

BIGGA's training programmes forge ahead

As I write, our new Education Officer, Ken Richardson, is settling in, making contacts and hopefully beginning to see the wood from the trees in terms of greenkeeper education and training. I am sure that with his training background he will have much to contribute to both our own training programmes and to the development of education generally within the profession. Indeed much is happening on the education front. You will read elsewhere in the pages of this issue of the re-structuring of our annual management courses. This is an exciting development providing members with the opportunity whilst pursuing a course at Aldwark Manor to move towards a nationally recognised qualification. As part of our review this year we will be looking at the Master Greenkeeper Certificate to see if any amendments are necessary to the certification scheme after four years of operation. The status of the certificate continues to be enhanced and I remain impressed by the determination of members to obtain the certificate. As in any examination procedure there are referrals but a referral only seems to reinforce the determination of a member to reach his goal and this surely augurs well for his and the profession's future. Recent comment indicates that those referred are not clearly advised on aspects where they need to show improvement. Ken Richardson is aware of this criticism which will be rectified in future. There will be very real benefits in the years ahead for those recognised as Master Greenkeepers as indeed there will be for their profession and Association.

We will be looking to link the Management Courses with the Training Manual and to examine the feasibility of doing likewise with the Master Greenkeeper Certificate thereby demonstrating a coherent and logical approach to greenkeeper education in broad terms.

Training initiative

In discussion with the GTC we have agreed on the need for a local training initiative and greenkeepers will thereby be presented with a choice of educational pro-



BIGGA in focus

BY NEIL THOMAS

vision. Whilst the detail remains to be finalised this local training is likely to be both college or centre based and incorporate a travelling roadshow. There is much administrative work to be undertaken and there will need to be substantial financial provision by the GTC. However I am optimistic that this initiative will commence in September 1995.

Field Guide

Members will have recently received an on course field guide for the major diseases and pests of fine turf which can be incorporated within their Training Manuals. This is yet another development emanating from the Education and Development Fund and offering practical benefits to greenkeepers. This fund is now in its third year, is firmly established and a vital source in terms of financing future educational projects. Continued support of the fund at all levels is extremely important.

This year will see two further training videos produced. The first will be made commercially with BIGGA backing and advice and will feature mowing tech-

niques. The second will be independently produced and financed by the Education and Development Fund and will feature golf course preparation. Our new library at Headquarters will become accessible for these and future training videos as well as books and will represent a valuable training medium.

Ecology debate

Discussions are ongoing with regard to the production of a practical guide to the ecological management of the golf course and a decision will shortly be taken on the direction in which this will proceed. Again financing will be provided through the Education and Development Fund. Ecological management is very much a current topic and concern and as an Association we must be at the forefront in leading the debate on behalf of the profession.

Needs analysis

There is concern at the lack of knowledge at Headquarters of educational developments at Region and Section level and here I see a key role in future for the regionally based Education Conveners. Our Education Officer will be seeking an early meeting with the Conveners essentially to carry out a 'needs analysis' exercise. There must be better coordination in future and indeed common standards and structured programmes implemented at Region and Section level. Any observations or comments you have will be welcomed by Ken Richardson who will seek to canvass a broad spectrum of opinion on the way ahead.

Conference venue

There has been much debate in recent months on the future timing and location of our National Education Conference. The recent conference at the University of Warwick more than maintained the standards of previous conferences and the enthusiasm of delegates continues to be most marked. Over the last year or so your Board of Management members have been made aware of pressures from within the membership to hold the Conference during the BTME in Harrogate.

I am equally aware of the views of many regular conference attendees who would prefer the conference to continue to be held separately in a university location. Having given in depth consideration to this matter your Education Sub-Committee has recommended that the 1995 Conference be held during the BTME replacing the Workshop programme over the Monday and Tuesday. This will be on a trial basis for 1995 and the situation will be reviewed thereafter. The Conference will be held in the Majestic Hotel adjacent to the Exhibition Halls and this hotel will now become the official Headquarters hotel for the BTME. Additionally we will of course be running the usual Seminar Programme during the Exhibition and here the format will remain unchanged. We are currently planning an exciting speaker programme over the five days and volunteers to present a paper at either the Conference or Seminar Programme will be given every consideration – but please hurry up and let us have your name. Look out for early news of BTME '95 in the BTME Newslines which will be closely followed in September by a new-look programme and booking form.

So there we have it – much is happening in greenkeeper education and with the review underway future initiatives are already being discussed. Members can rest assured that, in accordance with our founding objectives back in 1987, the development of greenkeeper education and training will continue to be our first and foremost consideration.

BIGGA Staff Profile SAMANTHA COLLINS (Sami) Clerk/typist

Maybe it's because she went to school in Colorado for a year, or maybe it's just because she likes American rock music, but Samantha Collins (or Sami as she prefers to be known) is a big fan of the US of A.

When she's not handling the subscriptions database for Greenkeeper International, answering the telephone or involved in secretarial duties, you'll find Sami in a pair of Levis dancing to "Sweet home Alabama" in her favourite bar. Sami's also a computer whiz and before joining BIGGA worked for several computer companies. "Have a positive attitude – it makes life worth living," she says, philosophically.

