

Time for greenkeeping to take the global view

It is that time of year when the international role of BIGGA comes up for discussion. This occurs during the European Forum at the BTME and is then closely followed by the GCSAA Conference and Show which invariably provides for an international gathering of greenkeepers and administrators. The recent GCSAA Conference and show in San Francisco attracted all time record numbers in the region of 17,500 and the International Summit which Chairman, Barry Heaney and myself attended was certainly the most worthwhile international gathering of recent years. Two hours of intense discussion took place with three main topics – Global Concerns Facing Golf and Golf Course Management; Education of the World's Golf Course Superintendents and The Status of the Golf Course Superintendent Throughout the World. Some 15 countries were represented and whilst there were exchanges of view on such vital topics as environmental considerations, educational programmes and what is generally perceived to be the improving image of the greenkeeper, all present were united on the need for improved communication and debated how best this could be achieved.

Communication is of course facilitated by personal contact and four of my most interesting conversations during the show were with Wayne Hinton and Euan Laird, President and Chief Executive Officer respectively of the Australian Golf Course Superintendents Association, Trevor Smith, President of the Canadian Golf Superintendents Association, Ricardo de Udaeta, Greens Committee member of the Argentina Golf Association and Nigel Butler, Immediate Past Chairman of the Golf Course Managers, Greenkeepers Association of South Africa. The discussions which took place have undoubtedly led to closer relations between our respective bodies and to a greater understanding of common problems. Much international goodwill is generated annually at the



BIGGA in focus

BY NEIL THOMAS

BTME and the GCSAA event but all too frequently this can be dissipated through lack of contact in the ensuing year. I really do believe that this year good intentions will be turned to positive action as there seemed to be an underlying determination on the part of all concerned to communicate more effectively.

BIGGA will need to be instrumental in facilitating improved communication and in so doing assist other Associations in their growth and development. We can also learn much from the programmes being developed by other Associations. BIGGA, as probably the second largest greenkeeping Association worldwide, must be seen to give a lead in these matters and indeed to do justice to the 'international' contained in our title. The Board of Management has recognised this and made budgetary provision for such development. At present BIGGA has some 320 international members spread across 32

countries and their help will need to be sought in the vitally necessary exchange of information and implementation of educational programmes which will allow the profession to grow and flourish worldwide. In this day and age there is no need for members in distant countries to feel remote – indeed some are more involved and closer to BIGGA than fellow members in the United Kingdom. Let me give just one example. Bil Montague is based in Ohio and is one of our Master Greenkeepers. He is in regular contact and has twice visited the BTME. During the recent GCSAA show he was only too happy to help out on the BIGGA stand when he was not proudly touring the show in his BIGGA Master Greenkeeper blazer. So I would ask our international members to get in touch and make suggestions as to how communications can be improved and I would like to see 1995 as a year when real progress in this regard will be made.

If we can work closely with our international members how then can BIGGA take a lead in communicating with its fellow Associations? It can start with the dissemination of information from Headquarters and this will begin immediately. I believe this will stimulate other Associations to respond and then we can move forward together. In the not too distant future the time will surely come when the annual gatherings at the BTME and the GCSAA Conference and Show are supplemented by more formal meetings during the year to establish com-

mon goals and policies – the fields of education and the environment could be prime current considerations.

The Swedish Greenkeepers Association has invited BIGGA to be present at their conference and exhibition this coming September and this represents an excellent opportunity to learn from one of the most progressive associations. I have previously had the opportunity to speak at their conference and I am sure that Billy McMillan, Course Manager at the Wildwood Golf Club, who has accepted an invitation to speak this year, will return enriched by the experience. So the exchange of views and information is facilitated and BIGGA must be prepared to play its part on the international stage – not I hasten to add intrusively. We will go where we are invited and welcomed respecting the wishes of our fellow associations but offering help and guidance where it is requested. The world is becoming a smaller place and greenkeeping can only benefit from actively cultivating a recognised and respected international and worldwide image.

Editor to move on

BIGGA's editor Chris Boiling is off to pastures new. Following production of the April issue of *Greenkeeper International*, Chris will take up a new post in Dubai with Motivate Publishing, one of the leading publishing houses in the Middle East. Chris will be responsible for 'What's On', a monthly Entertainment and Sports magazine. BIGGA's executive director Neil Thomas said, "We are very sorry to lose Chris' services as he has developed *Greenkeeper International* to an ever higher standard during the last year. The search is now on for a successor who will continue to take the magazine forward as the market leader". Design and production editor Tim Moat will take on additional editorial responsibilities for the May and subsequent issues pending a new appointment.

Another new Golden Key member

Massey Ferguson has become the latest member of BIGGA's Education and Development Fund, bringing to five the number of new companies already in Golden or Silver Key membership for 1995.

Commenting on Massey Ferguson's decision to take up Golden Key membership, BIGGA's executive director, Neil Thomas said, "The Association is delighted to receive this backing for the fund from one of the industry's leading companies. The fund goes from strength to strength and the training aids and programmes now possible as a result will bring great future benefits for greenkeepers. We are indebted to the industry for its ongoing support".