



Chairman's Word

BIGGA Chairman Paul Worster looks at how both the Association and individual greenkeepers can empower and protect themselves

My personal thanks

Much has already been written about the recent Open Championship and recognition rightly given to BIGGA volunteers and staff who worked so hard – both on the course and behind the scenes. It was my first time at St Andrews and what a memorable experience. I am pleased to add my personal thanks to everyone on the Team which once again helped raise BIGGA's profile.

Great life in greenkeeping

My favorite moment was introducing Cecil George's Lifetime Achievement Award during Friday lunchtime in the BIGGA marquee.

It was fantastic that so many of Cecil's old friends as well as so many of our younger people took time out to be there. It was a powerful combination of 'old-guard' and 'young-guns' – all with a single purpose – to celebrate Cecil's great life in greenkeeping. I don't know Cecil very well so I brought in two who did – Elliott Small and Walter Woods.

In a witty aside, Cecil upon being informed that it was Walter who would be making the presentation was heard to mutter "Och, it'll be nice to actually get something out of the old so-and-so for a change!"

Joking aside – as Elliott was listing Cecil's many achievements, it struck me just how much one person on his own managed to achieve when he put his mind to it. It follows that if we ALL put our minds to it – just how much we can achieve together. This after all is the purpose of a trade association like BIGGA, and is why I closed the presentation ceremony by saying "I want us all to take a long hard look at what we do, and what we are". Because by doing this, by involving ourselves at all levels – we can empower ourselves.

I had some busy meetings, including the GEO and the R&A Golf Course Committee. Both have on-line systems for interactive recording

and benchmarking against goals, leading to significant golf course improvements, and both appeal directly for BIGGA's assistance to increase greenkeeper involvement in their fine work.

The greenkeeper will provide the key information these organisations need

Clearly both organisations need the active support of greenkeepers. Both want to bring real and sustainable improvements to golf courses. This can only be really successful if UK greenkeepers take the lead. We can start by registering with both the GEO and the R & A via their websites.

www.golfenvironment.org/certification

www.bestcourseforgolf.org/club/register.html

May I urge you to take a few minutes to register your club on both of these sites? By registering and participating, the UK greenkeeper will provide the key information these organisations need to help us move the industry forward. As Greenkeepers, by taking the lead, we can far better directly influence any number of key issues.

By doing so we will not only enhance our individual standing but that of the greenkeeping profession as a whole.

It is this type of activity, this professionalism that will one day ensure all greenkeepers will be seen by their employers as the people who make a real and positive contribution to enhancing the golfing experience.

In this we emulate Cecil's example – he was a lone influence on the education system, and with singular resolve hammered out the deals that put UK Greenkeeper Training on the map. This was achieved by a single person. This is empowerment.

Support Your Trade Show

May I close by bringing an industry situation to your attention. It is that of trade shows – specifically IOG SALTEX and BTME. Recently, IOG and BIGGA attended a meeting at

the NEC with trades-people (some of our exhibitors and sponsors) and representatives of Pitchcare, independently chaired by Roger Lane-Nott, CEO of the Agricultural Engineers Association (AEA). The purpose was to discuss the future of SALTEX and BTME. You may be aware that trade shows in general are facing hard times – take the Royal Show and the Smith field Show – both industry institutions in their heyday, but both now vanished without trace.

We will protect and enhance everything that BIGGA members want from their Association

It was decided that both BIGGA and the IOG would be represented on a Steering Group, which, in conjunction with Pitchcare and the AEA, would look at the future direction of both shows, and to adopt an objective and business-oriented approach to them.

BIGGA participates in this Steering Group because it is far better to take part in essential, if difficult, discussions than to avoid them. We will absolutely protect and enhance everything that BIGGA members want from their Association by forging closer links with others such as the IOG or the AEA if this will help us to advance the interests of greenkeepers.

I need hardly remind you how attending BTME can help you in advancing your career; networking with like-minded professionals, sharing knowledge and experience, as well as improving your knowledge through extensive educational seminars. You can update yourself on the products, services and developments within the industry, by meeting with the suppliers who choose to exhibit. By exhibiting the trade provides valuable, vital and hugely appreciated support to BIGGA, and I would encourage you to support the companies that support you in this way.

I would urge you all to ensure that you make full use of this event.

This brings me back to the need for us all to take every opportunity to empower ourselves and advance this great profession.