

Fintan Brennan, Toro Student Greenkeeper of the Year, reports on the "adventure" which followed winning the prestigious title



Fulfilling a dream

Awonderful weekend at BIGGA Headquarters at Aldwick Manor last October, during which I was fortunate to meet a lovely group of people, was capped by my becoming Toro Student Greenkeeper of the Year. As a result I found myself, at the beginning of January, en route to the Winter Turf School in the United States which was part of my prize.

Preparing for the trip I recalled my Irish colleague, Bridie Redican, winning the same competition in 1993. It was the year I started greenkeeping and I remember thinking will that be me someday? Then I realised that dream and it was me with my picture on the front cover of *Greenkeeper International!*

Sitting in the departure lounge in Dublin Airport with my family, wife Bernie and boys Mike and Joe I had mixed feelings... loneliness, fear of the unknown, excitement. Yes, I was very excited about setting off on my adventure.

And an adventure from start to finish it certainly was. Three flights and 22 hours after leaving Dublin I landed at Bradley Airport, Hartford, Connecticut and it was another hour's journey to the Econo Lodge which was to be my home for the next seven weeks.

The weather which varies from zero to minus 10 and colder was the initial shock and then there was the College Day which began at 8am and finished at 5.30pm. It had been a while since I had sat in a classroom for that length of time.

The course was more intense than I had previously experienced. Eleven subjects were covered including: Plant Physiology, Turfgrass Management, Turfgrass Insects, Weed Man-

agement, Arboriculture Calculations, Organisational Management, Irrigation, Soils, Golf Course Design, Construction and Turf Grass Disease. Examinations were to be taken on most of the subjects and two projects to be completed. Each of the 11 subjects were studied in depth and even though some of them did not apply to my present position they will be of great benefit to me if I wished to work overseas.

A trip to a trade show in Boston, organised by the college, was of interest to me but the highlight of my stay was the visit to the GCSAA Show and Conference in Las Vegas. My first port of call was, of course, the Toro stand which consisted of Toro Machinery, Toro Irrigation and the newly-launched Site Management Programme. I also visited the BIGGA stand where I met the newly-appointed National Chairman, Pat Murphy. While in Las Vegas I made a flight over the Grand Canyon and enjoyed a bus ride to the Hoover Dam.

During my total of eight weeks away I also visited Boston, Vermont, New York and had a very informative trip to the Toro Machinery Headquarters in Menna and Toro Irrigation in Riverside, California.

I have made quite a few friends while in the States and to Jim, Steve, Noel and Ron I would like to thank you all for your companionship, friendship and kindness during my stay.

I have gained an invaluable experience that I would not have got elsewhere and for this I sincerely thank Toro for sponsoring my trip and giving me an insight to other golfing worlds. I would also like to thank BIGGA for organising the competition.

BOOK REVIEWS

Several interesting books have arrived recently at BIGGA HQ from the USA. Although aimed at American Superintendents, they contain a great deal of useful information for the British greenkeeper. All of the following books are available from: Cassell plc, Stanley House, 3 Fleets Lane, Poole, Dorset, BH15 3AJ.

The Mathematics of Turf Grass Maintenance

A knowledge of mathematics is required when controlling budgets, applying pesticides and fertilisers and when trying to estimate resource requirements for the building of golf course features. This book gives examples of some of the mathematical problems that may be encountered by greenkeepers with hints on how to solve more complex tasks. Although the examples are in Imperial units ie feet, pounds and gallons the basic concepts still apply and conversion factors are given for those who wish to work in metric units. The authors, Nick Christians and Michael Agnew have managed to avoid the trap of making the simple complex and the book is reasonably easy to follow. Priced at £24.95, this book would be a useful reference for Head Greenkeepers' offices.

Colour Atlas of Turf Grass Diseases

One of several references for the identification of turf grass diseases currently on the market, this book, written by Toshikazu Tani and Dr James Beard, gives general information on diseases and more specific guidance on the identification of warm and cool season grasses. Although some of the full colour pictures would have been clearer if they had been enlarged, the notes accompanying each plate ensures that mistakes are not made in disease identification. A useful book for anyone with an interest in the identification of diseases especially students and academics, this book costs £54.95.

Guide to Golf Course Irrigation System Design & Drainage

This book's title is slightly confusing due to the term drainage at the end of the sentence. The book does contain information on the design of irrigation systems and on the theory and installation of drainage systems. As our weather changes and drought conditions worsen, irrigation is becoming increasingly important. Moreover, the demand for all round play and our damp winter conditions make adequate drainage equally essential.

Written by Edward Pira, Professor Emeritus at the University of Massachusetts, this book looks at the theory of irrigation system design and compares and contrasts the various types of pumps, pipes, valves and controllers. The sections on drainage look at surveying, types of drainage system and some of the mathematics required. Each chapter includes practical examples to illustrate the principles involved. This book would be a useful introduction to the techniques of drainage and irrigation for those just entering the profession and for any greenkeeper thinking of installing a new irrigation or drainage system. Priced at £39.95 this book is good value, especially if it saved you from buying the wrong irrigation system and making a very expensive mistake.

KEN RICHARDSON, EDUCATION OFFICER