A superb selection of students

Following the dream

The prize was a seven week trip to the Stateside, the first six weeks of which, I would have been based at the University of Massachusetts, followed by a week of travelling. Although very exciting by this opportunity, I was at first understandably apprehensive. However, once meeting some of my fellow classmates who were also staying in the same accommodation as myself, it didn't take long for me to settle in. There was no time however to sleep off the assignments, so the group study and continuous progression of quizzes and assignments, so the group study and discussion sessions were of real benefit to everyone, and were a vital factor in guaranteeing success in the course.

My time in Massachusetts was not entirely confined to a classroom. Since this was my first trip to America, I was keen to visit as many places as I could. Fortunately, two of my classmates invited me to Boston, Rhode Island and Ottawa, Canada as well. This resulted in me having to spend only two weekends at the motel I was staying; but I managed to take in some of the local culture: seeing a basketball game and an ice hockey game.

I was kept very well occupied during this six and a half week period, and the Graduation Dinner and the presentation of certificates was quick in coming around. Although it was difficult to say goodbye to everyone, I was looking forward to the next stretch of my travels, and to having a rest from working. I flew out of Hartford to head for Dallas, Texas.

The Golf Course Superintendents of America Association (GCSAA) Trade Show and Conference was my next port of call. The show was enormous, and was certainly bigger than anything I've seen at home. Also attending were Toro representatives, BIGGA represent-
made the decision to swap careers much sooner as he enjoys his job so much.

Thursday saw Pete and I in Cheltenham where we were joined by Richard Barker, Vice Chairman of BIGGA to judge the South West and South Wales Regions. Mark Wildshire, a South African, working at Llanishen Golf Club was selected from a very high quality group. Mark who represents Penzco College has only been working full time for over 1999 feels that his NVQ course has given him the foundations to progress to the highest level in Greenkeeping.

Our final journey saw Pete and I travel to Kettering where we were joined by BIGGA Board of Management Member, David Walden. The eighth finalist, selected from the five Midlands entries is Ewan McCabe. Ewan is a pride Greenkeeping student and works at Gog Magog Golf Club. Ewan started his working life as a greenkeeper, left to join the Army and finally returned to his true vocation five years ago.

The National Final will be held on Tuesday 28th October at the Crown Hotel in Boroughbridge, alongside the Final of the TORO Excellence in Greenkeeping Competition.

The National winner will be awarded the TORO Scholarship and travel to the United States for six weeks of study at the University of Massachusetts, followed by trips to the TORO HQ in Minneapolis, and the TORO Factory in California and to the GCSAA Greenkeeping Show in Orlando.

Although judging is strenuous, this Competition gives me, and my fellow judges a great boost when we hear how greenkeepers are using their education and training qualification to further their careers, improve their pay and conditions of service and to improve the status of greenkeepers. The industry has continued to progress thanks to GTC ensuring the range and quality of greenkeeper qualifications, to BIGGA for encouraging greenkeepers to study and learn and to TORO for supporting this competition.

I would say that winning the Toro Student Greenkeeper of the Year 2000 Award is a great honour, and one that was very unexpected. To those who believe that it could only be a dream, I would say follow that dream. Apart from the accomplishment of winning such a prestigious award, it was a great opportunity to attend The Winter School for Turfgrass Managers at the University of Massachusetts. This experience has fed my professional development, and given me a renewed enthusiasm for the problem solving nature of our business. It has changed the way I now look at my career.

Jonathan Cleland