

Openness is the name of the game

In October of '89 I was asked if I would consider becoming vice-chairman, this being seen as the next step forward in my committee career in view of my position of seniority on the Board and with the logic of choosing a new chairman from the North, Ivor Scoones coming from the South West. This is an added touch of good housekeeping which prevents the election of, say, three chairmen from one particular region and avoids any feeling that a region is being neglected in any way. In that sense, I suppose I'm serving a double role in that I reside and work in the North but I'm a Scot, so both areas should feel well represented

Asked by Paddy to be vice-chairman, my first reactions were, naturally enough, both delight and apprehension; because I didn't know what the job really involved. I wanted to do the job, and recognised the honour that was being bestowed upon me but needed to be certain that the whole of my work team and my Club committee at Middlesborough Brass Castle would be solidly behind me. Thankfully I've had the whole-hearted support of them all and they couldn't be more co-operative and enthusiastic. Before actually committing myself with a positive YES I asked Paddy many questions. For example, I needed a rough idea of just how much time I would need off work.

My mind was set at rest on all counts, and I was already prepared to give up any proper holidays during the intensive two year period, something that most of the board members gladly and willingly do for the good of the Association. I'm lucky also in having my wife Marion as a strong support.

One thing I really want to do in 1991 is ensure that those 'quiet asides' that often happen in places like hotel lobbies and across the bar get an equal airing in board meetings. If a person has something to say, but will not face the board with the same whispered comment, then I have no time for that comment. I'm all for putting my cards on the table and I'll encourage others to do likewise, for we are not operating some sort of secret society – rather the opposite – and openness will be the name of the game.

With the difficulties encountered regarding the previous magazine – which became something of a destructive force in 1990 – now resolved; and with Greenkeeper International already heralded as a giant step forward in promoting the real spirit of the Association, I earnestly hope this will be an era in which we can make great progress. There's little doubt that Ivor served during a tough period and this may have made his term less than perfect. My view of the chairman's position is not seen through any rose-tinted specs., but I believe that along with responsibility there should be a time when holding office is a great joy.

Now that our consolidation is assured I envisage the Association going from strength to strength, ably supported as we are by the R. and A., who have been a tremendous help and source of encouragement. Without them we would be the poorer and whilst we hope in the distant future to be self-sufficient there is no doubt in my mind that they have been and remain true friends of BIGGA and have shown their true colours in so many ways. By way of an addendum to that statement; it is a great bonus for BIGGA that the unions and the controlling bodies of golf have 'bitten the bullet' so to speak and brought the cause of greenkeeping education – and a great many other issues vital to our cause – nearer to an ideal. The next decade under the Joint Golf Course Committee promises to be quite something.

You have asked me what I would like for the Association in the future and I can answer without hesitation. Sooner rather than later, I want to see every greenkeeper in Britain and Europe join this marvellous Association and share in our future. How to get outsiders with us is a matter that taxes us all, but I believe that as a tool of recruitment the magazine has a major role to play. It is the only continuous promotional link many of our members have with the Association, especially those who for reasons unknown choose not to join in the many extra-curriculum activities, and I would like members everywhere to offer the hand of fellowship to his neighbouring greenkeeper – along with a copy of Greenkeeper International – and an invitation to join. Nothing would please me more than to learn of a BIGGA greenkeeper visiting another course where he knows the greenkeeper is not a member and inviting him for a pint and a pep talk. The merit of increasing greenkeeper power by strength of numbers is an easy enough banner to wave and the value a member gets in the package is, without argument, the bargain of the century! That, in a nutshell, is my principal goal and perhaps in the coming years of actually seeing greenkeeper's clamouring to become members – wishful thinking? I believe not.

I'm also constantly reminded of the address given by Bobbie Gee at Harrogate and would like to see all greenkeepers take her message on board and promote themselves in a more vigorous and spirited fashion as true professionals. Without the greenkeeper the world of golf would be in a sorry state and it doesn't matter what level they may have reached, third assistant or course manager, they all play a vital part in the well-being of a hugely profitable industry and should share in the bonanza – it's really up to the individual to go out and do a bit of banner-waving for themselves and their proud profession!

It would be remiss of me not to mention education, but I will do no more than suggest the BIGGA Master Greenkeeper Certificate route as the one sure way in which individual growth will be demonstrated and the path upon which the future of our profession depends. David Golding is opening up whole new vistas in that sphere and greenkeepers everywhere have never had better educational opportunities to improve; and prosper thereby. We should never lose sight of this fact.

In conclusion, I feel that to be chairman of the Association is not unlike being a course manager. Like greenkeeping, it calls for hard work and dedication, but the whole task is greatly rewarding and the results are worthwhile beyond measure. That dedication is reflected in every board colleague and I hope every member has an appreciation of how much hard voluntary work is put in on their behalf. In addition we should not lose sight of the debt we owe to the staff at Head Office. As a final shot, perhaps it would be a bright idea for the board – or small sectors of it along with the Executive Director – to visit regional meetings for open forum. Perhaps in twelve months we shall talk again and I can give you my reflective observations. You can be sure we will not have stood still!



Elected to the lofty heights of chairmanship in April, GEORGE MALCOLM took time out to tell David White something about himself and of his aspirations for the Association in the year ahead...



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REAL WORK begins

If a golf course has been constructed to schedule and all elements are installed and working effectively, it is imperative that it is maintained correctly during its infancy in order that it may be ready for play when opening day arrives.

Unfortunately, it is so often the case that a schedule will be set back, due to all manner of unforeseen circumstances throughout the construction phase. This in turn has a direct effect on the starting date for a maintenance contract. It can make things very difficult for the greenkeeper and his staff if, for example, a course due to be handed over on August 31st is not his until October 31st.

If the greenkeeper has been employed from the very beginning of the construction phase then he will likely be prepared for such changed circumstances. If not, he must adapt to the situation very quickly.

Once seed has been sown on greens, tees and fairways there is little the contractor or greenkeeper can do until seed germination, apart from ensuring the irrigation system is working efficiently and keeping rabbits, moles or deer off the site.

The contractor, as part of the construction contract, will be responsible for limited maintenance of the new course: for example, an agreed number of mowings before handing over. He will also be obliged to make good any defects that may occur within a negotiated period, such as wet areas due to problems with drainage, scour effect due to extreme surface run-off or poor acceptance of grass seed.

Eventually the course will become the responsibility of the greenkeeper and it will left to his knowledge and experience to make the necessary decisions in treating any problems he encounters.

When the grass is young it is extremely susceptible to disease: for example damping-off, red thread, fusarium etc. and the greenkeeper must be able to swiftly recognise disease symptoms in order to prevent the problem becoming difficult to eradicate.

Problems may occur for a number of reasons: nutrient deficiencies; animals and pests; environmental stresses; heavy machinery compaction or excess watering. It is the responsibility of every greenkeeper to retain the balance at all times. Whilst the course is within its establishment period he may at least breath a sigh of relief that there aren't hordes of heavy-footed players (with golf trollies – the scourge of every course) making his job still more difficult. The golf course though, must be maintained to steadily reach a point at which it can withstand the ultimate treatment. After all, this is why a golf course exists – to be played on. So often, greenkeepers utter the words 'the golf course would be great if we didn't have all these bloody golfers walking across it'. I suppose that is one of the reasons why Augusta National always looks so perfect for The Masters – it's closed six months of the year!

As the course begins to establish, the greenkeeper must keep a close eye on minor changes in the quality of the turf, for sometimes a disease can take hold almost overnight. Sometimes an indication of stress can only be seen when the grass itself has reached a point where serious action is required to resolve it. In some respects, it is almost a balancing act, where turf is given feed only when it cries out for it, but to leave it a further day may have fatal consequences.

It is imperative to maintain a running check on the status of the soil, particularly on the greens. At regular intervals it is necessary to take samples (cores or plugs from selected greens, tees and some fairways, if necessary) to identify levels of the three main nutrients – nitrogen; phosphorus and potassium – and to provide information on calcium; magnesium and pH levels.

Visual symptoms of a nutrient deficiency indicate that serious problems will occur if the condition is not corrected.

Early recognition of a developing nutrient deficiency is important and in the case of potassium and phosphorus, regular soil testing is used as a guide to fertilisation to ensure that symptoms never develop into fully blown disasters.

The pH of the soil on greens and tees can be affected by the water source for the irrigation system, and in turn this will affect the fertilisation rates. For example, iron can be used to bring the pH down to a manageable level and it helps to keep disease away by strengthening the individual young seedlings. Once the pH levels and nutrients have been brought into the desired range, a soil test is required every one to three years.

In terms of getting the course into playable condition, the greenkeeper must carefully gauge at which stage to begin reducing mowing heights and at which point he decides to use ride-on mowers. With some seed mixes it is quite possible that a good putting surface can be achieved very quickly. Given the perfect conditions at East Sussex National, for example, by using Pennncross seed the greens were in play within three months of sowing. In the case of the more readily acceptable traditional bent/fescue mixes, it is often 18 months before a really good putting surface is achieved. However, it is important to note that although it takes longer for this seed to establish, the costs of maintenance are significantly cheaper and the methods are considerably less labour intensive.

Although a course with good greens will always prompt the golfer to return time and time again, there are other elements that require attention prior to the opening. There is often a lot of cosmetic work that takes place at this stage which effectively 'finishes off' the course, cleaning out ditches and bunkers in particular. Sanding the bunkers is a big job that can be extremely time consuming, especially when the greenkeeper could otherwise be spending time on important maintenance work. Having said this, it is often the responsibility of the contractor to fill bunkers with sand.

If the greenkeeper succeeds in juggling his many roles as course manager; golf course constructor; golf course architect; agronomist; drainage specialist; irrigation engineer and personnel manager and still manages to manicure the course in readiness for the all-important opening, then he has overcome the hardest task in the business. To take a golf course from the constructor and to literally 'tame it' is a mammoth task. Thankfully, many greenkeepers are well up to this extraordinary feat, with approved colleges now training greenkeepers to be multi-talented specialists. This inevitably makes for better and forever improving standards of golf courses in this country and throughout Europe.



● The author and golf course architect, Jonathan Gaunt, will be contributing further articles to **Greenkeeper International** in the coming months, beginning with his views on the lasting influence made by great golf course architects of former generations, and how modern architects may learn from them

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Welsh wizardry at work

Royal St David's Golf Club, venue for BIGGA's National Tournament, is in the highly capable hands of Roger Kerry. In search of champagne air and a meeting with the Club's amiable Welsh greenkeeping wizard, DAVID WHITE found himself breathing the real atmosphere of golf, mingled with a mellow air of tradition...



The glorious triumphs of amateur golfer Harold Horsfall Hilton, winner of countless titles including two Open Championships in 1892 and 1897, a US Amateur title in 1911 and three British Amateur Championships in 1900, 1901 and 1911, are forever enshrined in golf's glittering Vallhala. That Hilton was inordinately fond of Royal St Davids at Harlech is equally well recorded; and it is in memory of this great warrior that members compete for

the Harold Hilton Gold Medal, one of their premier trophies.

Wandering through the delightfully atmospheric clubhouse, still mercifully free from plasticised twentieth century 'improvements', one can almost feel the ghost of Harold beckoning, pointing to the honours boards with satisfaction and giving the Hilton nod of approval. The place positively reeks of history and upon its hallowed walls some very famous names peer down, written in gold leaf as winners of major Club titles.

Amongst them, the golfing achievements of Welshman Roger Kerry appear – on the Hilton Gold Medal winners board no less – and although his golfing prowess is well recorded as part of the Club's illustrious history; it is for entirely different achievements that Roger will perhaps be best remembered.

Roger Kerry, pictured, is Royal St David's Head Greenkeeper, a linksland course that is one of Britain's finest and certainly the most atmospherically alluring of all. Harlech itself is a quiet little town, and one might be forgiven for thinking that notwithstanding the brooding Castle and the



staggering views across to the mountains of Snowdonia it may well have settled into being a quick photographic stop on the Welsh tourist route. Forgiven perhaps but totally, utterly wrong; for the biggest draw – the main and everlasting attraction – is the links course in care of Roger Kerry, a talented low handicap golfer and a dedicated greenkeeper.

Keeping a true links course in top class order has never been easy, for quite apart from the constant vagaries of wind and salt-laden air, there is the feeling that one ought not to tamper too much with what is in every way natural. The original architect of St David's (it became 'Royal' around 1905) is not recorded, perhaps because these great links apparently just 'happened', with a party of men hell bent on getting out to play using crude work tools along with what Mother Nature and the elements had provided. Simplistic perhaps, but apart from some sympathetic work done on bunkering in 1960 by dear old Fred Hawtree, the course remains pretty well intact and like all good seaside courses has a natural 'feel' about it. The skillful layout fol-



lows the contour of the dunes and hillocks and consequently no two fairways run parallel, with tantalising breezes keeping even the most talented golfer guessing. Host to BIGGA's National Tournament in August, it plays to 6427 yards with a par of 69 and a SSS of 71 and comprises five threes, eleven fours and two fives.

Returning to Roger – the proud keeper of the green – this 42 year old has been at Royal St David's for 13 years, working in harmony with a dedicated staff of five, including deputy head greenkeeper John Kerry, Roger's twin brother. All staff are BIGGA members and three are keen golfers. The first thing that strikes home in talking with him is just how progressive the thinking behind the place really is. This is no sleepy little Welsh backwater, far from it, and the Club has grasped the nettle firmly with regard to 'The Way Forward' and practices what the R and A preaches by fielding a green committee of just three, Roger included. This pioneering attitude is very much to Roger's liking, with green chairman, Alan Ellis, having held office for ten unbroken years and very much a personal friend. In other ways they are also streaks ahead, with progress seen to work in more subtle ways. Roger's full membership of the Club is encouraged (their greenkeepers deservedly pay just 25% of the fee) and is a good example of forward thinking and a clear way of eliminating 'them and us' attitudes still prevalent at some Clubs – of forelock pulling and knowing one's place. Royal St David's progression is such that other Clubs might do well to emulate them.

We talked of earlier visits from Jim Arthur and how his timely advice stood the course in such good stead. He recalled how Jim would insist on certain practices being carried out and how closely the more recent recommendations of STRI's agronomist Roger Evans still follow Jim's edicts of a decade ago. Greens are slit upwards of 20 times a year and dressed with a 50/50 mixture of Fen dress and local dune sand, with a once niggling problem with Dry patch now eliminated. From being almost 100% meadow grass they now have some 65% bents on greens and about 50% bent on fairways.

In 1990, during drought conditions, a calculated decision was made to allow the fairways to burn-out and this helped to eliminate many unwelcome invaders. Lies, like all good links courses, are inclined to be tight and greens are usually slick, the native sandy loam and seaside weather allowing little or no backspin. On that score, Roger expressed surprise at the 'Americanisation' of Royal Birkdale during The Open held there in 1983. 'It wasn't links golf as we know it', he said, and recalled how some members became fired with the idea of seeing the same target style golf at Royal St Davids. They soon came to appreciate that it wasn't right for such a traditional course, one where the style lends itself to the

Roger Kerry on the BIGGA National Tournament: 'I'll not be trying for anything unusual or try to 'trick' the course up... presentation will be my main goal and I'll be aiming for a course that will be both fair and a good test of golf. But I shall be on tenterhooks until the final putt is sunk'

run-up shot. 'When BIGGA members come here in August they will find precious little back-spin' says Roger, and suggests that practice with fairway woods will pay dividends, especially on some of the longer par fours, where a well-struck wood may be necessary to get up in regulation. There are 100 bunkers, placed strategically to catch the wild tee shot, though few, if any, come into play for long second shots, where running-on through wide approaches is the name of the game.

Of the Club itself, there are 700 members, of which about 400 are non-local. The Club operates a graduated membership package with subscriptions reducing as one moves further away from Harlech. Needless to say it is fully subscribed with long waiting lists. A vast increase in traffic, both of members and a continuous stream of visitors, has taken place over the past decade and play continues unabated throughout the year. It is to the great credit of Roger's team that the course looks and plays so well despite this

huge increase. Only once in 1990 was the course closed – whilst waiting for a thaw – though when surface frost is prevalent he quite rightly holds players at bay for two or three hours to prevent damage. 'Inevitably one gets a few grumbles', he grins, 'though in the main our members appreciate that such restrictions are for their own good, and the results speak for themselves'. Conversely, if there is one thing that perhaps rankles Roger it is the growing use of 'buggies'; and whilst no words were spoken as we watched one such machine being driven at maniac speed on ancient ground clearly unsuited – and subsequently ending up out of control and flying full speed over a precious green – his eyebrows raised in a "can you believe it" air of resignation. I have an idea the culprit was a visitor, but whoever he may have been, it is my opinion that venerated linksland is no place for these cursed modern contraptions. I'm equally certain that Harold Hilton, who walked at a spanking pace everywhere, would NOT approve!

Roger is a founder committee member of the new North Wales Section and speaks proudly of the achievements made in that sphere, of bringing North Wales into the mainstream. He is also an advocate of greenkeeper education and in practicing what he preaches, attends Reaseheath for Phase III management training. He sees his own progress in terms of earning potential inextricably linked with gaining further qualifications and as part of that pattern now presents five-year plans to the Club. As a result he is largely responsible for deciding his own policy and course maintenance strategy. 'The Club is a good one to work for' he says, with their policy of keeping abreast with up to date machinery something he applauds. His particular preference is for Toro machinery for greens and tees and these get upgraded every five years.

Asked about the forthcoming BIGGA National Tournament, Roger intimated that although he is no stranger to the big event – indeed International tournaments are often held at Royal St David's and the Welsh Ladies Championship was scheduled for just two weeks hence – he is more apprehensive at the thought of 120 greenkeepers casting their expert eye over his links than almost any other. 'I'll not be trying for anything unusual or try to 'trick' the course up', he said, 'presentation will be my main goal and I'll be aiming for a course that will be both fair and a good test of golf. But I shall be on tenterhooks until the final putt is sunk'. I left him with an assurance that if the course was as good in August as it is now he need have no such fears.

Leaving Harlech I took time for a whistlestop tour of the beautiful countryside and to wander into the Italianate fairytale village of Portmeirion, a jewel of a place just a few miles distant. For BIGGA members and partners, it all adds up to a wonderful August week that should not be missed.

1992 Exhibition promises even greater success

Viscount Whitelaw, the Association's President, will open the BIGGA Turf Management Exhibition at Harrogate next January.

The 1992 Steering Committee, which met for the first time last month, are already drawing up detailed plans to make the new exhibition and seminar programme even more of a success than the 1991 event.

A number of noted speakers have already been confirmed and an even greater involvement with BIGGA members is promised.

The acclaimed workshop sessions will again be run on the two days before the grand open-

ing on Wednesday January 22.

Harrogate's Old Swan hotel has been designated as official 1992 HQ throughout the event and attractive accommodation rates have been negotiated.

Members of the steering committee – which included trade representation from Iseki, Farmura and Ransomes, along with exhibition contractors Joe Manby Ltd – agreed that the 1991 exhibition had been "a great success".

Up to the minute details of the 1992 exhibition and seminar programme, and the hotel accommodation rates, are available from Debbie Savage at BIGGA HQ on 03473 581/2.

Merchandising moves in-house

Exclusive and high quality merchandise – from T shirts to ties and umbrellas to sweaters – is now being handled directly through the Association's HQ at Aldwark Manor.

All items incorporate the BIGGA logo and the full range of merchandise will be on show at the Open Championship, National Tournament and the 1992 BTME.

Additionally, all regions and sections should now hold a sample stock, which members can see at their local events. Regional administrators and section secretaries are asked to place an order without delay if their current stock is inadequate.

It will be a strict rule that all orders from within the UK must be accompanied by payment. Overseas orders, including the Republic of Ireland, will be invoiced to take account of additional postage costs. In the UK, all prices are inclusive of postage, packaging and VAT.

Andrew Clark at BIGGA HQ, telephone 03473 581/2, will be pleased to answer any merchandise queries from members.

Consideration is being given to extend the list of merchandise available and any suggestions from members would be welcomed.

Discussions are also underway concerning the official BIGGA blazer. A range of workwear is also being considered.

More details, as they become available, will be announced in future editions of Greenkeeper International.



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A year of decisions



Annual
Report
1991

A summary of the Association's work and progress, by BIGGA Executive Director NEIL THOMAS

In preparing this report, it is pleasing to look back and observe what an active Association we have and how much is happening throughout the country to enhance the status of both our members and the whole greenkeeping profession. At the outset I am reporting on a year of sustained development and progress. Conversely, it has proved to be a difficult, indeed the most difficult, year that this Association has ever faced or is likely to face.

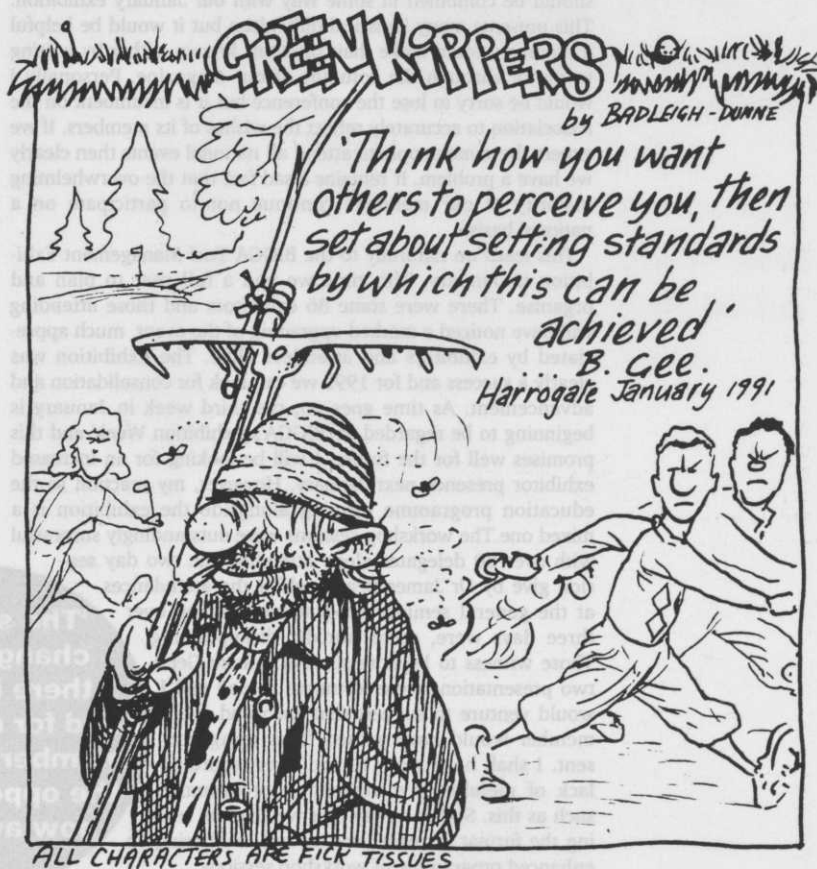
It has been a year in which major decisions have been necessary, crucial to our future well-being. We have moved forward at a time of financial uncertainty with, until the turn of the year, the Association's magazine in jeopardy. These two problem areas were inter-related and combined to produce tremendous pressures and a situation in which your Board of Management had to take difficult decisions whilst under considerable harassment. It has certainly been a learning experience which will stand us in good stead. Through it all we have held steady and been frank and open in our discussions with those who could offer advice and assistance. Since January we have moved into calmer waters, with an exhibition that was successful in organisational and financial aspects and with the production of a well received in-house publication, professionally developed and earning a secure and respected position in the market place. More recently we held a highly successful National Conference.

Membership continues to grow and at the end of 1990 totalled 3700, of which 3300 are greenkeepers and 400 associate or trade members. We set a 1990 target of 4000 members and our growing membership therefore leaves no grounds for complacency. There are many, many more greenkeepers who have not yet joined us and it is incumbent on all members to seek them out and persuade them of the benefits of joining BIGGA.

Looking back over the year one is struck by the increasing use of Aldwark Manor as a training base and the growing interest and participation of companies within the industry in our training courses. During the year a construction course was organised in conjunction with Rolawn and three compact tractor courses in conjunction with Iseki. In a reversal of the training role, Ransomes sent 20 of their staff to Aldwark Manor to be trained. Utilising approved college lecturers as well as greenkeeping personnel, the needs of the greenkeeper, relative to machinery usage, were expounded and the course met with a most positive response from Ransomes.

Our 'in-house' Management Courses were again run in October/November and were well received. It was particularly interesting to run an advanced course for those who had participated in 1989, a logical development which will be repeated by a third year course this autumn. There is little doubt that Aldwark Manor is now becoming an attractive training base - with the infrastructure a major contributory factor - for the hotel offers the added opportunity for delegates to inter-act socially and thereby enhance their learning experience.

During the year two award schemes have been undertaken - the Toro Scholarship Award and the ICI Premier Greenkeeper Award. The Toro Award was in its second year and the calibre of candidates - one from each of the approved colleges - is a clear marker of the improvements now apparent in greenkeeper education. The overall winner, David Norton of Beverley and East Riding Golf Club and representing Askham Bryan College, proved a fine ambassador for us during his eight week course at the University of Massachusetts. The ICI Premier Greenkeeper



Award was in its inaugural year and whilst numbers of entries were disappointing, the calibre of candidacy was high. Entry for the award demanded a substantial commitment and, with the award scheme now running for a second year, it is hoped more members will find the confidence to 'have a go'. The winner, Anthony Davies of Prestbury Golf Club, was again our excellent ambassador, this time at the GCSAA Conference and Show.

With the timing of the AGM a little later this year I am able to report on two successful National Education Conferences. The 1990 Conference at the Royal Holloway and Bedford New College was blessed with heatwave conditions last April. The speaker programme met with unanimous approval and the college ambience contributed greatly to the event's success. The 1991 Conference was held recently at the University of York and proved an outstanding success with the speaker programme maintaining, if not surpassing, the quality of previous conferences. All three conferences have climaxed in memorable banquets and there is no doubt that our National Conference has a unique place in the greenkeeping world - much appreciated by the growing number of international delegates who attend. We should not underestimate the value of the conference in projecting the Association most positively to a wider audience within the game of golf. This is a real learning experience - three days of intensive lectures on a wide range of greenkeeping subjects - and those who have attended past conferences have gained lasting education benefits. It was pleasing that numbers



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A chance to consolidate our success in the future

were up significantly, long may the trend continue. Equally pleasing has been the large postbag received from delegates congratulating the Association on the organisation and quality of the conference.

There is a view amongst many members that the conference should be combined in some way with our January exhibition. This presents many logistical difficulties but it would be helpful if members could make their thoughts known, either by writing to me or through the columns of our magazine. Personally I would be sorry to lose the conference but it is incumbent on the Association to accurately reflect the wishes of its members. If we expect the same people to attend all national events then clearly we have a problem. It remains a sad fact that the overwhelming majority of our members continue not to participate on a national basis.

This leads on naturally to the BIGGA Turf Management Exhibition in January. This time we had a full year to plan and organise. There were some 86 exhibitors and those attending will have noticed a marked upgrading of the event, much appreciated by exhibitors and attendees alike. The Exhibition was clearly a success and for 1992 we can look for consolidation and advancement. As time goes on, the third week in January is beginning to be regarded as 'BIGGA's Exhibition Week' and this promises well for the future. I will be looking for an increased exhibitor presence next January. However, my reaction to the education programme running alongside the exhibition is a mixed one. The workshop sessions were outstandingly successful with over 80 delegates alone attending the two day session give by Dr James Beard, whilst the attendances at the general seminar programme running over three days were, quite frankly, disappointing. Two witness to keynote speaker Bobbie Gee's two presentations were fortunate indeed and I would venture to suggest that each and every member would have gained from being present. I shall have more to add later regarding lack of member involvement in programmes such as this. Suffice to say that we shall be revising the format for next year as well as offering an enhanced programme of workshop sessions.

On the wider education front, the development of our Master Greenkeeper Certificate has moved on apace. We now have 46 members registered; with many more eagerly seeking the 200 credits before registering and moving on to stages two and three. The Certificate has had a marked impact on greenkeeper education, creating a much greater awareness amongst members of the need for education and training. Indeed, many who had long since lapsed in education aspirations now find themselves studying again with renewed enthusiasm. The development of the scheme has been noticeable for the excellent co-operation with the approved colleges represented on the working party; which meets periodically at Aldwark Manor to review, monitor and update the scheme. This co-operation is leading to an equally effective joint approach to many other aspects of greenkeeper education. However, we have still to convince the four Home Unions of the validity and benefits of the Certificate and this will be a task for the forthcoming year. The first four candidates sat their finals last month and hopefully we shall soon be able to announce the first holders of The Master Greenkeeper Certificate.

There are many members who suffered in the past when educational opportunities were not available. As mature greenkeepers they are naturally apprehensive of attending colleges or undertaking examinations. It is therefore pleasing to report on the recent introduction by Elmwood College of an Accreditation of Prior Learning Scheme. This is a new service which takes account of previous achievements, skills and knowledge to credit participants with nationally recognised qualifications which

they may previously have lacked. Achievements are first identified, then matched to existing qualifications and finally assessed. Past learning and practical achievements can be credited providing a participant can show sufficient evidence that he can meet the standards of the qualifications he would be gaining. The modules which can be credited will be listed on the National Certificate Award, which is issued by the Scottish Vocational Education Council (SCOTVEC). It is anticipated that the scheme will in time be adopted nationally and of greater importance, qualifications obtained in this way will count towards the Master Greenkeeper Certificate. As we progress educationally therefore, there are opportunities for every member, with little doubt that an exciting future beckons the trained and qualified greenkeeper.

At this point I must address a trend which has been all too apparent during the past year - that of the inertia of so many of our members to better themselves. Opportunities are clearly available through approved training colleges and the many courses and seminars being established by BIGGA, as well as through pursuit of the Master Greenkeeper Certificate. Yet we quite often struggle for numbers. There can be no justification for disappointing numbers at the Exhibition Seminar programme or at other educational events. Considerable progress has been made with employers in getting them to accept their responsibilities in the field of education and training. Our Education Officer, David Golding, had addressed a whole series of meetings attended by club secretaries and green chairmen during the past year and we are now obtaining a large measure of favourable employer response. However, it is disquieting to hear employers complaining that they are never approached and conclude that their employees have little interest in furthering their education. Perhaps this is a too simplistic response, and within the Association we are all too clearly aware of the crisis of confidence which has existed for many of our members over many years, bound up in the more unpalatable traditions of the game where the greenkeeper was expected to know his place.

'The scene is changing and there is a real need for many more members to grasp the opportunities now available'

We have sought to instil confidence - many of our courses are designed to this end - particularly in the field of personal management and awareness. Members may be pleasantly surprised these days when they summon the courage to ask for support to further their education. To those who continue to experience difficulties, we will give all possible support from headquarters - but the initiative must come from you, the members. The scene is changing and there is a real need for many more members to grasp the opportunities now available.

It is also pertinent at this stage to report optimistically on developments during the past year in relation to *The Way Forward* document. A sub-committee comprising of representatives of the R and A and the Home Unions has met throughout the year; with the aim of producing a strategy to better co-ordinate the infrastructure of golf course design, construction and management in Britain and Ireland. Their proposals have recently been ratified and whilst this is not the place to go into detail, it is clear that BIGGA will have a key role to play in the administrative structure now being created. Over a period of time it is anticipated that there will be significant increases in monies allocated for greenkeeper education and over the next year the Association must be in a position to justify the allocation of such sums and thus move greenkeeper education a further step forward. Already as an indication of BIGGA's Way Forward we are in discussion at college level for the introduction of a full-time HND course in golf greenkeeping. Whilst high degree of member commitment and participation will be necessary, there is much to look forward to educationally. The R and A's initiative is exciting and will receive our full support and co-operation.

Turning from education, I would point to a few other events during the year which have contributed to our development and recognition within the game. The Iseki Tournament continues to be a great success and a means for our members to readily identify with their regions. During 1990 a successful extension to the tournament took place with the staging of an Irish round and this was further extended to 1991 when rounds were played in Northern and Southern Ireland last month. Relationships with our Irish members and those interested in joining the Association over the water have been strengthened considerably and will, I'm sure, continue. The Iseki event is eagerly anticipated and the 1990 final at Moortown in September was blessed with a finely prepared course and a grand atmosphere, enhanced further by the regional team competitions, now an integral part.

In referring to regions, I would mention the success of the WESTURF Exhibition organised on a regional basis to meet the needs of the South West and Wales Region. This really is an excellently organised local event, with full credit to Gordon Child and his team for its successful establishment. Regional initiatives in terms of fund raising and bringing members together are vital and this is an outstanding example of just such initiative.

In July we gathered at St Andrews for The Open, blessed with the most glorious weather. From BIGGA's view this was perhaps our most successful Open. The assistance offered by our members to Walter Woods and his staff went without hitch and was much appreciated by the R and A. Our thanks are due to Walter for securing a really excellent site, which ensured record numbers of visitors to our marquee. Additionally our thanks to the Scottish region for their excellent organisation and the hard work undertaken by a number of individuals.

Hardly returned from St Andrews, we were straight into our National Tournament at Ganton. Again the weather was excellent and though the fairways had suffered by drought it was a privilege to play this majestic course. The Tournament continues to attract a regular nucleus - many of whom have been coming for more years than they care to remember. Changes in format have been suggested and these will be made, though it is important that traditions are not lost, particularly in terms of promoting it as a family event and social occasion as well as a golf tournament. What is needed is an influx of new competitors. We are moving around some of the finest courses in the country and 1991 takes us to another much revered course, Royal St David's at Harlech. Having visited with Club officials, I can vouch for the playing qualities awaiting you in August.

Finally in the golfing calendar, we turn to the Kubota Tournament held annually at The Belfry in October. This held particular significance in 1990 because we managed to lose the trophy we had held for five years. A splendid well-run tournament - remember if you wish to qualify you must participate in the National Tournament.

I will conclude by picking three highlights from the year. In September at Prestatyn Golf Club, at a meeting attended by seventy interested people, we formed a North Wales Section to meet the needs of an area which previously had undoubtedly been geographically isolated. This was most certainly a highlight of my year, and not only because I was back across the border! One could not fail to be impressed by the enthusiasm generated and it is clear the Association will have a strong section in that area. This is the first new section set up since the establishment of BIGGA in 1987 and as such has been widely welcomed.

In February, Chairman Ivor Scoones, Debbie Savage and myself represented BIGGA at the GCSAA Conference and Show in Las Vegas, where we had our own stand. We made many international contacts and generated much potential interest for new members, subscribers and advertisers to our magazine and possible exhibitors for the 1992 BTME Exhibition. We can and do learn from the GCSAA, which has been in existence for over 60 years, but all is not perfect in their organisation and it is therefore rewarding that there are already some areas of our own organisation which they could, perhaps, beneficially study.

In March we were delighted that our President, Viscount Whitelaw, was able to pay his first visit to Aldwark Manor and we took the opportunity to officially launch Greenkeeper International during his visit. His interest and support for the Association is greatly appreciated and during the last year he has visited us at the National Conference at Egham, The Open at St Andrews and Aldwark Manor. He has already intimated that he will visit our marquee at this year's Open and also plans to attend next January's BTME Exhibition, where we intend introducing an award ceremony for leading award winners during 1991. Our President has a real 'feel' for greenkeeping and does all he can to project the Association at golfing functions around the country.

As a final comment, with another year behind us where lies our current status within the game? Certainly at Club level there is much greater employer awareness, which manifests itself in the numerous enquiries covering all manner of greenkeeping matters relating to salaries, conditions of service and contracts of employment. Relationships with the Home Unions have been strengthened and this will continue with the new structure emanating from *The Way Forward* document. Contact with the PGA European Tour and the PGA remains spasmodic, as does media interest in greenkeepers and all greenkeeping matters. Throughout, the R and A remain steadfast and wholehearted in their support. I believe we are structurally sound and there is much respect within the game for our progress of the last three years. We continue however to be under-resourced and must look within to resolve this situation. The generation of increased funding remains essential and will continue to demand the attention of our Board. This Association is blessed with a dedicated staff, whom I thank for all their untiring efforts in the last year. Ours is a happy and welcoming office and it is very apparent that members enjoy coming to Aldwark Manor. Much has been achieved, but for staff and members there remains a great deal still to be done as we jointly seek full professional recognition for greenkeepers and the further advancement of this fine profession.

I conclude with sincere thanks to our retiring Chairman, Ivor Scoones, for all he has achieved during his year of office. I have enjoyed his constant and steadfast support through many difficult days this past year. His commitment and enthusiasm is there for all to see and I am sure he will look back on the many positive developments that took place during his office. Ivor won't mind me saying that he is one of a fairly select group of greenkeepers whose efforts over many years are at last being rewarded in the strides forward now being taken in the profession. We owe much to this group, without whose efforts today's achievements would not be possible. Ivor will continue to serve on the Board and we will draw on his considerable experience. I am sure also that you will all join with me in wishing Ivor's wife, Anne, a full and speedy recovery from her current illness. Thank you, Ivor, for all you have done.



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'Much has been achieved, but for staff and members there remains a great deal still to be done'

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GREEN BUT NOT NECESSARILY GREAT

by David Boocock, The Sports Turf Research Institute

Fertiliser manufacturers, aided and abetted by the advertising industry, have for very many years pursued a relentless campaign based entirely on maximising sales. Whether the message was put across by the hard or soft sell approach – the written word, glossy photographs or colour graphics – these all encourage the notion that turf has a high demand for fertiliser and the greater quantities used the better things will be. That the salesmen have been all too successful in the past is borne out by the gradual deterioration in turf quality and the condition of playing surfaces, especially on putting greens. Not that fertiliser is solely to blame, but it has a great deal to answer for.

The same thing continues today, but more subtly with the emphasis placed on environmental issues – nitrate pollution and the advantages of so-called slow release nitrogen sources, products with nil phosphate, low potash, and even those old favourites – autumn and winter feeds – are still around with a superabundance of phosphate for application to many soils that are already brim-full of the stuff. The impression has been created through carefully planned and orchestrated advertising, which has brainwashed the laymen or laywomen who play golf and serve on Club committees, that if grass is not a bright, lush green there is something wrong. It takes only one step further to equate poor colour with other problems and ergo there is something wrong with the management of the course and greenkeeper or manager are called in to explain.

The layperson can be brainwashed in other ways too, and none more so than by television – that ace medium for accentuating trivia. Golfers see the lush greens, tees and fairways of Augusta National in April and expect that sort of appearance on their home course, notwithstanding the vast differences in soils, climate, amount of play and, last but by no means least, maintenance budgets. One other simple and often overlooked aspect of colour television pictures is that contrast and depth of colour are both capable of adjustment by the production team as pictures are transmitted and sets certainly vary greatly in their ability to reproduce natural colour with integrity. One perception of that turf as a lush, dark green carpet may be the result of



One perception of golf course turf on TV as a lush, dark green carpet may be the result of nothing more than the producer shouting 'turn the colour up Norm!'

measure by the grass species making up the sward, general soil drainage and other maintenance inputs, including aeration and scarification. Fertiliser plays a relatively small part.

Nitrogen is the plant nutrient required in the largest amounts by turfgrasses. Leaves can contain between 2 and 5 per cent nitrogen and it is vital to their proper function. It is present in chlorophyll, the green pigment which absorbs and utilises the energy of the sun through the process of photosynthesis for growth. Plants can obtain nitrogen from the soil solution mainly as a nitrate, which is the most soluble form found in the soil and therefore the most readily available via the root system. They can, however, also absorb nitrogen as the ammonium molecule and as urea.

Amounts of nitrate and ammonium available in the soil vary enormously during the growing season and this depends largely on the release of nitrogen from soil organic matter by the action of micro-organisms, and in turn by their death and decay as a part of the nitrogen cycle. This process is largely temperature-dependent and could be said to be nature's own slow release nitrogen source and an extremely effective way of conserving nitrogen, since it only becomes available as soil temperatures rise and the plants themselves are making enough growth to take it up. There is no question that turfgrasses require nitrogen, especially in the putting green situation where clippings are removed – the matter at issue is how much?

Over supply of nitrogen in the early spring when soils are too cold for sustained growth is simply washed deeper into the soil profile, possibly to contaminate the ground water. Excess when there is enough warmth for growth leads to succulent, lush leaves with sappy, thin-walled cells which are far more prone to mechanical damage from feet, machinery and to attacks by fungal diseases. Disease attacks on such lush turf can be damaging enough in the summer, but during the autumn and winter months can completely ruin putting surfaces through the scars and pitting effects which follow from widespread and severe outbreaks. Turf damaged in this way takes a long time to recover in the following spring and early summer; and since the finer turfgrasses such as bents and fescues are very slow to spread vegetatively, the opportunist free-seeding and inferior grasses – such as *Poa annua* – are given an easy entry and often take over areas of turf damaged in this way.

The other important aspect of using fertiliser to excess, particularly nitrogen, is that rapidly growing turf produces far more leafage and therefore organic matter. This not only requires additional mowing effort to ➔ 22

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