



On the Soapbox

A vehicle for letting people within the industry express their point of view

History! Not exactly everyone's favourite subject. All these dates you had to repeat to get them well and truly into your head. I'm sure you all still remember them...

Battle of Hastings? Signing of the Magna Carta? Battle of Bannockburn?

Of course you do. How could you forget?

Now, who knows the name of the first greenkeepers' Association formed in England, or in Scotland? Do you know when your Section was formed? Or even, when BIGGA was established?

History can be interesting, as long as you have an interest in the subject. And I believe we have an obligation to record our past so that our successors can see how the Associations have developed.

We in the Greenkeepers' Associations have, I believe, been a bit lax in recording our past and it is about time we brought it up to date. What better time than now, as next year - 2012 - it will be 100 years since the first Association in England was formed.

I say in England as we are pretty sure an Association was formed in Scotland in 1908, but unfortunately all those early records were lost in a fire.

Next year, at BTME, BIGGA would like to put on an exhibition/display on 100 Years of Greenkeeping Associations and there are many of you who can contribute to its success.

Obviously the last 25 years' of BIGGA should be pretty well taken care of, so it is really the 75 years before then that need to be covered. I know, I know, how can many of you guys know anything about that time when you're not old enough?

Greenkeeping often runs in families and possibly your father or grandfather was a greenkeeper. What can they remember? Or what have they got hidden in the attic? Perhaps an old magazine from a bygone day, a prize won at a National tournament. Who won the first Ransomes' watches, presented many years ago and does anyone still have one, even if it was their father's?

Do you still have contact with old retired greenkeepers in your area? Have a chat see if they have anything that may be of interest. And, to the old retired greenkeepers who still get this magazine, especially those who were involved in one way or another in their Association, recycle the memories, you are the stepping stone back to the earlier years of what went on with our Associations.

Photographs are another way of recording the past. There must be photographs of all

kinds of greenkeeper meetings from golf days, company days, seminars, social events.

Can we find photographs of Past Chairmen of the BGGA; there has to be photos of winners of the BGGA National Tournament over the years.

I am not forgetting EIGGA in this, while they had a relatively short life compared to the other Associations, they play an important part in the evolution of what is now BIGGA. So I would appeal to the guys who were instrumental in the formation of EIGGA to contact me so that we can make sure we have facts, figures and names correct.

Education, this didn't just start with BIGGA. Both English and Scottish Associations encouraged greenkeepers to learn more about their trade through various means right from the early days. The GGA ran an essay competition and published the winning entries in its Journal in 1915 while the SGA ran evening lectures during the winter months through the 1920s and published booklets on these lectures.

Incidentally greenkeepers travelled from all over Scotland, by train of course, to attend

between them. Do we have a family who has only worked at one club?

What about some of the old established companies which have been such great supporters of all the different Associations over the years, have you got any mementos, photographs, brochures of company days for greenkeepers or programmes for seminars you or your predecessors may have put on.

So, to recap, we are looking for GGA Journals, BGGA magazines (not whole collections), possibly Diaries, especially from the earlier part of the century.

Also, Conference/Seminar brochures, photographs, booklets on lectures, any references to Educational events. Memorabilia, lapel badges, blazer badges, even cloth ones. In other words anything at all that relates to, and shows us how, the greenkeeping Associations developed over the last 100 years.

Any of these things can either be donated to BIGGA or loaned and will be returned. If you have something which you wish to send, but not until nearer the time contact me and let me know what it is so I can include it in the planning.

Be part of BIGGA's Time Team

these evenings. I have copies of some of the aforementioned journals and lecture booklets. Are there more out there? Has anyone got copies of the old GGA Journal, or do you know someone who may have?

Famous, or well known, people. I can think of a few professionals who started working as greenkeepers and then moved into the Pro Shop, but who do we know who moved onto the big stage and became familiar faces in the professional world. Not just pros, but top amateurs as well. Sandy Pirie, a well known greenkeeper in Aberdeen, was also one of Britain's top amateurs and a Walker Cup player. If my memory serves me correctly Alec Millar, from Denham, a member of an extended greenkeeping family, won either the Golf Illustrated Gold Vase or The Lytham Trophy, as did Tony McLure, from Whickham, in more recent years (the only time I didn't mind losing a fiver was to his shot making).

Greenkeeping Dynasties, or just families. Are you descended from a long line of greenkeepers, or do you know of a family who have followed each other into the business? Let us know about them from the oldest to the youngest how many cumulative years

If you wish to contact me you can do so on elliott.edna@hotmail.co.uk or contact Headquarters on 01347 833800 or your local Regional Administrator.

I thank you in anticipation and incidentally those dates at the beginning were 1066, 1215 and 1314. Of course, you knew those anyway.



Elliott is a BIGGA Past Chairman
Email: elliott.edna@hotmail.co.uk

Elliott Small

The views expressed within On The Soapbox are not necessarily those of Greenkeeper International