On Friday 14 April I attended the opening of the Duke of York's new Greenskeeping Academy at the Berkshire College of Agriculture. This is a new hole course built within the college grounds specifically for the training of greenskeepers. The College are to be commended for their initiative in looking to the future, as they have incorporated into their design diverse areas of conservation and also have plans for research into using waste water from their own plant for irrigation purposes. Each of the six greens are of a different construction and Head Greenskeeper Bob Woodcock has the interesting task of maintaining the complex. I wish Bob the best of luck and perhaps he could find the time to update us through the pages of GCI on the progress of the greens. I enjoyed talking to many people from all sections of golf including Martin Gunn and Malcolm Jackson from the course built within the college grounds which has been successful, and I was pleased to see some of the students of the Berkshire, who constructed the course.

I well remember Cecil George and Harry Diamond advocating back in SIGGA days that we should have our own golf course for training greenskeepers. I would like to think that may be a possibility in the future, my personal opinion, but in the meantime it is interesting to see how many colleges now have their own courses. After a relaxing Saturday at home that week, it was up early on the Sunday morning to get the train for York and to the World Conference on Greenkeeper Training and Education at BIGGA House. I must admit being a bit apprehensive about this Conference, but my fears were groundless as it turned out to be a most successful day. (Report elsewhere).

It was fascinating to listen to people from so many different countries explaining their training programmes or in some cases, the lack of any training. How often were similar points raised by different delegates and the outcomes of the group sessions on ‘Problems and Possible Solutions’ made everyone aware that the problems were global. Funding, Standards, Communication and Languages were common problems in each group.

It was a most enlightening few days and seeing the delegates exchanging cards and e-mail addresses, there was an air of expectancy that, in the first instance, better and more regular communication between all the associations and a willingness to share experiences and lessons learned from these experiences, could only help to further strengthen Greenskeeper Associations around the world.

Congratulations to Emma Dagg who many of you will remember working in the BIGGA office. Emma left BIGGA to concentrate on her golf and it certainly paid off as she has been selected for the Curtis Cup team to play the USA at Ganton in June. Well done Emma and the best of luck for the match.

I went to Western Galles in Ayrshire to play in the Ayrshire Spring Meeting, my first game of golf this year it was to be. Well, what can I say. It was one of the worst days of the year, it poured down, there was a strong wind and it was freezing cold. Those 24 brave souls that played all the way had to be commended as six 70 yarders at the end only managed 8 holes before admitting defeat. My thanks to the Ayrshire section for the day. I thoroughly enjoyed the clubhouse pâté.

That was on April 26 and you know what, we had two days of mainly glorious weather since then and I still haven’t had a game yet.

Many of you may have read in a national paper a few weeks ago about Chris Yeaman’s son. Chris is Head Greenkeeper at West Lancashire. He had been waiting for a liver transplant and I am pleased to say that he has now had the transplant, which he had desperately needed. He was also given some related complications, he is now stable. I am sure I speak for all when I say we are all wishing Christopher a full and speedy recovery.

Golf is a great game, a game to be enjoyed by many. Most golf in this country is probably played by private members clubs. The day-to-day running of most of these clubs is usually carried out by, in no particular order, Manager/Secretary, Head Greenskeeper, Course Manager, Professional and a Club Steward. The relationship between these people will usually be pretty good with the best interests of the club and the members at heart. I know at Frillican that we all get on very well with each other and it makes for a better working environment. Why then, if we from all these different associations get on so well at our clubs, is there so little co-operation and communication between our respective Associations. Even though there have been a lot of courses built in the last twenty years, it would appear that golf is in a bit of a stagnation period. It seems we need to encourage many new people, especially younger ones, to play the game. This to my mind is even more reason why all the different associations should be talking to each other on a regular basis with a mind to the future of the game.

There is another group important to the game and these are in the Golf Unions. I believe there are fairly close connections in Wales and Ireland but not so in England and Scotland. The game of golf is the important thing here, not individual associations and whilst each association may have a little bit of a mind to the future of the game, they should all have closer working relationships for the good of the game of golf.

With that I leave you with the thought that

"The only limits are, as always, those of vision."