



Chairman's Word

A welcome from newly appointed BIGGA National Chairman, Tony Smith

An Open welcome

It is an absolute honour and a privilege to have been elected by the Board of Management to the role of Chairman of this great Association. I have been a greenkeeper for 48 years and an active member of BIGGA from its inception, at Section (Cleveland), Region (North) and Board levels.

I arrived at Royal Lytham And St. Annes Golf Club for the recent Open Championship as a member of the Support Team and minibus driver and left as Chairman. Pretty good promotion!

I have, of course, been Vice Chairman for the last eighteen months during which time Andrew Mellon has given an enormous amount of time and expertise to the Association – far over and above what any of us could have expected. He has guided us through some very stormy waters to such an extent that the general feeling of both staff and members is now one of optimism and excitement, looking forward to the future. Andrew will be a difficult act to follow and I know I speak for all of you in wishing him all the best in his new career overseas. He will be welcome to return at any time and will be sorely missed, not only by myself but also by the members, headquarters staff and his colleagues at Elmwood College and Golf Club.

When I began my career at Abbeydale Golf Club in Sheffield I never thought I would have an opportunity such as this to serve the profession of greenkeeping and I intend to work tirelessly along with my fellow Board of Management members, Jim Croxton and our dedicated team at BIGGA House and in the Regions.

My job at Teesside Golf Club, where I have been Course Manager for 32 years, will allow me to dedicate sufficient time to be an active and involved Chairman and I am very much looking forward to attending many BIGGA events and meeting as many of our thousands of members as I can. The golf industry is facing a difficult time and many of our members are coming under sometimes intolerable pressure as golf clubs deal with declining revenues. The Association must play a strong part in supporting those members whilst continuing to work with other industry stakeholders to remind them that no golf business can thrive without a



well maintained and managed course.

I am also fortunate that my personal circumstances, my wife Lorna and I have two grown up children who have given us three fantastic grandchildren, mean that I have the flexibility to fully commit to the role. Our social life including our passion for amateur dramatics may have to take a little bit of a back seat for the next year and a half though!

I am grateful that my employers are fully supportive of this opportunity and I would like to thank Gary Evans, the head greenkeeper, and the whole Teesside team in advance for all their hard work.

The Open Championship itself was fantastic, with the on site team, led brilliantly by Paul Smith, presenting the course in magnificent condition despite appalling weather conditions. I had the privilege of being part of the early morning set up team on the Tuesday and Wednesday and witnessed first hand the extraordinary attention to detail and hard work the team put in.

It was also great to see the BIGGA Open

Support Team once again do a first class job, it is humbling to witness so many BIGGA members take time out of their busy lives to play a part in the Open Championship, well done guys, you did the Association proud once again. I'd also like to congratulate Tracey, Rachael, Sandra and John on the excellent administration of the team before and during the event.

During the week there was a presentation made to the recently retired Regional Administrators, Peter Larter (Northern/Midlands Regions) and Peter Boyd (Scottish Region) who both served the Association with distinction for many years. It was great to have the opportunity to recognise both gentlemen for the important roles they have played and I wish them

well in their retirement.

I am delighted that my good friend, Chris Sealey of Chippenham Golf club has accepted the invitation from the Board of Management to be my Vice Chairman. Chris is a great man with greenkeeping at his heart and he has served on the Board with great passion and dignity. I look forward to working closely with him over the next 18 months or so.

As BIGGA moves forward it is vital that we continue to react to the needs of the industry and our members. I wish every single BIGGA member the very best during my time in office and would like to make it clear that I welcome any input or feedback on any topic.

The strength of this Association is the members and I will put you first at all times. I look forward to meeting as many of you as I can.

Tony Smith, BIGGA Chairman
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