



# Chairman's Word

National Chairman, Andrew Mellon, gives his thoughts for the month

## Working together for a better future

**As you will read in the magazine Matt Perks, First Assistant/Mechanic at Ham Manor Golf Club, in West Sussex, is the 2011 winner of the Toro Student Greenkeeper of the Year.**

As previous winners, including Alan Pierce his own Course Manager, will no doubt testify, the effort required to achieve this accolade is more than justified when you see the benefits to be gained both in terms of personal development and more tangibly in the New Year in the form of a six week study course at the University of Massachusetts, a trip to the Golf Industry Show in Las Vegas and visits to Toro's base and many other facilities I'm sure.

The runners up and all the entrants should all be equally proud as they exemplify the passion and dedication that members of our Association apply to their careers, in seeking to fully educate and prepare themselves.

I was extremely fortunate recently to attend the Toro Turf Professionals reunion, in the company of many of our country's finest Greenkeepers, and especially fortunate to travel with Walter Woods, BEM, formally Links Superintendent of St Andrews Links.

I've known Walter for a few years now and have been fortunate enough to listen often as he shared his experiences with myself and many others at local Section events or at BTME.

Toro have published his book, "Walter Woods, Memoirs of a Greenkeeper", and it is great to see those experiences permanently recorded to share with others.

Many of Walter's peers were also present at the reunion; Jack McMillan, George Brown, Chris Kennedy, and many top managers from the next generation also.

The collective experience of the group was very inspiring. These gentlemen, and many others, were the pioneers, whose efforts and collaboration were the foundations of the BIGGA we know today.

Their effort and their recognition of how important education and sharing of good practice would be in the development of greenkeeping standards, has led to such an improvement in golf course conditions that many young Greenkeepers today are expected to, and are capable of producing consistently high course standards which

would once have been the preserve of only the top professional tournaments.

We must not be complacent and allow the legacy they have created to be diminished. The importance of your Association cannot be underestimated. Times are tough, but they have been tough before, and these gentlemen would tell you that it was through associating with and supporting each other, through hard work and dedication that they persevered and were better for it.

The resources available to you now through BIGGA are constantly improving and developing and are far more extensive than then but you must play your part. It is collectively that we are strong, united in supporting one another as we face challenges we have not experienced before.

The forum on our website is a modern and excellent way of communicating with hundreds, if not thousands of your peers. You only have to look at that to see how much Greenkeepers are prepared to help and support one another. The education



encourage any Greenkeeper who is serious about their career to take that step and start participating in BIGGA, through the forums, local Sections, and our annual gathering in Harrogate in January.

Put yourself out a bit, demonstrate your professional ethics and standards and soon

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available, locally at Section events, regionally at their conferences, and nationally at BTME in Harrogate each year, provide you with great opportunities to learn from Industry experts, and share experiences with your colleagues.

I started my greenkeeping career a relatively short time ago in 1997, at the remote Stornoway Golf Club, on the Isle of Lewis in the Western Isles of Scotland, where I learnt a great deal from working in a small close knit dedicated team.

But it was through taking advantage of the BIGGA network, that I was able to explore further horizons, make useful contacts and take advantage of the abundance of learning opportunities available, at BIGGA, at College and from fellow Greenkeepers, who were always willing to help.

I'm a great believer that you get out of something what you put into it. I would

you will reap the benefits to you. In turn your employers will see the improvement in you as a committed valued member of their team. That can only be of benefit to you and our profession as a whole.

The Golf Industry Trade companies, the R&A, the Golf Unions, the PGA, the Club Managers Associations, and many more have all seen the benefit and improvements in golf brought about through better greenkeeping hence their willingness to support and work together with us in our efforts.

Let's continue to work together and ensure that the legacy created by the founders of BIGGA and its predecessors, continues and strengthens, for our benefit and for the game of Golf.

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