Ken Richardson explains why the Education Department has been so busy this last month.

I hardly seem to have been in the office lately. I spent all of last week 'on the road' doing the interviews for the TORO Student of the Year Competition. I always travel over 1000 miles but three of this year's candidates added to the miles, as one drove back from a holiday in North Wales to Manchester for his interview then back to Wales, one flew from Majorca to Manchester and then back to Majorca - leaving his wife and children 'on the beach' and a third returned from Sri Lanka for his interview in the Midlands.

TORO Student of the Year 2006

37 candidates were nominated for this year’s competition from a total of over 3000 greenkeeping students. They ranged from those just entering the industry from school, to those entering the industry as a second or third career.

Delegates to this competition, come better prepared each year and it is not easy for the judges to choose the eight candidates that will go forward to the National Final in September.

Sunday, July 2, saw me flying to Edinburgh Airport where I was joined by Ian McLeod to judge the Scottish candidates. A long day of judging was followed, a flight back to Leeds/Bradford and a night at home before I was up early to drive to Manchester Airport to judge the Northern and Irish candidates. I was joined at Manchester by: Sami Collins, Warren Beavan and Trevor Chard from TORO. After a late afternoon finish, I set off for Homel Hempstead via a massive thunderstorm in the M1 Road Works at Luton.

Wednesday was judging day in the South East where I was joined by Master Greenkeeper Lee Strutt and John Pike from TORO. The next stop was Cheltenham where Gavin Robson joined John and I to judge the candidates from the South West and South Wales on Thursday. Then it was back in the car to dive to Peterborough where Peter Mansfield from TORO joined Gavin and I to judge the candidates from the Midlands.

Next it was time to select the eight National Finalists. They are: Barrie Lewis and Kenneth Gilroy from Scotland; Stephen Eager from Ireland; James Billington from the North; Michael Emptage and Stephen Stroomer from the South East; Abigail Crosswood from the South West and South Wales and Graham Brampton from the Midlands. Congratulations to all eight Finalists.

BIGGA Golf Environment Competition

The judges at STRI have finished their initial judging and are busy visiting clubs around Britain to determine the prizewinners. More details will appear in the next issue of Greenkeeper International.

Regional Training Courses

BIGGA continues to support education and training in the Regions and the following courses have been arranged at Gay Hill GC in the Midland Region:

Sit In ATV - 4 October 2006
Cost to BIGGA Members £60 + VAT (£70.50)
Cost to non members £160 + VAT (£188)

Chainsaw Maintenance & Cross Cutting
- 6/7 November 2006
Cost to BIGGA Members £225 + VAT (£264.38)
Cost to non members £325 + VAT (£381.875)

Communicating with Committees
- 5/6 December 2006
Cost to BIGGA Members £110 + VAT (£129.25)
Cost to non members £210 + VAT (£246.75)

The following course will be held at a tree felling location in Staffordshire

Chainsaw Basic Felling Techniques (up to 200mm in diameter)
- 8/9 November 2006
Cost to BIGGA Members £205 + VAT (£240.88)
Cost to non members £305 + VAT (£358.375)

For more information please contact Sami Collins on: 01347 833800.

The Alps Golf Tour

You may have read about a proposed Greenkeeper’s Tour of the Alps in the April edition of Greenkeeper International. Some more information about this educational, as well as enjoyable tour, is given below. Further details will be published in future editions of this magazine.