

Dorset. The weather was warm and sunny and nearly warm enough for a visit to the nudist beach. Not to participate, of course, but merely to observe and ponder the idiosyncrasies of the human psyche.

The second break, just a few days later, was a Wednesday to Sunday visit to France, in a village called Chatelleraut, between Tours and Poitiers. Plenty of food, wine and a game of golf. A visit to a chateau and on the Sunday home on empty toll motorways that only resemble the M25 at 4 o'clock in the morning. That's holidays over until Christmas and then another long sea voyage to the Isle of Wight.

Whilst I was in France, the annual England v Scotland golf clash occurred at Hankley Common GC and I understand from Tony Bremer that a grand day was had by all, especially the English team. Ronnie Christie would not answer my text enquiry from France as to the outcome and only told me to concern myself with not upsetting our European colleagues. My assumption that England were victorious proved correct and the result, I later learned, was England 4 - Scotland 2. That I was not able to play, I hope will not stop me from being selected next time, for I know Tony was particularly upset that my golfing expertise was not available this year.

Mummy of the month is Caroline Wales, who gave birth to Freddie, 6 lbs. 12 oz on October 2. Daren Wales, husband and Course Manager at Clandon Regis GC was, he informed me, a major player in the proceedings but now needs time to rest and recuperate.

Retford was the venue for the Northern six hour lawnmower race and Surrey's answer to Jenson Button, Steve (Basher) Bush and his 24 inch Atco lawnmower were 1st in his group. Steve, Head Mechanic at St. George's Hill GC, finished 12th overall, having raced 140 miles in six hours. Some say you have to be mad to race a Formula 1 vehicle - what do you have to be to race a lawnmower?

That was all, so read on once again for January 2010.

Have you heard the news? Of course you have, how can any Surrey member not be aware that we have in our midst a man whose knowledge, persistence

and for his age, reasonable good looks has at last entered the higher echelons of our greenkeeping world. I write this with the deepest respect and I know that you must all be feeling that when next you meet this aficionado of grass and everything green, including Dollar Spot, that his humorous and talkative nature will not have been affected having now earned that great honour to be called Mr John Ross MG.

Ken Cooper will retire on December 4 after 36 years at Kingswood GC. Ken previously worked at Burhill and Banstead Downs and will retire with his wife to a flat in Banstead Village. Many will know Ken's son Steve, who is deputy at Silvermere GC.

Tony Kyle, Surrey Downs GC, and his wife, Samantha, have been so busy looking after twin boys, Logan Aston and Quinn George who arrived on February 26 and 27 and their other three children that Tony forgot to tell me about the happy event. A belated congratulations to you both.

The Greenkeeper v Secretary Golfencounter was played at The Berkshire GC in November and ended in a friendly draw 3 all. Only one of our pairs appeared to play for the Secretaries by losing their match 6 and 4 and it would be ungentlemanly of me to divulge their names. Needless to say that Tony and Anthony must both practice more if they hope to be picked next year.

The Turkey Trot results will appear in February's Edition as the deadline for January is on December 5.

Brian Willmott



Kent

Happy New Year!

Now that silly season is over and hopefully all the extended families have left your respective domiciles relatively unscathed, you can start to concentrate on restoring some sanity to your daily lives. The psychological tolls taken by excessive Christmas pleasantries can leave us all emotionally drained and, I find, that there is no better cure than going out on the verti drain and punching a load of holes



John Pemberton
Chief Executive

I hope everyone has enjoyed the Christmas break and that there are not too many sore heads left over from the New Year celebrations.

The first few days of January are when many, well some, of us try to keep our New Year's resolution, but how long does it last? From personal experience whether it's a diet to counteract the excesses of turkey and treats at Christmas or work on that short game to knock a couple of shots of the handicap somehow by the end of January good intentions slowly seem to slip by the wayside. As I sit here in the middle of December writing my column to beat the rapidly approaching editorial deadline I have convinced myself that 2010 will be different. Why will it be different? I'm determined to enlist the help of family and friends.

BIGGA is in a similar exception to the rule and while all exhibition space at Harrogate 2010 is fully sold, the Association needs the support of its members and the sports turf industry if it is to prosper.

We have had donated some issues of Golf Greenkeeping, the official publication of the British Golf Greenkeepers' Association, dating back to the later part of 1982 and early 1983 and it is surprising in reading them how many articles and features are topical today. Headings such as 'BGGA reject proposed IOG merger', 'How secure is the Greenkeeper's job?', 'Greenkeepers at cross roads', and 'Head Greenkeeper sacked by Committee' could all have been written in the last 12 months let alone 26 years ago.

The following is a direct quote from an editorial from February 1983 and I hope it gives you food for thought:

"Never has there been a time in the history of golf and the greenkeeping profession for a more united front. We have seen over the past ten years a wind of change in the economics of our lives which could well develop into a hurricane.

Golf courses will no longer remain the cosy club supported by a few wealthy members who are content to keep their club exclusive and did not mind paying for it. Golf Clubs, or rather Golf Courses, are fast becoming part of the sporting leisure business and with business comes capital investment and the expectation of profit."

The article continues by pointing out the need for greenkeepers to improve their image, improve training and education and encourage management development.

It concludes with the statement: "The turf trade in general could help and in fact some of the big names in industry do make a significant contribution to the training and education of greenkeepers, but the good Lord only helps those who help themselves and all greenkeepers should give considerable thought to their own future and the direction they would like it to take." By my way of thinking that sums up the situation today very well, it seems that some things never change which perhaps reflects the general apathy that still exists in some part of this very traditional industry. We all know that the wind of change is blowing. Do yourself a favour and take advantage of the many education related opportunities that BIGGA presents, that way you can help shape your own future and perhaps that of your employer.

Will I see you in Harrogate?

John Pemberton, Chief Executive