THE YEAR OF 1991 began in fine style with the now well-established Westurf, and though marred this time by poor weather, it did little to dampen spirits. This show meets a real local need in the West and continues to attract both enthusiasm from the region and from those traders who rightly see it as a valuable shop window. Every credit, therefore, to Gordon Child and his energetic team.

The Iseki Tournament was a huge success, continuing to cement relationships at regional level and culminating with triumph at the wonderful final staged at Hillside. Members were unanimous in praising this fine course and echoed the view that the Iseki event is one that would be sorely missed should it cease to be staged. As members know, Colin Gregory was the driving force behind Iseki and he has now moved to pastures new. That stated, we will make every effort to ensure the continuance of this tournament, which has been a cornerstone of greenkeeper golf since 1988.

The Open Championship at Royal Birkdale in July was a time when favourable comment was voiced for our support team, suggesting that both in appearance and conduct our professional image was greatly enhanced.

For this National Tournament to be staged at Royal St David’s in August it was a personal thrill and gave considerable pleasure to welcome those who had never crossed the border. They were not disappointed, for the event was voted by many as the best ever, culminating in a triumph for banquets and Welsh choir in full voice! A stunning few days for which we cannot thank ICI Professional Products enough in providing support and active participation.

As we moved towards autumn, there was a marque for activity beginning with the Ransomes International staged at Fulford. In October came the annual Kubota Challenge at the Belfry, an event in which the Greenkeepers have won six times out of nine – this year we defeated the EGU by eight matches to nil! Your Board sees a need to broaden the basis of selection for such events, which need to be used to promote the Association as well as the playing of golf. It has been decided to widen selection away from the English scene and to make more inroads for national and Scottish teams.

A new tournament of a greenkeeper training management system and concentrate resources on the major importance of BIGGA’s finances. The industry in supporting our exhibition has a right to expect the Association members to support its own exhibition. We have a lot going for us at Harrogate – this year’s event was without doubt an outstanding success and it is fast becoming the premier event within the industry – so make sure that its future is not jeopardised by apathy and non-participation.

Much interest was expressed at the GCSAA Conference and Show in New Orleans in magazine subscriptions, membership and the BTME. The presence of BIGGA on an international stage is important as greenkeeping develops worldwide and whilst we now enjoy new relationships with the US, Canadian and Swedish Associations, there is a clear need to consolidate our position in Europe where many greenkeeping associations are still in their embryo stages.

Coming to the National Education Conference at Cirencester, this has most certainly become a prestige conference and, like Harrogate, a focal point in our year. For the first time a sell-out occurred with a number of latecomers disappointed. The lecture programme was complemented by much greenkeeper debate and each year it is noticeable how many attendees return home enthused for the future of the profession.

Whilst the major events, awards, exhibition and conferences have undoubtedly further advanced the Association, much developmental work has been undertaken both within the Association and through participation in wider developments throughout the game. We currently have thirteen approved colleges with over 1,000 students on Craft Level courses and a number of colleges running a Phase II – III course and some on a Phase IV Management course. During the last three years BIGGA has seen the need for higher qualifications, specifically HND/Degee level courses. Recently the first submission for an HND in Golf Greenkeeping Development was received by our observations and another is pending. The first HND course will be up and running at Cannington College this year. Demand will ultimately determine the need for such courses, but I would suggest that initially no more than two in England and one in Scotland would be the optimum need. In Scotland five colleges are working jointly to establish an HNC course as a forerunner to a full HND course. Progress is being sustained and this will further enhance our standards that prevail in Scotland.

Greenkeeping as a career is becoming attractive but it will only capture the interest and imagination of future generations if it can offer sound training up to and including HND level courses. This must be our aim and we will be encouraging the various bodies to support the system and concentrate resources through the approved colleges.

Work is advanced on the preparation of a greenkeeper training manual, for which the Home Unions are being compiled by a Working Party with a major input from the approved colleges. Initial concentration is on craft level before moving onto supervisory and management levels. BIGGA is represented on the Lead Body for Amenity Horticulture and this manual will become the basis for National Vocational Qualifications in greenkeeping. BIGGA is actively involved in establishing NVQs for the profession and the NVQ system will play an important role in helping to develop the needs and in enabling individuals to develop their potential to the full.

Much is happening educationally – maintaining the momentum of progress will not be possible unless significant advances are made in training courses and training programmes.

Two pennies remain the princely sum (per member) collected by the Home Unions and paid annually to the GTC – yes, just 2p goes into greenkeeper education and training.

This year produced a sum of £16,042 which was matched by the R&A. In addition a £5,000 contribution was received from the PGA European Tour. £37,000 then is the sum currently available to assist in the education and training of greenkeepers. Over and above this we are dependent on sponsorship and BIGGA’s own resources to run...
attending a formal national oc-
tion, to dress in tie and jacket of the Association and to follow the guide-
lines on shoes, slacks and shirt'. Jan-
uary 1992 has now passed and we are some way from achieving this - look no further than the recent Iseki faise Tournaments for proof. Since 1987 we have sought to present our members professionally at such events, with BIGGA sweaters and shirts provided and on occa-
sions blazers and ties have been lent. The Constitution must now be amended; Greenkeepers have made great strides in presenting themselves professionally but there is still some way to go - even now we are talking of perhaps only 20% who take pride in their appearance with some 80% adopting a laissez faire approach to the detrimen
t of themselves and their Association. 1991 proved a good year - the first good year for our magazine since 1987. Its content and presentation have been widely applauded throughout the industry whilst there has been a constant effort to improve and to reflect the needs of the profession. We could not have chosen a har
der year, in the midst of a recession, to bring the magazine in-house. The indus-
try has remained supportive and levels of advertising have been sus-
tained - this augurs well for the future. We are in a highly competitive business and the maga-
zine has to run on strict commercial lines. This is happening and we are more than maintaining our own. We have mentioned the industry and out there many companies who have histori
cally supported the profession are experiencing very hard times. The great majority recognise the benefits of on-going relation-
ships with individual greenkeepers and with our sections. It is in many ways a small and closely-knit indus-
tory where everyone knows everyone and amidst the competitive rivalry, a camaraderie exists. Many green-
keepers are at ease with company reps and pressure selling is rare and generally unwelcome by our mem-
bers. At National level we benefit from a small number of sponsorship agreements, primarily aimed at pro-
moting the education and training of greenkeepers. Those agreements are very welcome and I would sug-
gest mutually beneficial. They gen-
erally work well and over a period of three years have stood the test of time. The danger we face is of some companies perceiving one simply for the benefit from their relationship with the Association to their exclusion and in time this could have a polar-
sing effect. The launching of the new Education and Development Fund marks another significant advance for the Association. Substan
tial contributions will now channel the resources of the game and the industry into one central fund which will enable the promotion and financing of educational pro-
grammes, scholarship awards and training aids for the benefit of the greenkeeping profession. The enhancement of knowledge and technical expertise will in turn lead to higher standards of course management.

Nearly five years on we can look back and be proud of our achievements. Yet there is much to be done. We must start by exami-
nining very carefully where we are falling down before criticising others. Our b i g g e s t p r o-
blem can be summed up in one word - apathy - the apathy of members paralysed by seeking edu-
cational better-
ment. Whilst this can be seen as a product of past attitudes within Clubs, many of our members really do need to wake up to oppor-
tunities now becoming avail-
able. Many of them lack the confidence to pursue these opportu-
nities having in the past adopted the traditional role of knowing their place. Our Management Courses are designed to instil the self-confidence needed to march into the secretary's office and make a case for financial support. If support is not obtained the profession will not be deterred in tak-
ing the profession forward to its rightful place at the forefront of the game.