitchcare with a view to working together on the development of a new trade show that would embrace all of sports turf and sports facility maintenance and management. Based on surveys that they have carried out, they believe that this is what the industry would support and their suggestion is that we consider a change of venue from Harrogate - their preferred option being the NEC, in Birmingham.

This proposal was considered by the BIGGA Board at its meeting in October and, for the avoidance of any continued speculation, I wish it to be made clear that at this moment in time the Board do not wish to pursue the matter any further. The Association is committed to building on the existing success of Harrogate and while the current two show position (Harrogate and SALTEX) may not be ideal for some companies, it never-the-less provides a workable compromise.

While on the subject of rumours I would also like to clarify the position between BIGGA and the IoG. Merger talks may have broken down at the end of 2007 but the two organisations are not at odds with each other. BIGGA's move earlier this year to allow sports turf groundsmen to join as Full Members was not an act of confrontation merely a natural extension of its business following the recognition of the synergy between greenkeeper and groundsman. I am in communication with Geoff Webb, CEO of the IoG, and we are looking at what, if any, common issues can be addressed by working together. This is no different to the approach that I am taking with other CEO's.

Within the sports industry there is a great deal of Best Practice that can be shared and it's long overdue that we all sat down and helped each other!

There is a meeting of Section Secretaries planned to take place at the end of November at Headquarters and this is an opportunity for members to have their views brought to the attention of the Staff. Market research and feedback is important and over the coming weeks we will be sending out surveys to certain groups of the membership. Please take time to respond and thereby help us to improve the value of being a member.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Pemberton'.

John Pemberton
Chief Executive