



Chairman's Word

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

Planning ahead for a new term

It seems like only yesterday we were coming out of a long cold winter and looking forward to summer, and before you know it I'm looking at my diary and we are approaching September, and trying to plan and implement all the autumn maintenance.

While the growth slows and we get more time for other activity, at Elmwood we move in to a very busy period as our students arrive looking to learn all they can about Greenkeeping and Golf Management and Performance.

Numbers have grown steadily over the years, and while it's useful having extra hands about the place for some types of work, most of the students on the entry level greenkeeping course are raw recruits, who need to be taught everything from scratch, and there are a lot of them, so planning and control are very important.

As many of you will know, you can get great satisfaction from successfully training a new member of staff, but it is not without challenges.

Imagine having 75 of them every week.

We have a busy programme planned for them and it will be good to see their excitement and enthusiasm as they start their careers.

We also have over 100 students studying performance golf, many of them excellent plus handicappers and they place a heavy demand on the golf facility, and on the turf, at a time when recovery is very limited through the winter, but the challenge is to manage that to the best of our ability and try and ensure that all the students get a worthwhile experience.

Education is a constant as far as I'm concerned, and you will find elsewhere in this magazine information about the upcoming Harrogate event and the education on offer there.

I'm looking forward to it, and hopefully I'll get some time out-with my duties as Chairman to benefit from some of what's on offer.

I believe that in any line of work, in order to be the best you can be at the career you have chosen, you must constantly develop and, "Continue to Learn."

You will also see within our news sec-

tion that we have been working with other Associations within the UK sector and have formed a group to facilitate closer working relationships, bringing the opportunity to engage with stakeholders in considering decisions that will impact on the future of the industry and its Associations.

I was extremely fortunate to spend a week in China this month.

On behalf of the college I delivered some lectures to groups of students we have there, and also met with groups of Superintendents for discussions and with potential University partners.

My hosts were fantastic, and I'd like to thank everyone I met for welcoming me so warmly and sharing their time with me.

I arrived in Hong Kong and drove to Shenzhen, a city of thirty million people, which is only really about thirty years old. The climate there was very hot and humid.

I also flew to Kunming province in the

sustainable manner, with water resource a premium, and use of agricultural land very restricted.

Estimates put the number of golfers at 300,000, set to grow to 20 million by 2020.

Despite a government ban on course development the number of courses grew from 170 in 2004 to nearly 600 by 2009 and continues to grow at a phenomenal rate.

How that progresses will, I imagine, be determined by whether the golf industry can convince the government that they can address their concerns and develop in a sustainable manner.

That presents opportunities for those with such knowledge and experience, whilst it became very apparent to me how much we take our Association for granted.

When meeting with them there was a lot of interest expressed in BIGGA and a real hunger for the aspects of sharing good practice and networking.

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South West of China where the climate was more temperate and similar to the UK.

The different grass types and management techniques required were very interesting to see and the standard of presentation on all the courses was very high.

In all I toured seven courses, witnessing the difference between Paspalum, Bermuda, Creeping bent, Rye, and yes, even Poa. They face many of the challenges we do, though golfer demand currently outweighs supply so they are not facing that problem yet.

Labour costs have increased considerably in only the last few years, and that was a common challenge to all the superintendents.

Golf is booming there, but it is not without difficulties as the government seeks to ensure that courses are developed in a

While sitting in a group meeting it dawned on me that the group actually had over 100 years experience between them and were able to give each other advice and help with many of the problems they have. Sometimes we fail to recognise how useful something is.

I know that in my time in greenkeeping BIGGA has been the best source of information and contacts for me to meet and seek advice.

Whether you are a single Greenkeeper working alone at a 9 hole course, or a Course Manager, running a multi course facility you will find someone in BIGGA who can share their experience with you, and lighten the load.

That is of value not just to the individual, but to owners and employers and ultimately the golfer in ensuring staff get the necessary support to fulfil their potential.