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WELCOME FROM THE EDITOR



Credit where credit is due

The news that Celtic Manor's Jim McKenzie has been awarded the MBE in the Queen's Birthday Honours was as welcome, and richly deserved, as it was surprising.

I say surprising for no other reason than it is often the case that those who are most deserving tend to be overlooked. That is particularly the case in a profession that often sees its best work carried out with nothing other than the odd fox, deer or blackbird for an audience.

For the first time I can recall, the Ryder Cup showed greenkeeping in the much prized "high profile-positive" combo. If it hadn't been for Jim and his team - 65 Celtic Manor staff, supplemented by 71 volunteers drawn from all over the UK and beyond - the 2010 Ryder Cup would not have been completed, and the world of golf knew it.

Not only would that have deprived golf lovers of the spectacular action provided by both sets of players, particularly during Monday's dramatic singles, it would also have gone down as a black day for the game, and for Wales.

The Ryder Cup was the biggest golf event of the year. It's actually the third biggest sporting event in the world nowadays after the World Cup and the Olympics and for it not to have been completed would have been an absolute disaster.

As the biggest sporting event in Wales' history, the disappointment of an abandonment would have cut right through the nation's heart.

Jim is very modest and quick to deflect the achievements of the week onto his team but speak with anyone who was involved and they will tell you that Jim was absolutely immense – calm, organised and on top of every possible

scenario, even if he was quaking just a bit on the inside. In other words, it was his leadership, in circumstances and under a pressure no other greenkeeper has ever experienced before, which carried everyone through.

Since those momentous days last October, Jim has been very generous with his time. He has spoken at many BIGGA Seminars at National, Regional and Section level, describing what happened during the Ryder Cup and passing on advice and information that will help the hundreds of greenkeepers who have had the privilege of listening to him.

In much the same way that you can be sure Jim learned much in his early greenkeeping days from attending talks given by the senior Head Greenkeepers of the time, while he was working at Hagg's Castle, Cawder and Renfrew before he moved south to Wentworth and then Celtic Manor.

And that is the beauty of BIGGA and its wonderful members. To have someone at the very top of the profession, so willing to share experiences and information with his fellow members – in his own time and often at his own expense – is not something that is found in many areas of life. In other industries, a seminar session to listen to someone of Jim's standing could cost as much as a greenkeeper's weekly wage.

Jim – You are a top man.
Congratulations!

Scott MacCallum
Editor