

Travelling together or miles apart?

In the March issue of *Greenkeeper International* I wrote that it was time for greenkeeping to take the global view and I asked our international members to get in touch and make suggestions as to how communications can be improved.

As the summer (perhaps a misnomer!) of 1995 passes I have still to receive one single suggestion in this regard. So at present we remain primarily dependent on contact at conferences/exhibitions together with the occasional foray into Europe by our magazine Editor for a "one-off" article. If we take in the BTME, the GCSAA Conference and Show, the Irish Greenkeepers Association exhibition which will again be held in Dublin this coming November and the Swedish Greenkeepers Association conference and exhibition at which we will be represented in September, one is left to ask is this really enough in terms of ascertaining the views and needs of our international members? In my view it is quite clearly not enough. Taking a positive view, our attendance at the last IGA exhibition certainly led to closer relationships and improved contacts. I have great hopes that this will also prove to be the case in Sweden in September where we hope to hold a meeting to involve not only our colleagues in Sweden, with whom we enjoy a close working relationship, but also greenkeepers from Denmark, Finland and Norway. Following the meeting I would hope that we are more enlightened on developments in Scandinavia.

As I have previously indicated, the Board of Management has set aside monies in the current year's budget for international development. There is no wish to impinge on the aspirations and workings of fellow greenkeeping associations and we can therefore only go where we are invited. However, our growth and development does enable us to offer assistance where there is a need and wish for BIGGA to be involved. We have the leading publication in the turf industry in the United Kingdom and with our international circulation this can be used to focus on international issues and particularly within Europe. Our new Edi-



BIGGA in focus

BY NEIL THOMAS

tor is ready and willing to carry international news items and stories – it merely needs a telephone call. In the key area of greenkeeper education our track record over the last eight years would indicate that there is a considerable breadth of knowledge which can be made available. Again our Education Officer is only too willing to help. This does not mean that something is available as long as an international member is prepared to come and get it. Far from it. Tell us what is required and, as far as it is within our means, we will seek to bring it to you. In this day and age the problems, eg language, are not insurmountable.

We need to know the conditions under which our members labour in Europe. Without such knowledge it is difficult to advise those who wish to gain new experiences abroad. We need to see at first hand the progress of golf course development and the greenkeeping profession in Europe. To do this we need to interact with our international members. A study tour would perhaps be a way forward – let us know if you, as an international member, would like to be involved.

For the last three years BIGGA has held a European Forum during the BTME in Harrogate. These forums have proved to be worthwhile gatherings but it is essential that they result in broadening the base of BIGGA's international contacts. To date this has happened only spasmodically and there is a need to move forward. There has been a suggestion for an international column/page monthly in *Greenkeeper International*. Would this be welcomed and from where cometh the material? Now there must surely be enough international news items to meet the needs of a monthly column. As such it is down to you, our international members, to filter them

through to our Editor for inclusion in the magazine.

As this issue of our magazine reaches you, we will be on the verge of The Open Championship at St Andrews. Now if ever there is an international gathering then surely this is it. Equally The Open will as usual attract a cosmopolitan gathering of greenkeepers within our new setting this year, the Madras Rugby Club, situated near the 17th green and for the exclusive use of BIGGA. So don't go looking for the BIGGA marquee! Here then is an immediate opportunity for greenkeepers from foreign lands to make their views known on international matters to BIGGA officials and staff. I will look forward to speaking with many of you. Don't let the opportunity slip. I know full well the concern of international members that they should receive the same value for membership as that enjoyed by their compatriots in the United Kingdom. We at Aldwark Manor feel frustrated that international developments are not happening at the pace we would wish. Together we must make things happen – let's set a target to make real progress in the next twelve months.

Company's practical training for students

Colleges are being asked to nominate greenkeeping students to attend turf tractor product appreciation classes run by Massey Ferguson/Iseki and organised by BIGGA.

With the emphasis on practical training, the four day courses are designed to give candidates a good appreciation of the technicalities of the selection, operation and maintenance of turf tractors and are likely to appeal to those students who have already shown an interest in machinery matters.

Massey Ferguson's Grass Equipment Division, which also distributes Iseki turfcare machinery in the UK, became a Golden Key member of BIGGA's Education and Development Fund in January and this latest initiative further underlines the company's commitment to greenkeeper training.

The courses will be run at three



Massey Ferguson's Gold Key Holder status was recognised with the presentation of its plaque. The presentation to Nick Kirby, Massey Ferguson's Grass Equipment Director, was made by BIGGA's Vice Chairman Dean Cleaver as he sat aboard a SF300.

different college venues in Scotland, the Midlands and the South East between February and April next year. 30 student places are available and all costs will be funded by Massey Ferguson/Iseki.

College course tutors should contact Ken Richardson, BIGGA Education Officer on 01347 838581 with their nominations. Look out for more details in the September edition of *Greenkeeper International*.