The GTC was back in attendance at this year’s show after one year’s absence as an exhibitor and for many of us it has been a privilege since the first exhibition back in 1989.

So many faces who have attended since that first show are still coming to ensure that greenkeeping, as seen as a respected profession and they should be proud of their achievements over the years.

Prior to this year’s show, there was much talk about there only being three halls and the recession will keep people away....well back in 1989 there were only two halls but that event signalled the start of something very special.

Those in attendance back in 1989 will remember the image of the greenkeepers and how BIGGA was continually encouraging members to buy Association blazers, sweaters and even giving ties away as a membership benefit, all designed to promote a more professional image.

There were even neck scarves for any lady members. You could say the Association was ahead of the sexism laws!

Image is so important and while we all appreciate greenkeeping is often a hands on job, often dirty, there is little doubt that we all accept greenkeeping is a very important profession.

So many faces who have attended this year’s show and that is EDUCATIONAL!

It has been said by many who attended this year’s event that the education programme had something for everybody and attendance were record breaking.

Those older readers may well remember the dynamic stumping speaker, Bobbie Gee, back at the 1991 exhibition giving a keynote address on, Image—understanding the role image plays in personal and professional success.

If my memory serves me right, Bobbie’s husband was a Golf Course Superintendent in the USA and she knew first hand how the profession, or image of the profession, had to be changed and she was inspirational for all of us at the presentation.

We have known for many years that the American Golf Course Superintendents are held in high esteem by their employers and golfers and thankfully I believe we have moved forward in the UK and the role image plays in personal and professional success.

For many years the GTC focused, quite rightly, on ensuring the agrochemical aspects of the greenkeeper’s job were covered in education courses and qualifications and rest assured this is still the number one priority, just look at the content of the Apprenticeship scheme!

However since The BiA’s discussion document The Way Forward was circulated to golf clubs and golfing bodies in 1989 which, among other matters stated: “that many Head Greenkeepers and Course Managers feel that advanced training in management skills is the greatest deficiency in their training” - times have changed!

During this year’s Continue to Learn programme, there was a workshop for assistants hosted by Frank Newbery (nowhere near as attractive as Bobbie Gee) which focused on the importance of good communication and image. It is by raising the awareness of the importance of image at the earliest opportunity in a greenkeeper’s career that we will produce the Course Managers of the future.

Some 22 years on there is so much to be proud of in the way greenkeepers have progressed both in seeking knowledge to add to their skills to compete on the world stage and now we see many apprentices from the 1990’s today’s Golf Course Managers and some stepping into General Manager positions.

The GTC will ensure the ranges of qualifications available within the sector include “communication” Units and that includes image.

We will work with our Quality Assurance Centres and Training Providers to ensure there are seminars, workshops and short courses available for supporting our employers and learners to choose from.

BIGGA, I am sure, will continue to promote supervisory and management short course provision through its Sections and Regions, which are often subsidised through the Learning and Development Fund and the GTC will continue the drive for professionalism through greenkeeper training.

In closing please feel free to feedback any views you might have on current provision of education, training courses and what you feel the GTC should be addressing.

Please contact us on:
Tel: 01347 838640 or email david@the-gtc.co.uk

For the latest news on greenkeeper education, training and qualifications including the up to date list of GTC Quality Assured Centres and Training Providers visit www.the-gtc.co.uk

In Brief
David reflects on the recent December meeting and education programme for Continue to Learn ‘11 and an update on the Apprenticeship scheme.

Continue to Learn 2011 delivered 143.5 hours of education to 2008 attendees. The Queen’s Suite was buzzing with the queues outside the auditoriums for some of the most popular seminars. On a couple of occasions there was standing room only and a couple of prominent Course Managers were spotted sitting on the floor to ensure that they could participate in the sessions.

The introduction of the Turf Managers’ Conference proved to be a success with superb feedback on the speakers and the content of their presentations.

Dr David Jones from the Natural History Museum, aka ‘the worm man’, equally educated and entertained the audience with many requesting his return to future programmes.

The ‘Fringe’ sessions, presented by exhibitors at the show, were as popular as ever. The more established speakers imparted their knowledge to enthusiastic audiences, with newer speakers attracting a credible number of attendees.

I am forever indebted to all the speakers who (sometimes with a little coaxing) agree to speak on the Continue to Learn education programme. Without them, there would not be an education programme to present.

The new challenge is to replicate the success in 2012 – no pressure!

A HUGE thank you goes to the Gold and Silver Key companies and individuals to the Learning and Development Fund for their support in enabling us to present Continue to Learn at Harrogate Week.

Pesticide Update for NPTC Certificate Holders

Health and Safety advisor, Jon Allbutt has confirmed that the possession of a City and Guilds NPTC Pesticides Certificate is more than five years old may not be accepted as evidence of competency unless the holder has updated their skills and knowledge and kept pace with the many changes in this important legislation, the Code of Practice, application equipment and techniques for the control of pests and diseases.

The next subscription workshop at Harrogate, there are a number of Update Courses being presented. For up to date availability, contact Jane Glassett at Jon Allbutt Associates on 01959 575275 or visit the Events’ page on the BIGGA website.

The ‘Fringe’ programme of practice for using plant protection products is now available as a free download in the Members’ Area of the BIGGA website.

Thank you to our Gold and Silver Key Sponsors

Gold Key Individual Members: Steven Tarney, Wil Rojas, Andy Carpenter MSG, GSCE, Iain McKinnell, Finlay Newbery, Andrew Turnbull, Iain Mathieson MSG, Ian Mortensen.
Silver Key Individual Members: Ian Asher, Steve Cook, Iain Jefferies, Harriet Marchant, Nick Long, Gary Waltham, Andrew Morley, Colin Coggeshall, Mike Sansom, Sami Collins, Head of Learning & Development, BIGGA.

Learning & Development
Sami Collins, Head of Learning & Development, with an update on education issues

That was the week that was…
and what a week it was!
Rachael and I are looking after our feet while looking agahast at the attendance figures for the Continue to Learn Education Programme. Now we know why we’re so tired and our feet still hurt!