Thanks!

The conveyor belt of those BIGGA members who have benefited from Ransomes Jacobsen Scholarships just keeps on rolling and over £125,000 has been gifted to talented, ambitious people who could only move forward with assistance towards their course fees, since the scheme was launched in 2002.

This month three of the recipients, at different stages of their careers, talk about their experiences and thank Ransomes Jacobsen for allowing it to happen.

Paul Farrell MSc

This June I attended my graduation at Cranfield University for the MSc in Sports Surface Technology. As a beneficiary of the Ransomes Jacobsen Scholarship Fund I would like to give a brief insight into my experience over the last two years.

Having started out in greenkeeping 28 years ago, I have always strived to gain academic qualifications to supplement my practical knowledge and experience. Beginning with City & Guilds 2–4 and then moving on to the Higher National Diploma in Turf Science at Myerscough College. Although the knowledge I had gained was certainly of great value to me in my career, I felt that if I gained a more scientific understanding of the subjects within our industry then it would help me make more informed judgements. I had started to look at the options for higher study, at the various colleges in my area, which included BSc degrees etc, when I spotted the advert in Greenkeeper International for the MSc in Sports Surface Technology at Cranfield University. I wrote off for the information pack and found that the module format would fit well with my work schedule as these took place over the ‘winter’ months.

However the costs involved did prove to be a stumbling block at the time and I gave up on the idea. That is until three years later when I came across the course informa-
When the time came to start the course, some doubt did creep in as to whether I was up to it. It seemed to be a big leap from HND to MSc, and I was under no illusion as to whether I was up to it. After all it seemed to be a big leap from HND to MSc, as I was under no illusion of the standards that would be required in terms of work submitted and in the amount of hard work and effort that was to be needed.

Also I did chat to a past MSc student to gain an idea of what to expect, he said the experience was “like putting your n*ts in a vice and letting someone give them a good kicking for two years”, although he did add it was a great experience and well worth it in the end. Surprisingly this didn’t put me off, but it did give me an insight into what lay ahead, plus I had been a Head Greenkeeper for over 20 years so I already knew what that felt like anyway!

The two years that followed were tough at times, the usual highs and lows whenever you attempt anything worthwhile, however the support you get not only from the lecturers but also your peers is brilliant. Basically everything is set up to help you reach your goals, if you are prepared to work hard to achieve them.

The course was made up of eight modules, each module taken as a two week block release over two years, plus two group projects and the thesis/individual project. The modules were varied, ranging from subjects such as soil science to synthetic surfaces.

As mentioned an individual project/thesis was a criteria of the course. You aimed to choose a topic of original research, which seemed difficult at first – we all know from browsing the internet on greenkeeping matters the wealth of research that already exists on subjects we might be interested in.

The trick, if you are struggling, is to maybe take a subject and tackle it from a different angle if possible. Also it is important to have a genuine interest in the subject, as otherwise months of research will become a chore, which besides making you miserable, will probably reflect in the quality and end result of your thesis. The subject of my thesis was ‘The Ecology of Nematodes and plant parasitic nematodes in turf is recognised as a problem.

Although damage caused by plant parasitic nematodes in turf is recognised as a problem. All nematodes play an important role within soil biota, being involved in nutrient and energy cycling. These nematodes are identified and separated into different groups by their feeding guilds. Nematodes interact with the soil biomass and are involved at every trophic level within the soil food web.

Therefore any management practices carried out upon a turf area should consider the effects they might have on not only nematodes but also microbial biomass populations within the soil.

An investigation was undertaken to assess what effects management and soil type had upon the nematode and microbial biomass populations of nine different turfgrass areas.

The investigations also sort to ascertain if a relationship exists between nematode and microbial biomass populations within the turff areas.

The results found that there were significant differences in the nematode populations found and that different community structures exist across the different surfaces (p = 0.05).

Microbial biomass populations across the turf areas also showed a significant difference (p < 0.001).

The levels of nematodes and microbial biomass were considered in relation to the management practices carried out and soil type. It was found that the two influenced the nematode and microbial biomass population size.

A weak positive correlation was found between the nematode and microbial biomass populations (r = 0.58).

However it was considered that
Darren Anderson MG

It was August 1992, the look of disappointment on my Parents faces said it all! I had just shown them my GCSE exam results and my Father who back then was also my Course Manager, leant back on his chair at the kitchen table and said. “Well you’re lucky to be in a career that you can get a education in, not all kids who have just failed their GCSE’s can say that”, he then followed on to say “You better stick in when you go to college for your NVQ level 2 or else!” I kept quiet as I had got away very lightly with a telling off!

It was another year before I was sent to college, the reason being, so I had good basic greenkeeping knowledge practically before I went; this was also so I had more interest in the subjects being taught to the class if I had some practical experience in them. Little did I know that this would be the start of a very long education through different stages, even becoming the 46th Master Greenkeeper in 2008 and the look of pride on my parents’ faces, I think I had been officially forgiven for the GCSE exam results 16 years earlier.

Throughout my education I have been lucky enough to have a training provider, North Wales Training (NWT) who funded my NVQ levels 2,3,4 with all the extra courses like NPTC training that helps towards NVQ’s. In 2001, they also paid for my HNC in Golf Course Management, I told myself this was the final qualification I was going to do, but in 2008 I decided to dust off the computer and study for my Foundation Degree in Science this was On-line and the subject was Sportsurf.

The Club was supportive in me doing another qualification as they knew they would benefit from it too, but they also wanted me to look into funding to help with the costs to keep expenditure down as with most members clubs of late.

With no more funding available from NWT and almost all the avenues of funding exhausted towards the FdSc – Online at Myerscough, it didn’t look like I wouldn’t get a any financial help, but then I remembered the Jacobsen scholarship that I read about in GI and on the website, so I applied and got accepted!”

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