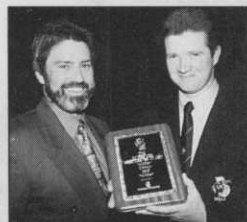


Managing membership

Win the ICI Premier Greenkeeper Award and visit San Francisco

Judged by your peers to be the best of the best is a rare achievement in itself. But for the winner of the 1994 ICI Premier Greenkeeper Award, that achievement will turn into an unforgettable experience with a place on the BIGGA trip to San Francisco for the 1995 GCSAA Exhibition and Conference. You'll enjoy legendary American hospitality and VIP treatment all the way.



ICI Professional Products' Roger Mossop, left, with the 1993 winner, Gordon Irvine

Other prizes in this most prestigious award include:

- ★ a weekend for two at a top London hotel, with tickets for a West End show of your choice
- ★ a weekend for two at the Aldwark Manor Hotel, York
- ★ ... and all section nominations will receive a memento of the occasion, courtesy of the sponsors, ICI Professional Products.

Entry forms are available from Headquarters or your Section Secretary.

Each section of BIGGA will consider the entries and one nominee will represent each section in a regional final, where in a course visit by representatives of ICI and BIGGA, they will walk the course and have an informal discussion with the nominee.

The five regional finalists will receive a further course visit and will be interviewed at Aldwark Manor prior to a banquet and presentation at BIGGA HQ on 5 December 1994.

Closing date for entries is April 30, 1994 - so don't delay, enter today!

Membership is at the very heart of BIGGA. There is strength in numbers and from 1987 onwards our membership has shown consistent growth. I am often asked just what I consider to be our membership potential and this is a difficult question to answer. In any professional body there will always be only a given percentage of those entitled to join who will actually apply for membership, the remainder citing any number of reasons for a negative attitude. Within BIGGA we now have some 50% of all eligible greenkeepers in membership so membership matters should continue to focus our minds.

The good news is that at the time of writing 763 applications have been received from potential new members for 1994. Conversely, after a membership drive which has stretched since mid-November, we entered March with approximately 1,500 current members still to renew. These have been chased from headquarters with a good response and the next chasing will be at regional and section level. When all is said and done we will look to increase on our 1993 closing membership figure of 5,162. In this year of review, we have the opportunity to look at our membership rates and categories. As far as subscriptions are concerned there are clearly two schools of thought - those who feel that subscriptions should be increased in line with the needs of a professional association and the benefits available, whilst there are those who feel that subscriptions should be kept at present levels both from an economic viewpoint and because they see these levels as most likely to pull in new members. There is always scope to change membership categories but changes need to be made judiciously and only to meet clearly defined areas of need.

What of golf clubs and their attitudes to BIGGA membership? The majority of golf clubs now have an insight into the benefits of BIGGA membership for their employees and as such encourage membership. Not all greenkeepers respond to this encouragement. Other clubs take an opposite view, still seem-

ingly threatened by an association which they see akin to a trade union. Nothing could be further from the truth. Through their representation on the GTC, the Home Unions have agreed to encourage membership of BIGGA and one hopes that the message will get through to those clubs who adopt an insular and sometimes hostile attitude. What justification can there be for a greenkeeper to feel that his employment might be threatened should he join a professional association whose educational and training programmes will ultimately make him much better equipped to perform his role within his golf club? Some golf clubs indeed still actively oppose greenkeepers seeking training and qualifications fearing that they will



BIGGA in focus

BY NEIL THOMAS

then move onto better things.

Let's have a look at the value members get for their membership. First, let's clearly establish that membership for those renewing in 1994 came at a rate of £1 per week or less. From receipt of a monthly magazine to insurance and legal benefits and numerous educational opportunities, this is surely outstanding value for money. It is an old but very true adage that you only get out of something what you are prepared to put in but for the keen and committed individual, his membership allows him to play a full role at section, region and national level, to pursue a number of educational options to his career benefit and enjoy the camaraderie and social aspects of BIGGA whilst being backed by a professional associa-

tion intent on improving the status, training and conditions of service for its members.

The two schools of thought on subscriptions are matched by two schools of thought on who should pay those subscriptions. Club or individual member that is the question. Many are the arguments on this score with those seeing membership of BIGGA as a reasonable part of their employment benefits to be funded by the club, whilst others feel that the individual paying ensures that greater value is placed on membership and there is increased commitment to the Association. What of the renewal process? Non-receipt of the membership invoice, lost in the washing machine, chewed by the dog - there are many intriguing excuses made for late or non-payment. Like most, greenkeepers do not like parting with their money before the last possible moment. So from Headquarters' viewpoint there has to be recourse first to the Constitution and second to a penalty. 'The annual subscription shall be due and payable on the first day of January each year... No member of the Association whose subscription is in arrears by one calendar month shall participate in any of the advantages or privileges of the Association, vote on any question or compete for any prize'. That applies after 31 January. After this any member still to renew has the magazine withheld and by the end of March they are deleted from membership. I wonder just how rigorously the constitution is implemented at region and section level in this regard. It certainly needs to be as, like other organisations, late payment for BIGGA means reduced cashflow.

I hope I have triggered some thoughts on a subject which is the very life-blood of the Association. We do not claim to have the ideal membership systems, categories or subscriptions. We remain open to suggestions on where improvements and changes can be made. This year we will be reappraising the administration and computerisation of membership. I would welcome any views or comments you may wish to put forward.



BIGGA Staff Profile **CLARE DOUGLAS** Membership Services Officer

Clare was one of 38 students to successfully gain a place on a newly-established retail marketing degree course at Manchester Polytechnic - from 10,000 applicants! Now Clare is using her skills to help build BIGGA's membership and her day to day role includes marketing to gain new members and dealing with any queries that may occur. Before joining the Association, Clare was a graduate recruitment officer at Sainsbury's head office in London and worked for Yorkshire Water in their customer services and personnel department. Clare saw her move to BIGGA as an "interesting opportunity" to use her degree.