



Most industries have their own night of nights. The Oscars are the most famous of them all. They are occasions to celebrate excellence and reward people who have reached the top of their chosen field.

BIGGA has had such nights in the past – separate events covering both the greenkeeper and student greenkeeper of the year titles but only this year have they been combined and under the titles of Excellence in Greenkeeping Award and Student of the Year to become known as "The Toros".

It has come about due to Toro adding the new Excellence Award to the Student of the Year.

To be known as a Toro winner, or indeed a finalist, now means entry to a select club for both students and established greenkeepers.

TORO

Student
GREENKEEPER
of the year



The TOROs



The winner: Ian McMillan, holding plate and certificate, with, from left, Bob Buckingham, Toro and Pete Mansfield, Lely and BIGGA Vice-Chairman Gordon Child

Notes from a small island

Walter Woods visited the courses of all five finalists and what he found gladdened his heart

The Toro Award for Excellence in Greenkeeping certainly conjures up all sorts of factors in your mind – how do you measure good greenkeeping or good greenkeepers? These were some of the thoughts which went through my mind many years ago

when I first set foot in Elmwood College to talk to students who were taking their first ambitious steps into a greenkeeping career. During that period the only education available was a one year course to achieve a City and Guilds certificate. Fortunately, owing to the dedicated effort of many, mainly greenkeepers themselves, education has advanced considerably even almost to a University Degree in Agronomy.

The Toro Company based this award on Course Managers' ability to organise their affairs both in maintenance and management. The philosophy was the more encouragement greenkeeping education receives the more that golf clubs with their golf courses will improve.

The '97 competition got going in earnest in April when nominations were accepted at BIGGA Headquarters. Each entry was vis-

THE FOUR RUNNERS-UP



Ratho Park



Nottingham Golf Club

View of the course at
Hankley Common



ited at local level with a winner coming from each Section.

The final five Section winners were Tom Murray, Ratho Park, Edinburgh; Philip Stain, Nottingham Golf Club; Mark Ford, Kingsdown Golf Club; Ian MacMillan, Hankley Common Golf Club and William Sparrow, East Herts Golf Club – all spread out across the length and breadth of Britain. The Competition had a high judging criteria right through every part of their golf course maintenance, taking into account the level of resources available. Other judgments on the individuals were their role in the golf club management coupled with their ability to set policies throughout the daily work programmes either on the golf course or in the maintenance building.

Ken Richardson, the Association's Education Officer, is certainly a perfectionist, with military precision on train journeys, golf course locations, time of arrivals – this made me wonder why trains are always late when I organise them. However, my first golf course was Notts Golf Club, Hollinwell, where at one time I was employed. What a majestic golf course this is, organised in a traditional manner with a large history spanning over a 100 years. Philip Stain is the Course Manager and what a super job this young man is doing – with tidily kept maintenance buildings housing the most up-to-date machinery. Philip has been at Notts Golf Club for a number of years but this has been his first one in total charge. He has taken it in his stride and has

hosted a top amateur event to the complete satisfaction of players and members.

Next on the list was Kingsdown Golf Club, near Bristol, a very progressive golf club with recent acquisition of land on which to build a practice ground and perhaps extend the golf course. Mark Ford has worked at the golf



course for 20 years and been the Course Manager for the last seven. Kingsdown is a parkland course but was in very good condition. Mark is also very enthusiastic in education on all aspects of club management.

The following day it was organised to visit Hankley Common, a heathland golf course with outstanding natural beauty

and what I would say is an example for every golf club to follow. About 10 years ago the Club Council drew up policies in every department of golf club organisation. Their first priority was to employ a Course Manager which they did with Ian MacMillan, son of Jack, coming on board. The golf course was in magnificent condition with perfect playing conditions. Heather was in abundance making it into an environmentalist's dream.

Travelling from Hankley Common to East Herts Golf Club is two train journeys, numerous tube rides then miles of twisting roads through traffic lights and traffic jams bringing you to a lovely parkland golf course with mature trees where deer and pheasants roam undisturbed, making me think what would happen to them if they were on a municipal course in Glasgow! Bill Sparrow is Course Manager and has an abundance of experience which he is putting to good effect to the golf playing conditions along with the training of his young staff. Bill is also a very good golfer and knows what a golfer's requirements should be.

Back to Scotland to visit Ratho

Park, a private golf club not far from Edinburgh Airport, and what a surprise confronted me. A beautiful parkland golf course in perfect condition with fast firm fairways and greens along with tees perfectly cut and presented. Tom Murray, the Course Manager, has worked at Ratho, I believe, all his working days taking charge in the last ten years. Tom is a product of Elmwood College and certainly a credit to his club who encourage him.

On completion of the golf course visits and assessments all of the five finalists still had to go through the mental barrier with a vigorous interview session to a selected Panel which was organised in Harrogate on October 27. Each of the candidates were asked like-for-like questions to create consistent answers on a similar pattern. This was terrifying for the individual and it could be detected on their faces. However a winner had to be chosen and this was Ian MacMillan making it a remarkable double for the golf club having won the BIGGA Golf Environment Award, in association with Amazone and Rhône Poulenc only two weeks before.

Ian receives a two week trip to the USA taking in the Superintendents' Convention, in California, which is the ultimate in learning. He will also be taken to the machinery and irrigation Toro factories. His golf club, Hankley Common, also benefit being presented with a new Toro Greensmaster Greens Triplex.

The other four finalists were also presented with cheques and gifts. The Toro Company has been outstanding in their contribution towards greenkeeping education and encouragement. Bob Buckingham and Graham Dale along with their colleagues should be congratulated.



East Herts G C



Kingsdown Golf Club