

The common bonds of greenkeeping

This has been a very busy autumn in terms of fact finding on the future international role of BIGGA and how best we can serve the interests of our growing numbers of international members. During the course of a week, visits were made first to the German Greenkeepers Conference in Cologne and then the exhibition in Dublin of the newly named 'Golf Course Superintendents Association of Ireland', where for the second year BIGGA had a stand. Both visits proved most informative as the respective Associations seek to meet the needs of greenkeepers and move forward on a professional basis.

The German Conference was held for the first time in conjunction with the Areal Exhibition which takes place every two years and featured over 400 turf industry suppliers from 15 countries. The Greenkeepers Association of Germany (GVD) was formed in 1993 and currently has some 480 mem-

bers. It enjoys close links with the Swiss Greenkeepers Association (SGA) and the Austrian Greenkeepers Association (IGO) with meetings held under the auspices of the International Greenkeepers Association which is constituted from delegates of the three Associations. The 'Greenkeepers Journal' is the official publication of the four bodies and is



BIGGA in focus

BY NEIL THOMAS

the only German language greenkeepers specialised journal. Through the kind invitation of Claus-Detlef Ratjen, President of the GVD, I was invited to present a paper to the Association's AGM. This paper was translated into German by our Memberships Services Officer, Janet Adamson, who then had the daunting task of reading it to some 150 German greenkeepers. This she did expertly and we were made very welcome by the Association members and their President.


We made the point that BIGGA is actively seeking to develop international activities for the benefit of greenkeepers and the profession and that in our view it is essential that there is a close European cooperation, highlighting as a strong example the need for cooperation on environmental matters. However it was important to point out that it is not the wish of BIGGA to interfere in any way in the running of national greenkeepers associations. Indeed it is important that in each and every country in Europe where the profession is growing, strong and independent greenkeeping associations are established and developed. Within this context, BIGGA can and will offer support where needed through its established organisation and administration, albeit only on request. A brief visit but one which established a number of contacts and a basis for on-going dialogue and cooperation. Our thanks are extended to Claus-Detlef Ratjen, his officers and members for their welcome and hospitality. Membership of BIGGA in Germany currently stands at 62 and we benefited from meeting some of our own members during the visit and hearing their viewpoints.

Union of Ireland clubs in the Republic of Ireland. The aim is for the regions to control the organising of events and recruitment of new members while encouraging their members to be active and support the Association at regional and national level. The Association will encompass all categories of greenkeeper. Education and training will be to the forefront as the Association's efforts are concentrated on developing one strong representative Association, better understood and recognised. A more professional approach to management is sort and closer links with the golfing media while working in conjunction with other relevant bodies for the general good of the industry.


We met with the officers of the new Association whom we feel we know from past meetings and friendships formed during Hayter Challenge Finals in recent years. One cannot fail to be impressed by their enthusiasm and determination to successfully establish the new Association. They recognise the task ahead and they are aware that they can call on the experience gained by BIGGA since 1987 whenever they feel in need of assistance. We wish them every success.

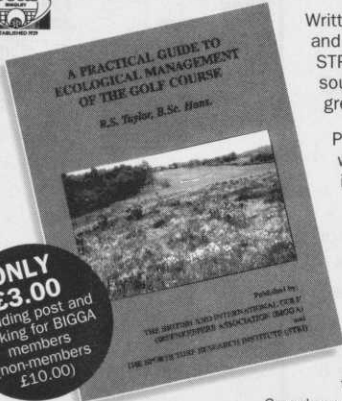
In updating readers on developments in Germany and Ireland one is moved to reflect on the common bonds of greenkeeping. Everywhere there is a thirst for education and training amongst those determined on a path of professional development. There is a recurring theme of concern on environmental matters as there is in terms of greenkeeper relationships with the Club and Green Committees. Rare within professions these days is the concern of man for his fellows but this is never more apparent than within the greenkeeping profession. It is something which knows no boundaries and is not hampered by differences of language and culture. Whatever the problem there is someone able and willing to give practical guidance and assistance. We can therefore find both strength and comfort in the international brotherhood of greenkeepers and move confidently forward to strengthen our relationships and secure an increasing recognition of the stature of the greenkeeping profession.

So to Ireland. The timing of our visit was auspicious in the sense that it coincided with the announcement in October that the 'Irish Golf Greenkeepers Association' was no more, having been reconstituted as the 'Golf Course Superintendents Association of Ireland'. The new Association will be run on a twin level of regional and national. Four regions have been formed covering the South West, South East, North East and North West within which will be incorporated the 26 counties - two regions of seven and two of six. At present there are 255 registered Golfing



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