One point emerged emphatically from a series of recent GTC workshops conducted very ably at Temple and Gatton Manor by Laurence Pithie MG, the message being that the principles of greenkeeping haven’t changed - simply the way in which they are applied and implemented.

Put another way, whole scale mechanisation has widened the scope of what is possible when it comes to course condition and presentation although machinery is expensive and every machine needs at least one person to operate it. It actually makes you realise that, with an average crew of only five or six, it is something of a miracle that our greenkeepers manage to do what they do. Certainly, other countries are open-mouthed in wonder.

I have always maintained the major problem with being a Course Manager or Head Greenkeeper is in dealing with the hundreds knocking on your door with something to sell. That undoubtedly gave rise to a regrettable period 30 odd years ago when courses were subsidised to overuse of water and fertilizer. It led to bad habits spawned from the belief that American-style courses, green wall-to-wall, were superior to our own. What made it even more reprehensible was the demand for a traditional formula that was known to work.

The formation of the GTC was one of the influences that brought about a much needed change of heart but it had to be proved to a fresh audience and Laurence’s presentations provided everything the evidence to show that greenkeeping has manifested its ways. Nevertheless, periodic reminders are always wise which is why good communications are so important.

September’s workshops to which I referred brought together Greenkeepers, Green Committee Chairmen and Club Secretaries, engagin in an enjoyable open forum with Laurence who kept everyone interested for four or five hours which is no easy task. By engaging in a comprehensive review of the fundamentals, the recurring theme was that greenkeeping is more common sense than mystic art.

Nobody can question that scarification, top dressing, over-seeding and sensible cutting heights are the common bonds of course managers everywhere. The skill lies in making on the spot, day to day judgements in adjusting to weather conditions. Details can vary even if principles are constant. Resources differ from Club to Club and so do budgets which, in turn, can dictate methods. Practically the only advantage of growing old is you can make comparisons and, seeing the list of modern aera- tion techniques, brought to mind the days when, as a junior member of Denham in the 1950s, we earned welcome pocket money by lending a hand with the annual ritual of treating the greens.

It consisted of scything by hand with a springbok rake, cutting the shoots by hand that were raised, hand hollow-tining to a depth of no more than 2-3 inches, applying a dressing of soil and later rounding the Kota. Get off with an application of dried blood, hoof and horn meal. It was a laborious and dirty process involving working on perhaps two or three greens a day whereas, nowadays, the entire operation can be completed in two days and the greens back near their best in little more than a week. In today’s context, it is merely part of an industry’s proud heritage in the same way as Hickory shafts and gutta-percha balls but, while the only shot over which a player has influence is the next one, greenkeeping can only look ahead. Here the future couldn’t be brighter.

BIGGA and the GTC have joined interests and responsibilities in raising standards and performance. The Home Unions lend practical and financial support, leaving golfers to understand that it is all being done for their benefit. Whether they do or not depends, as I have stressed, on the vital role of communication.

Owing to the demand for Chair- man of Green – Secretary Manager – Course Manager workshops, more are being planned. Dates and venues will be available from the GTC and on the website. Delegate feedback has also encouraged the GTC to organise more workshops covering such subjects as Health & Safety including EMPPLOYMENT responsibilities, and how to improve communica- tions within the golf club.

All workshops will be conducted by GTC Quality Assured Training Providers.

Learning & Development

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

October heralds the launch of the One-day Workshops

You should have received your copy of the One-day Workshops 2012 with this issue of the Greenkeeper Interna- tional. For those of you who have already perused it, prior to read- ing this, you’ll see that we have a number of workshops that are new to the 2012 programme. These include:

One-day Workshops

Progressive Cultural Manage- ment – Frank Rosil Ph.D

How to be an Outstanding Man- ager, Part Three – Shona Garner

Essential IT Business Adminis- tration for Greenkeepers – Jacky Lowe

Successful Project Management – Bruce Williams COGS

Half-day Workshops

A Practical Guide to Setting Up a Social Media Presence – Lesley Wood

Rescuing Your Course – Parts 1 and 2 – Howard Swan

Managing Parkland, Heathland and Links Courses – an Eco- logical Perspective – Bob Taylor

Compost Tosa – Provide Healthy Rootzones for Healthy Grass – Martin Ward

Writing and Using an Environmental Policy Document – Richard Stuttard

The Turf Managers’ Conference will make its return to the programme on Monday 23 January featuring presentations on:

- Identifying and Managing Plant Parasitic Nematode Problems in Turfgrass – Dr Colin Fleming
- Golf Course Photography – The Job, Purpose and Challenges – Ian Lowe

The Effects of Climate Change and Climate Phenomenon on Greenkeeping Practices – Mark Hunt

Employee Engagement – Helen Bennett

The Power of Social Media for Your Golf Club – Lesley Wood

Practically Sustainable Golf Turf Management – Frank Rosil Ph.D

Book now to secure your place by completing the booking form or by contacting the L&D Department on 01347 833800 option 3.

You can now register to attend the Conference either as a delegate or as a guest (subject to availability). Contact details are listed on page 12.

- BIGGA Seminars at SALTEx

For the first time, BIGGA presented a series of educational seminars as part of the SALTEx education programme. Presenta- tions were made by Cale Bigelow from Purdue University, USA; Les Hawkins MG, from The Richmond Golf Club, and Jim McKenzie MBE, from Celtic Manor Resort.

I am delighted to report that attendance figures were better than hoped and that the feed- back from the attendees and the organisers was great! We have now been asked to put together some seminars to take place at Stourport in November – details to follow.

Higher Education Scholarships

Supported by Ransomes Jacobsen

The most prestigious scholarship has been awarded to:

Ash Smith - On Line Foundation Degree - Sports Turf