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October 1998

Your next issue of *Greenkeeper International* will be with you by November 5

Regulars

News

Pages 7, 8, 9, 10, 11

8 Assistant Profile

Colin Noble, Cathcart Castle GC

13 Letters

20 The Learning Experience

Cutting Remarks. Making the most of your budgets

36 Golden Key Mini Profile

Barenbrug

43-50 Around the Green

56 Education

Education and Training Manager, Ken Richardson,

64 Money Matters

Getting the right mortgage

64 Health & Safety

Tony Rees continues his look at the H&S requirements in maintenance units

74 Features Listing

Helping you track down some of *Greenkeeper International's* previous articles

74 As I see it...

BIGGA National Chairman, Gordon Child, calls for a return to the good old fashioned ways

Reader Reply Card

Use our post-paid reader reply card to obtain further information on the products and services advertised in this issue. Just state the company's Ad Ref numbers, post the card to us, and we'll arrange for further information to be sent direct to you.

Advertiser	Ad Ref	Page
AF Tranchers Ltd	203	50
Amenity Technology	431	76
Banks Amenity	168	49
British Seed Houses	87	34
Charterhouse	130	44-45
Cleveland Sitesafe	56	21
Construction Materials Ltd	592	32
Datagag	599	10
Eagle One Golf Products	593	11
Eagle Promotions	549	35
Fairfield Turf Ltd	18	46
Farmura Ltd	88	37
Fraser C Robb	600	31
Geo Henderson	601	32
Grass Roots Golf Co Ltd	595	38
Grass Roots Trading Ltd	479	51
Green Pride Ltd	598	48
Green-Relief™	563	30
Greensward Engineering	312	55
Groundsman Industries	602	35
Hi-Chem UK Ltd	510	6
Hydroseape	475	2
John Deere	103	58
Kawasaki	544	15, 33
Lloyds & Co Letchworth Ltd	603	35
Marlwood	501	46
MJT Contracts	383	63
Ocmis	360	33
Pattisons	35	21
Pitland Technology	189	12
Plasticisers Fibres	597	22
Rainbird	443	5
Rhône-Poulenc	59	42
Rigby Taylor	127	31
Scottish Grass Machinery	604	30
Sharpes International	453	28, 49
Sovereign Turf	435	57
Sportsground Ltd	605	32
Textron	9	19
TIS	153	47
Ultra Plant	473	29
Weidmann (UK) Ltd	326	30
Wessex Farm Machinery	210	48
Whitemoss Amenities	606	28

Greenkeeper Education and Development Fund

The Fund provides the key to the future for greenkeeper, golf club and game. Individuals and companies can join the Golden Key Circle and Silver Key Circle. For details, please contact BIGGA on 01347 833800



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Will you be at BTME99? Look out for your pre-registration card in this month's *Greenkeeper International*, or contact the BTME hotline on 01347 833833 for more details



74 As I see it...

A potential cast of thousands

We have arrived at the time of the year when the "gongs" are handed out in the Association's top competitions - the BIGGA Environment Award, in association with Amazone and Rhône-Poulenc and the Toro Excellence in Greenkeeping and Toro Student of the Year Awards.

These competitions have grown in stature over the years to the extent that - outside of the wonderful prizes which go along with winning - the prestige value is quite incalculable.

For a student, even to reach the final of the Toro is a significant achievement and one bound to open the eyes of any prospective employer while the Excellence Award, which was also once seen as also a great lift to a career, is now sought after by people who are already at the top of the tree.

It goes without saying that "BIGGA Environment Award Winner" is a badge any golf club in the country would be proud to wear.

I say these things because competitions are often seen as glorified back slapping exercises where winning comes because it happens to be your turn and not so much because an achievement has been judged to be greater than any other.

For example the Sports Personality of the Year is invariably the person who has been on the television most frequently - irrespective of achievement or, indeed, personality, and who happens to perform in a viewer friendly sport - usually motor racing, athletics or tennis. Put your money on Tim Henman this year!

Think of the Oscars, an old favourite who hasn't picked up one of the statuettes before is usually the favourite ahead of the young star who produces a stunning performance in a superb low budget film

It is a charge to which some Awards are open but we believe that the intensity and quality of the judging in all three of our competitions takes away the accusation of subjectivity and ensures that the winner is fully deserving of the prize.

In the Environment Competition this takes the form of written submissions from each of the clubs and, in the case of the finalists, two visits from Bob Taylor, the STRI Ecologist and one from a senior representative of English Nature.

In the Excellence Award those clubs entered receive a visit from a respected local greenkeeper and then, if successful Walter Woods, the Association's first Chairman and a man respected the world over, visits the finalists before they travel to York for the final interview before a panel of industry and Association experts. Only then with the winner be identified. Students also have to come through a rigorous process starting with their own college before a final interview singles out the winner.

You can be sure that the winners of our three main competitions will be out of the top drawer and that the successors to Ian McMillan (Toro Excellence), Steven Nixon (Toro Student) and Hankley Common with the ubiquitous Ian McMillan (BIGGA Environment Award) will reap the benefits of having entered.

You never know, I could be writing about your success next October.

Editor:
Scott MacCallum

Greenkeeper

INTERNATIONAL

Features

12 You've had your Chips

Arne van Amerongen pleads with clubs to move away from using wood chipping on pathways

14 A Warm Welcome

Neil Thomas reports from the latest FEGGA meeting in Iceland

16 Past, Present and Future

A walk down memory lane with Neil Thomas as he prepares to begin the next phase in the Association's history in its new headquarters

23 Stirling Service

BIGGA Past President, John Crawford, is Head Greenkeeper at Stirling Golf Club which has just welcomed the British Ladies' Strokeplay Championship

29-34 Scotsturf Preview

39 Let the Battle Commence

14 hopefuls will converge on the new BIGGA Headquarters hoping to become either the 1998 winner of the Toro Award for Excellence in Greenkeeping or the 1998 Toro Student of the Year

53 Branching Out

John Nicholson, of Eamonn Wall Associates, gives some advice on acquiring grants from tree planting

59-63 Saltex Review

Find out what went on at Windsor this year



23 Stirling Service



16 Past, Present and Future