

A year in the life of...

It is traditional at this time of year both to review the past 12 months and look forward in anticipation to a new year. For BIGGA 1994 was unquestionably a year of growth and development and financially this will be reflected in the Board of Management's Report and Accounts to be presented to the forthcoming Annual General Meeting.

In membership terms we now have over 5,500 members – an impressive figure but still some way off realising the full potential for BIGGA membership. Whilst for 1995 we must initially target 6,000, we need to look beyond that figure and particularly galvanize current members into bringing others into the fold. The old adage of strength in numbers remains very true and whilst the last year has seen a considerable strengthening of BIGGA PR and publicity initiatives, there is no substitute for the local member convincing fellow greenkeepers of the benefits of joining BIGGA.

1994 saw considerable advances on the education front and our new education officer, Ken Richardson, is now making his mark. The recent restructured Management Courses were a great success and will now be followed up in 1995/96 with local training initiatives geared to NVQ qualifications. As BTME approaches the launch of our new video on 'Golf Course Preparation' is eagerly anticipated. This video is a product of our Education and Development Fund and made possible through the generous support, both company and individual, of our Golden and Silver Key supporters. How encouraging, therefore, that at the start of 1995 two new companies have joined as Golden Key members and another two as Silver Key. As we move through 1995, additional resources in the Education and Development Fund can only enhance our training initiatives. Look out for an ecology booklet and one on grass identification.

Our magazine, *Greenkeeper International*, enters 1995 widely regarded as the market leader. There are no grounds for complacency in a competitive market place and we are aware of aspects of the magazine which can and will be improved. Again we need



BIGGA in focus

BY NEIL THOMAS

the input of members with articles, news items and indeed letters, whether these are specifically on greenkeeping matters or in critical appraisal of the magazine or BIGGA affairs in general.

As this magazine reaches you, many will be anticipating the visit to Harrogate for the BTME. A great week lies in store with the three exhibition halls sold out and indeed a waiting list situation. The intensive educational programmes available over five days are testimony to our ability to attract international as well as widely regarded home-based speakers. Already we are planning ahead to BTME '96 when it

is likely that we will need to move into a fourth exhibition hall. The development of BIGGA's own show since 1989 has been dramatic. From a personal viewpoint, my greatest pleasure in BTME week is to appreciate how much it means to our members as a focal point of their year and now, for many, an annual pilgrimage where old friendships are renewed and new ones forged. Long may it continue and your staff will spare no effort to ensure that the BTME continues to move forward with added strength and popularity.

Some brief thoughts therefore on membership, education, magazine and exhibition. Whilst one is justified in being upbeat on these important aspects of your Association as we enter 1995, there is a need always to be one step ahead in a competitive world governed by commercial realities. Mindful of this your Board was given the go-ahead at the 1994 AGM to undertake a review of the Association's activities and an initial draft report 'Towards 2000' has been compiled and been given initial consideration at the first meeting of the Review Body which was held in early December. There remains considerable work to be undertaken before the

final report is submitted for approval to the 1996 AGM. Members should note the composition of the Review Body and any proposals or suggestions for consideration will be welcomed by any Review Body member.

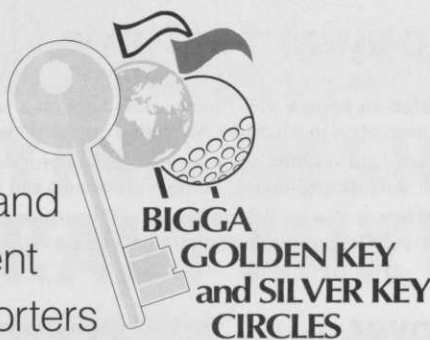
Review Body Membership

Chairman – Barry Heaney, Vice-Chairman, BIGGA
 Harry Diamond, Scottish Region
 Richard Barker, Midland Region
 Clive Osgood, South East Region
 Gordon Child, South West Region
 Ian Holoran, Northern Region
 Neil Thomas, Executive Director
 John Pemberton, Administration Manager
 Ken Richardson Education Officer
 Bill Lynch, Sales and Marketing Manager

At the conclusion of the review process we should be able to put in place an infrastructure which will serve the Association's needs beyond the millenium and which, through the Review Body, can be regularly monitored to ensure its continued viability and effectiveness.

In the January 1994 issue of *Greenkeeper International*, I wrote of the need in 1994 for staff at headquarters to have more direct contact at "grass roots" level and that during the year the senior management team would seek to spend more of its time "out in the country" communicating directly with greenkeepers at all levels. This has certainly happened and staff have received a positive response on their visits to all parts of the country. Proposals and suggestions generated in discussion can now be assessed, prioritised and taken forward. Perhaps the overriding concern at present is for localised management training and this is now being developed for 1995/96. We at headquarters will seek to maintain and widen our contacts with members but please let us know your views. It is your Association and its ultimate development depends on your input – an input needed from the silent majority as well as the committed minority. The welfare of the greenkeeper in all its aspects lies at the heart of this Association but your help is needed in determining how best this can be improved, maintained and enhanced.

Sisis joins growing list of Education and Development Fund supporters



Sisis is the latest company to back BIGGA's Education and Development Fund. This brings to four the number of new companies already in Golden or Silver Key membership for 1995.

Commenting on Sisis' decision to take up Silver Key membership, BIGGA's executive director, Neil Thomas, commented: "BIGGA members are very much aware of the support Sisis has traditionally given to our Regions and Sections. The company's decision to additionally take out Silver Key membership is greatly appreciated and the backing of such a well-respected company gives added strength to the Education and Development Fund".

Sisis' membership brings to 15 the number of companies in either Golden or Silver Key membership.