

A very busy 1996: and another full year ahead

This month's article looks back at Education and Training related activities during 1996 and looks forward to 1997.

It does not seem possible that the year has almost come to an end and Harrogate is only seven weeks away. This year started with the Learning Experience, with the week starting with the National Education Conference and the welcome return of two workshops. Workshop 1 on Golf Course Design, Construction and Maintenance was extremely popular, so much so that we had to stop taking applications in early December. We therefore decided to run this workshop again in 1997. Unfortunately, for those slow to apply, this workshop is again full and we are not accepting any more applications. The National Education Conference was a great success with speakers from around the world, entertaining over one hundred and fifty delegates. The last three days saw the seminar programme run for the last time in the Royal Hall. We have had problems with heating such a large theatre and 1997 will see in a new venue.

February and March saw the continuation of the very successful Regional Supervisory Management Courses run for us by Brin Bendon and Frank Newberry. The autumn/winter/spring period sessions allowed more than 180 greenkeepers to gain knowledge and practise the skills of supervisory management and, thanks to the contributors to the Education and Development Fund, at a very, very low price. Sami Collins joined me as Education Assistant in March and was soon involved in administrating training courses.

April and May saw the entries rushing in for the TORO/Lely/PGA European Tour Student of the Year Competition. This competition has got better each year and the overall standard of this years regional finalists made it very difficult for the Regional Judges to select the eight National Finalists. This competition always gives me a boost as I get to see the people



Education Update

BY KEN RICHARDSON

who represent the future of greenkeeping and from what I have seen over three years, there are exciting times ahead. Congratulations to Fintan Brennan, John Bachelor and Noel Green on their success this year. Watch out at BTME for details of the 1997 Competition.

June, July and August, the so called quiet months saw us beginning the filming for BIGGA's next training video, preparing for the next round of Supervisory Management Course, arranging course visits for the Miracle Greenkeeper of the Year Competition and administering the Master Greenkeeper scheme.

Thanks to the contributors to the Education and Development Fund, BIGGA will be launching three more training aids. Its new training video, designed to complement the very successful book, *A Practical Guide to Ecological Management on the Golf Course*, which will look at the process of conducting an ecological survey, production of a management plan and the methods of ecological management, the latest *On Course Field Guide*, which looks at grass identification and the relaunch of the pests and diseases guide which has proven to be very popular.

That brought us to September when I travelled around the Regions, judging the Regional Finalists for the Student of the Year, continued filming for the new video and began the production of a grass identification guide.

October and November started with the first three of this autumn's supervisory management courses, in Scotland, quickly followed by two weeks of residential courses here at Aldwark Manor, then more regional supervisory management courses.

That brings us back to Decem-

ber, where I started this article, and the start of a look to the future. Unfortunately, my crystal ball in broken and Mystic Meg is fully committed to the National Lottery but I will do my best.

The Learning Experience at Harrogate has been expanded yet again with four workshops and the National Education Conference taking place over the first two days ie 20 and 21 January. As I have mentioned before, Workshop 1 (Golf Course Design Construction and Maintenance) is now full but we still have places on Workshop 2 (Levelling and Surveying), Workshop 3 (Effective Communication-Presenting to Green Committees) and Workshop 4, a one day workshop, (The Magic of Greenkeeping). All four workshops and the National Education Conference take place in the Majestic Hotel, which will be BIGGA's Headquarters for the full week. We are again presenting a Chairmen of Green/Secretaries Course, on Tuesday 21 and Wednesday 22 January, in cooperation with the STRI. This course has been modified this year following comments from last year's delegates, and will include an input from Billy McMillan. This year sees the move of the Seminar programme from the Royal Hall to the Kings Suite, which is under Hall D. All four workshops, the National Education Conference and Seminars will, once again, attract Master Greenkeeper credits and BASIS Continuing Professional Development points. Full details of the Education Programme and Social activities is elsewhere in this magazine.

When we get back from Harrogate, the process will start all over again so that we will continue to provide quality education and training opportunities for greenkeepers.

Those attending a two day workshop will receive four credits, two for a one day workshop while each half day seminar session in the Education Conference will be worth two credits and the BTME Seminar programme worth five credits.

Irish

The Celtic connection shone through at the Toro/PGA European Tour Student of the Year Final with an Irishman from a Scottish college claiming the top prize.

Well that's it. The cat's out of the bag and the formula to success in the Toro/PGA European Tour Student Greenkeeper of the Year is now available to everyone. Postcards to a Mr Fintan Brennan, Dublin, Ireland.

So what is this big secret which can turn a man into a winner and give him a reference on his CV which only very few can boast?

Here it is:- Take a pinch of ambition, add a dash of application and a dose of determination, add two tablespoonfuls of talent to taste... oh yes, and be prepared to make sacrifices.

It was a recipe which all eight of the 1996 finalists had used "exceedingly" well to present the judges with the most difficult task of identifying a winner they have had to face.

However, the man whose particular combination of ingredients proved a winner was the aforementioned Fintan Brennan, Deputy Head Greenkeeper at Portmarnock Hotel and Golf Links.

Fintan proved his ambition at his interview for his job at Portmarnock when he looked Head Greenkeeper Peter Casbolt straight in the eye and in answer to the question what do you see yourself doing in future said, "Your job." That convinced Peter that Fintan was the man for the job and nothing has changed his mind from that initial impression.

His application and determination were also proved when his dedication to his studies won him awards at college and his talent shone through in his second year when he won the Barenbrug Student of the Year Award and was promoted to Deputy Head Greenkeeper after less than two years in greenkeeping.

Sacrifices? Fintan is married with two children, Mike, six, and Joe, two and a half, yet his college courses took place on block release over the Irish Sea, far removed from his home comforts at Elmwood, in Cupar, Fife.

"I was away from home for a total of 19 weeks over the last two