

# A success story

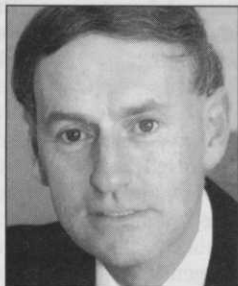
## THE STORY SO FAR

On 1 January 1992 BIGGA formally established its Education and Development Fund. At the time I wrote that, "...the new Education and Development Fund has been established to enable the promotion and financing of educational programmes, scholarship awards and training aids for the benefit of the greenkeeping profession". Now some three years on we have a fund on which to draw and one which, given the ongoing commitment of both companies and individuals, will in the future be of enormous benefit for the education and training of greenkeepers.

1993 saw the production of the video 'Raising the Standard in Spray Application' which was circulated to all course manager members of BIGGA. At BTME '94 we launched the widely acclaimed career video 'Keeper of the Green' produced and financed in conjunction with the GTC. During 1994 the 'On Course Field Guide For The Major Diseases and Pests of Fine Turf' was produced and distributed and received an excellent reception from BIGGA members. Filming has just been completed for a module type video on 'Golf Course Preparation' which will premiere at BTME '95 whilst plans are in hand to produce an ecology booklet and a leaflet on grass identification. So the practical benefits of having established the fund are now evident.

## FROM WHERE COMES THE FUNDING?

The fund has no guaranteed income and no grant aid. It depends entirely on what can be raised through the auspices of BIGGA. To this end it is gratifying to acknowledge the support received from companies within the industry as Golden and Silver Key supporters and this is done in good measure and quite rightly so elsewhere in this month's issue. Increasingly individual members are contributing to the fund as well as Regions and Sections. The fund is dependent on such support and those contributing are most welcome to put forward suggestions on future fund expenditure. With the companies, meetings are held twice a year to



## BIGGA in focus

BY NEIL THOMAS

discuss spending programmes and to seek common ground in continuance of mutually beneficial relationships. The fund will only prosper with continued company support and individual contributions. It needs the support of BIGGA's Regions and Sections. Backing from across a broad spectrum of our industry remains vital for future progress.

## GROWTH IN 1995

The fund is set to grow in 1995. Already Amenity Technology and Rhône Poulenc have confirmed as Golden Key supporters and Fenchurch will be a Silver Key supporter. Ransomes are upgrading from silver to gold status. Other new memberships are pending. It is an encouraging picture and one which allows for the development of further projects in 1995/96. All 1994 contributing companies have confirmed their continuing support for 1995 thus giving the fund a stability which will allow both for planning and for projects to come through to fruition. It is important to note that this fund is separated from the general running of the Association. Also that BIGGA has no other specific financing with which to further greenkeeper education and training and it is unlikely that alternative sources of finance will be forthcoming in the foreseeable future.

## FUTURE PLANS

A major and exciting development is planned for the autumn/winter of 1995/96. There is a very definite need amongst greenkeepers for training to be provided on a local basis whilst still offering the opportunity for intensive in-house

courses at Aldwark Manor. As I write we are in the middle of the annual Management Courses and it is pleasing to report that this year's restructured courses to meet N/SVQ requirements have met with an enthusiastic response. These are real learning weeks and we plan to continue with them in the future. However there is also a need for courses to be taken to members and to facilitate training by making it available on a local basis. I am able therefore to make two announcements in relation to localised training – both made possible through the increasing resources of the Education and Development Fund.

## NEW COURSES

During the first two weeks of October next year we are planning intensive Health and Safety courses on the basis of one per Region. These will be subsidised through the Education and Development Fund and be available to greenkeepers, BIGGA members and non-members alike, on a first come, first served basis.

Following on from the Health and Safety courses will be management training courses. These will be held during February and March 1996 initially on the basis of two per Region whilst it is hoped to be able to run these courses also in Ireland. These will be two-day courses financed from the Education and Development Fund with golf clubs sending greenkeepers merely being asked to meet the costs of one night's board and lodge. Again these courses will be available to both BIGGA members and non-members on a first come, first served basis. Whilst still in the planning stages it is hoped over the two-day period to offer a combination

of management and technical training. Importantly these courses will be directly relevant for N/SVQ qualifications and will therefore set attendees on the road to recognised national qualifications.

I believe these courses represent an exciting development and will help many more greenkeepers to identify with both BIGGA's educational programmes and the growing importance of the fund. For those not attending Aldwark Manor for courses, training programmes must sometimes seem remote whilst the availability of localised training will most surely be welcomed by golf clubs and greenkeepers alike. We would welcome ideas on course content as essentially those taking the courses will want to teach what greenkeepers wish to learn. If you are aware of a gap in educational provision let us know about it. If these courses prove successful then I envisage a steady expansion in the years ahead.

## IN CONCLUSION

After three years, the Education and Development Fund, and with it the setting up of Golden and Silver Key memberships, must be viewed as a success story. The fund is even more vital today than was envisaged back in 1992. Continue to support it and seek others who will wish to be associated with the development of greenkeeping as a profession for as I wrote again some three years ago "...the enhancement of knowledge and technical expertise... will surely in turn lead to higher standards of course management and better playing conditions for golf club members".

I believe this is beginning to happen.

■ The Sussex Section of BIGGA has made a donation of £500 to the Education and Development Fund as part of its commitment to the future training of greenkeepers. In welcoming this donation, executive director Neil Thomas said: "It is particularly pleasing to receive a section donation as it is indicative of the support our members are

now giving to the fund. We already enjoy a considerable amount of company support but it is also essential that BIGGA's members either collectively through Region and Section donations or individually support a fund which is being utilised to provide enhanced training and educational opportunities for greenkeepers."