



Chairman's Word

BIGGA National Chairman, Andrew Mellon, gives his thoughts for the new year

25 more years to celebrate

As you read this, I hope you have all had a good Christmas and are off to a good start in 2012.

As I write this, my 12th column, I find myself trying to think ahead and plan for what will be happening and where we will be.

In these changing times this is something that is harder for everyone now, across every part of society. However we must learn to look for and exploit all the opportunities that such an environment creates. There is no point in dwelling on the difficulties. We need to be able to adapt, and sometimes think outside the box to find ways of dealing with what we face.

I believe that Greenkeepers are naturally good at this, as we are constantly managing an environment in which some of the aspects change rapidly, outwith our control, yet the standards demanded by our customers is ever higher. We have always been innovative in finding solutions to meet these demands.

That all sounds easy on paper doesn't it? The reality is a much more difficult situation, and one which is not easy to face alone. Many mistakes are made along the way, lessons learned, difficult consequences faced, but hopefully we get through those and come out stronger on the other side.

To me this has been the main benefit of my membership of BIGGA. I always have someone to turn to and will find someone who can shed some light on a problem I'm facing, has been there before, got the T-shirt and can help me find a solution, or at least the best way forward in dealing with any issue I have. In what can sometimes seem a lonely job, that extra support goes a long way!

I have spent some time reflecting on my time as Chairman over the last year, and it has not been without some significant challenges and major changes, as well as many highlights. I'm honoured to have had the privilege of serving the Association.

As we celebrate our 25th Anniversary this year at Harrogate we will reflect on the many successes of our members and supporters and the impact they have had on the Golf Industry in which we all work. We have learned a great deal together, all of which

will be put to good use by the Board, the CEO, and the Staff as they focus together on the future of the Association. We are engaging with the Sections and Regions to ensure we align our resources and efforts to the benefit of all Greenkeepers. I'd like to recognise and thank everyone for their commitment to this work.

It naturally impacts on wider stakeholders, the beneficiaries of your labours – the golfers, the clubs, proprietors, and their associations and professional bodies. We are communicating with them all, looking for ways to ensure we work together effectively in ways which are mutually beneficial. It has been reassuring to hear their recognition and respect for the significant part we play in the success of Golf, and I'd like to thank them all on behalf of the Association for their co-operation and support.

I'd also like to sincerely thank the team here at Elmwood who have been unstinting

innovations that the trade have brought to market, enabling me to make informed buying decisions on behalf of my employers. Every year I've learned something new, and been given ideas that have helped me do my job better. Socially, I've enjoyed the company of some of the finest people you will ever meet, who I am lucky to now call friends. It's re-charged my batteries and set me up each year, enthused, focussed, and ready for another year of challenges and opportunities. I can't recommend it highly enough.

My trip to China this month to teach Superintendants for a week was another great experience. I learned as much as the students, and it was great to see them interacting and learning from one another. It was not without incident, I locked myself out on my balcony one evening, and tested my powers of sign language to the limit trying to explain to security, (my Chinese

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in their support during the year ensuring that my time spent on BIGGA matters has not resulted in a diminution of quality at my own facility.

We all need to reflect occasionally. We also need to rest and re-charge the batteries, and I hope you at least got a short holiday during the festive period to do just that. But we also as individuals need to re-energise and focus our forward direction also.

Every year, since I came into the Golf Industry, I have attended BTME at Harrogate. I can say with no hesitation it has had more impact on helping me than anything else.

My knowledge has grown due to all the education I've undertaken. I've made fantastic contacts who have shared so much experience and knowledge with me. I've kept abreast of all the developments and

is limited), why I was about to climb down some drainpipes. I nearly made the four minute mile, running between terminals at Guangzhou Airport, and narrowly avoided arrest after forcing my way to the front of check-in to catch my flight home. Cardiac arrest was on the cards at this point, but some help from a friendly Chinese couple smoothed the unrest and I was thankfully last on the plane and on my way home. Such are the joys!

I'll be at Harrogate Saturday 21st through to Friday 27th, and I hope to see many of you there.

My very best regards for 2012,

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