The GTC was back in attendance at this year's show after one year’s absence as an exhibitor and for many of us after one year's absence as an attendee at this year's show and that is EDUCATION! 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 our Head Greenkeepers and Course Managers are now at least on a par with their colleagues throughout the world of golf course management.

For many years the GTC focused, quite rightly, on ensuring the appropriate aspects of a 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 greenkeepers’ scheme.

However since The R&A’s discussion document The Way Forward was circulated to golf clubs and golfing bodies in 1989, among other matters stated: “that many Head Greenkeepers and Course Managers felt that advanced training in management skills is the greatest deficiency in their training”.

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 new management tools and courses and now we see many apprentices from the 1990’s at today’s Golf Course Managers and some stepping into General Manager positions.

The GTC will ensure the provision of qualifications available within the sector include “communication” units, which includes image.

We will work with our Quality Assured Centres and Training Providers to ensure there are seminars, workshops and short courses available for golf clubs and greenkeepers 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 anything 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 training.

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 wouldn’t be an education programme to present.

The new challenge is to replicate the success in 2012 and we are looking forward to that! 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 Harrrogate Week.

The GTC is a charitable trust, funded by its members, with the aim of providing grants for the development of the greenkeeping profession. Its main purpose is to raise the professional profile of the greenkeeping profession and to work in association with representatives of the industry to achieve professional profile.

By joining the GTC as a Gold or Silver Key member, golf clubs can access the fund to continue the professional development and progression to the assistance they’ve had from workshops, courses, the lending library, Gold Key Individual Members: Steven Tamney; Wil Rogers; Andy Cornwall; MSG, CSGC; Ian Aitchison; Fran Newbery; Andrew Turnbull; Ian Madeline; MSG; Ian Maclean.

For more information on the Greenkeepers Training Committee, regarding processes, contact the Head of L&D, Sami Collins, on 01347 833800 (option 3) or email sami.collins@bigga.org.uk. Thank you to our Gold and Silver Key Sponsors who have also been able to access the funds to continue with the development of the greenkeeping profession.