



Presenting Paul Worster

The new BIGGA Chairman has taken the time to write his own profile outlining his hopes and aspirations for the year ahead.

Some people lead – and in a volunteer-driven organisation such as BIGGA, leadership is crucial. Paul Worster is the latest in a line of twenty-three volunteer Chairmen since 1987 to slip on the blazer and take the reins.

Paul is in his own words – “a modest person” who never thought that his name would be mentioned in the same breath as some of the BIGGA “greenkeeping greats” such as ‘Jack’, ‘Walter’, ‘Elliott’, and a host of others in the intervening period.

Acutely aware of the traditions in greenkeeping and the fine work done by his predecessors Paul does not subscribe to the notion that blazers and badges are outdated and should have been consigned to the scrapheap or charity shop long ago.

I would not recommend trying to separate Paul from this item of his apparel. It represents, to him, one of the traditions worth preserving.

The growth of the Association

“Volunteering for BIGGA in 1983 as South West Section Secretary was the best thing I ever did” reminisces Paul. “Back in those days, the South West Section had only 56 members. When the position of Section Secretary was handed over to Adam Matthews this year, membership stood at some 280. This shows how far the organisation has come”.

When pushed – Paul recalls his early days as a greenkeeper – “One of the first facilities I worked in during the 1970’s was comprised of

two wooden Nissen huts which had been salvaged from a World War 2 Polish Refugee Camp which had been in the local area.

The huts were completely isolated in the middle of the course with no services whatsoever – no toilet, no telephone, no electricity, and no potable running water”.

“Can you imagine that in this day and age?” No – probably not. Paul is of the strong opinion that if it hadn’t been for the efforts of the previous volunteers throughout the history of greenkeeping, a good proportion of us might still be spending our working lives in marginally upgraded versions of that type of facility. That alone is why this year is so important to him.

The footprint greenkeepers leave in the sands of time

Paul is a Gloucestershire man through and through. “The Cotswolds are not designated an area of outstanding natural beauty for nothing, and golf in the county has become a part of that in the most natural way”.

Paul’s latest club, Minchinhampton, which some of you may feel you know quite well through the pages of this magazine, has been heavily involved in raising environmental awareness in the area, and as he puts it: “if anyone is still of the opinion that the environment is an issue that only affects others, then think again”.

“The Environment affects us all, and we all leave our footprint in the sands of time on our golf courses.

INSET ABOVE: Paul at his beloved Minchinhampton Golf Club

RIGHT: The annual portrait photograph of the Chairman

The environment is increasingly a huge selling point for golf – we at Minch have almost come full circle from being ‘polluters’ to ‘preservers’, and in greenkeeping we will eventually become ‘custodians’ of our own patches of the environment.”

Paul believes strongly that greenkeepers are uniquely placed to exert a positive influence on the thousands of people who visit golf clubs around the country every day.

The feelings of a life-long greenkeeper

Paul has spent the past 35 years of his life working as a greenkeeper. He has never actually done any other job and his two sons are also greenkeepers.

Paul has seen bad times in the profession as well as good and he understands the difficulties and frustrations, and the highs and the lows of a career in greenkeeping.

A positive individual with a serious side to him, Paul feels strongly that all greenkeepers should have the support they need to do their jobs well and be able to advance in their careers.

“For me, with two sons in the industry, this is particularly important.”

Paul feels that BIGGA through its own efforts and alliances can raise the profile of the profession even further so that greenkeepers can take even more pride in telling others about the work they do.





LEFT: Past Chairman, Peter Todd, hands over the reins to Paul Worster

Driving the turfcare profession forward

Paul is resolute about building on the efforts of his predecessors. "BIGGA has over the years developed a terrific infrastructure. The organisation is well-placed to weather this particular economic storm and emerge the other side, stronger, leaner, and fitter than before".

"I believe the BIGGA HQ team and the four Regional Administrators (RA's) have the experience, the drive and the professional determination to help us move our profession forwards. To succeed in this endeavour they will always need the committed support of volunteers and the desire of the members to take up what is on offer, particularly:

- 1) Management training
- 2) Skills training
- 3) Opportunities to grow through volunteer work

In the coming year - and beyond - Paul wants (amongst other things) to focus on the work of the BIGGA volunteers with particular reference to improving the take up of training and raising standards in the profession.

"I will be asking the Chief Executive to do all that he can to ensure that all departments at BIGGA HQ, and the four RA's, focus in 2010 on supporting our volunteers".

Volunteer work builds confidence and character

"It is training and development and the unselfish efforts of local volunteers that build confidence

and character in the individual and take the profession forward".

Paul feels that because knowledge and influence can be applied so quickly and widely through modern communications, BIGGA has never been in a better position to impact the way that the industry regards the greenkeeper.

"However, BIGGA cannot do that if the greenkeeper is not aware, or does not understand, how he can help himself/herself. In this and other respects the profession can benefit particularly from the support, advice and assistance of the retired greenkeeper in a voluntary role".

Retired greenkeepers and their legacy

As National Chairman Paul will seek to make sure that all retired greenkeepers have the opportunity to pass on a positive legacy to the younger generation in the profession.

"When we are disappointed and dejected, as sometimes we are, it can be very uplifting to listen to a generation of greenkeepers who have survived recessions and crises and still want to see members of the profession striving to be the best and are still keen for the association to go from strength to strength".

Paul thinks that despite the recession there are huge opportunities in the industry and these will increase as we develop our relationships and alliances with other organisations in the golf and leisure sectors, both here in the UK and abroad.

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The perils of avoiding challenges and being cynical

"We need to understand that as an association we, as members, have a responsibility for our profession. When mistakes are made, or when opportunities are missed, it is sometimes hard not to criticise and be cynical. However, in times like these, we have to be as professional as possible. We have to take the opportunities that are presented to us and not avoid the challenges that confront us by hiding behind a veil of negativity."

Paul is of the view that constructive criticism is always welcome and member engagement through participation is vital.

"If BIGGA members have a valid complaint or criticism it is vital to our Association that BIGGA officials hear about the problems being experienced.

"This is perhaps best done through the nearest local, regional or national level volunteer. It would be great if concerned members could also continue to offer practical suggestions for improving both the services and opportunities the association provides to members".

BIGGA to become the best membership organisation anywhere

Paul continues to be full of praise and admiration for the work and sacrifice of all his predecessors in the role. He particularly values the more recent 'behind the scenes' efforts of Kenny MacKay and Peter Todd who have both used their business acumen to bring greater commercialism to the business of BIGGA.

"Despite the current uncertainty and insecurity in the workplace it is important that BIGGA members feel they are part of the best membership organisation anywhere.

"As National Chairman it will be an honour for me to work towards this aim with the BIGGA HQ team and with our many fine volunteers at all levels.

"I want people to know that I am fully committed in 2010 to focus the efforts of BIGGA HQ and the Association as a whole onto:

1. Achieving much greater engagement of members at local levels
2. Providing positive leadership and support for our volunteers
3. Our association becoming the best membership organisation anywhere."