



Chairman's Word

Incoming National Chairman, Andrew Mellon, with his first monthly column

The start of a busy year ahead

On October, 21, 2009, I received an email from Paul Worster, BIGGA Chairman 2010, asking me to give him a call. I had an initial slight concern, thinking have we done something wrong at Section level. I called him that afternoon, and much to my surprise, he asked me to consider taking on the role of Chairman for 2011.

Surprise was probably an understatement, and my initial reaction was, that I would be honoured, but that I would need to know more about the commitment required, consult with my family, my employers and our team at Elmwood Golf Course. I also wanted to speak with my Section committee, (Central), and the Scottish Board to ensure I had their support.

Having done that, and discussed with John Pemberton in more detail the challenges involved, and receiving full support from all concerned, I was honoured to accept.

My first meeting was at Harrogate 2010, when I was welcomed and introduced to the Board. I came out of that meeting under no illusions to the fact that this was not a committee for committees' sake, but a group of people passionate and dedicated to ensuring the success of BIGGA, and supporting their fellow Greenkeepers.

We were also beginning to feel the bite of the recession, and the challenges of not only running a successful Association, but a successful business, became only too apparent to me.

When I arrived at the AGM this year to step up to Chairman, I had attended many meetings, both with the Board and several working parties, attended several events in the year, including The Open at St Andrews, and formed stronger working relationships with the Board members and the Staff at HQ.

Having checked my email inbox out of interest just before the AGM, and having received a good luck email from Paul, I noticed that I had received 554 emails from Paul over the year. I knew for a fact that we

had spoken almost daily during that year, not to mention my correspondence with the rest of the Board and the staff at HQ.

That may give you an indication of the level of commitment shown by those who serve you, the members, while volunteering their time to help steer the association.

I'd like to thank Paul and the rest of the Board for their dedication to this task, and also the staff whose enthusiasm, drive and dedication ensure that we can strive to meet the needs of the members.

There are many other members, (Greenkeepers and Trade), serving the Sections, Regions, and working parties and sub committees, who often go unrecognised and their contribution is vital to our future success. The support we receive from Industry is significant, and their recognition of the importance of our Association, despite their own current challenges, is something we value.

I returned from Harrogate, and once the adrenalin had worn off, I was shattered, but elated. I witnessed first hand the hunger among the members for further education, which had been more than satisfied by a fantastic record breaking education programme put together by Sami Collins, Rachael Duffy, and I'm sure support from many other staff. To see the queues up the escalator waiting to enter the sessions was incredible.

I spoke with many exhibitors in the halls. Despite the gloom and doom expressed by some in the lead up to Harrogate week, they were delighted and astonished at the level of support and interest they had received during the show.

My frustration was that I was unable to meet them all personally to thank them for their support. I am writing to them all to thank them and to ask for their input to ensure we continue to develop and organise

the event in such a way to obtain the most benefit for them and for the members – win/win.

During the week I attended many productive meetings, seeking to establish collaboration from other Golfing Bodies and Industry Partners. We sought feedback at open forums from the members and exhibitors which were well attended.

We will be actively engaging with all stakeholders. The Board took part in a strategic planning session during the week, the first of several.

By engaging with you we can ensure that we are working toward a common vision, and we can formulate the correct strategies and objectives to ensure our resources are focussed on achieving it.

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While we have all this attention, due to the challenges of the economic climate, it presents a great opportunity to evaluate our position and communicate. I am sure, more than ever, that not only will we face this challenge, but, that as we work together with our members, and collaborate with Industry and Golf bodies, we will flourish and ensure BIGGA's success.

I would like to close by thanking John Pemberton for his faithful, dedicated service to BIGGA over the last 18 years.

We have grown from small beginnings, to the strong vibrant Association we are today.

John will always be part of that and always welcomed by our members.

On behalf of all the members, thank you John and all the best for the future.