

And then there were

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The strength of guidance and support given to BIGGA members by ICI Professional Products – in both sporting and educational programmes – must be seen in all quarters as richly rewarding, demonstrated first by the truly fantastic ICI sponsored National Tournament and followed now by the quality of entry for this year's ICI Premier Greenkeeper of The Year awards.

Those greenkeepers who have faith in their own ability to rise beyond the norm – and there are more and more professionals who think in that fashion – supported the competition with great gusto and in greater numbers than hitherto, first by completing a short but testing examination paper and following this with an essay on a pertinent greenkeeping subject.

A natural process of elimination followed, with the five chosen finalists having been inspected by experts from both BIGGA and ICI at their place of work – on the field of action, so to speak – before finally reaching the nerve wracking final hurdle. This will be an interview to be held next month before a select panel of judges at Aldwark Manor, BIGGA's national headquarters.

Quite apart from the natural kudos gained in just reaching the final stretch, one proud greenkeeper will be chosen as ICI Premier Greenkeeper and join the BIGGA trip to the GCSAA Exhibition and Conference in America's New Orleans, in February 1992. The runner-up will receive a weekend for two in the 'Big City', with tickets for a major golf tournament and a West End show, with third place taking a relaxing weekend for two at Aldwark Manor, including golf and theatre tickets. All wonderful prizes.

THE CANDIDATES

RICHARD BARKER

Richard is a most popular and highly visible figure at all BIGGA functions, being Chairman of the East Midlands section, a regular trophy winner at both BIGGA and Leicester County golf events and a staunch supporter of greenkeeper education. Above all, he's a supporter with a solid background, having attended both Askham Bryan College and Elmwood College for Management and Supervisory studies – finishing up Top Student at Elmwood.

He's 27, still single, and is head greenkeeper at Kirby Muxloe Golf Club, a delightful parkland course on 150 acres with four green staff, where he's held the post for nearly four years. Quite apart from the day to day running of Kirby Muxloe, Richard has been involved in constructing three new Hawtree designed holes and has thoroughly enjoyed this exposure to another side of his career progression. He's a world traveller, taking note of the best that other countries have to offer and successfully attempting to integrate such techniques into his own course in his efforts to keep all of his members happy all of the time!

LAURENCE PITHIE

It's difficult to know where to start with Laurence, for his profile is on an all time high following his election as the first ever Master Greenkeeper this year. He was winner of the National Greenkeeper and Groundsman of The Year in '83 and '87, regional winner in '88 and holds the Course Managers Gold Diploma. He's a speaker at seminars and conferences, a student of foreign languages, and the compiler of a slide library on golf course management, culled from his many journeys to courses around the world.

Laurence, born in 1952, began as an apprentice in his native Scotland at Bruntsfield Links before moving to Mortonhall as deputy head greenkeeper, whilst following the time honoured pattern of college education at Elmwood. This was followed in '73 by a move to head greenkeeper status at Sandiway in Cheshire. His current courses, 36 holes of downland delight on a limestone plateau at Minchinhampton, have been his great challenge since 1981 and it is here that he lives with his family.



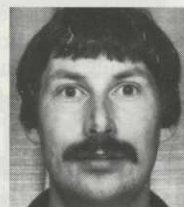
RICHARD
BARKER



LAURENCE
PITHIE



TIMOTHY
McCREADIE



DAVID
WHITAKER



ARNE van
AMERONGEN

Not content with nurturing 36 holes at Minchinhampton, he acts as a consultant for two other Clubs, plays to a handicap of 8, writes articles and has the ambition to write a full length book on course management from a practical viewpoint.

TIMOTHY McCREADIE

Tim is yet another of those greenkeepers who link fine play in the field of golfing competition – he's a grand player and was once a qualified member of the PGA – with the skills and determination to maintain absolutely first rate playing conditions on his own course. Recently at Hesketh, a qualifying course for Open Championship entry, he's been a head greenkeeper for some nine years at both Hesketh and Stourbridge, both truly bonny and challenging courses of high repute. Having worked on a variety of different courses, links, heathland and parkland, he is well versed in such diverse activities as major drainage installations and thatch eradication.

Unlike others with an eye for the glittering prize of professional golf, 37 year old Tim made the wise decision to study for his chosen career at the Reaseheath College, with the highlight coming when he was elected Top Student in his final Phase III year.

Now his sights are set on moving to a new development – one where top class specifications are written in stone and strictly followed to the letter – in order that he may combine his course maintenance skills with the empathy he has for nature conservancy and wild flower preservation. Tim lives with his family in the golfing mecca of Southport, where he collects books on greenkeeping design and maintenance.

DAVID WHITAKER

Ask 30 year old David Whitaker what his premier aim is and he will almost certainly wax lyrical on the subject of improving greenkeeper status, a subject on which he holds very firm views. He's of the opinion that this will come quicker than many believe, based on his premise that better research, education, and personal representation at both national and Club committee level is now regarded in many circles in a much more enlightened manner.

Perhaps this thinking is in line with his present position, that of course manager at the high profile and much discussed Wisley course, a new 27 hole Robert Trent Jones Jnr. design in the Surrey stockbroker belt, seeded throughout with the 'Penn' cultivar range. He's been at Wisley almost since the first sod was turned and has the huge task of 'growing-in' and subsequent maintenance of both course and grounds – a demanding responsibility.

Seemingly with a penchant for 'Penn' range grasses, David was previously responsible for an equally demanding task in Switzerland at the Pete Dye designed Golf Du Domaine Imperial, whilst also acting as a consultant to the prestigious Geneva Golf Club, all heady stuff. If all this suggests that his skills lie only with American style activities; not so, for over ten years of solid and dependable greenkeeping work in the north of England at both Baildon and Rawdon stamp him as a sound all-rounder with skills in every department.

ARNE van AMERONGEN

With a name like Arne (as in Arnie's Army) you could hardly be surprised that this likeable young Dutchman eventually took to greenkeeping as a career, though his first sporting love is Judo and he is a past champion of the crack Dutch Marine force. What is surprising is that one hailing from the cradle of golf should work in Germany and be college trained in Britain. Arne is head greenkeeper with the British Army Golf Club in Sennelager where he trains other staff, especially on the intricacies of a computerised irrigation system. From early beginnings, training under Englishman Bill Garner, Arne moved around whilst working on both heathland and parkland courses and became involved with building both tees and greens from scratch. He's a model student under Dennis Mortram at Reaseheath in Cheshire and is well forward toward completing his Greenkeeping and Sportsturf Management examinations. One of the new European breed, he is a strong contender for the TORO/PGA European Tour Student Greenkeeper award this year and is setting his long term goals high. One idea in his mind is that he may become a course designer and act as a consultant, with an emphasis on machinery, maintenance, budgets and irrigation.