Course Managers and Head Greenkeepers often think, if only I had another pair of hands... well maybe they can find that additional help through explaining to their employer the benefits of recruiting an apprentice. Successful businesses often refer to the fact that during difficult economical times they invested in staff development and there is no better way than using the nationally accredited Greenkeeper Apprenticeship Scheme to ensure the course team has a committed, enthusiastic new employer being trained, educated and assessed to the industry agreed national standards.

Many of today’s top Course Managers started as apprentices in the UK and now are maintaining and managing golf courses all over the world.

My friend of many years, Mike O’Keeffe, known to many as the man from Ohio State University who opens doors in the USA for British greenkeepers to gain like-minded skills and experience, sums up how British greenkeeping apprenticeships are sought after by the Superintendents across the pond.

Mike explains, “In over 20 years of working with the GTC, BIGGA and our friends at the approved Centres and colleges, literally hundreds of British trained greenkeepers have travelled across, to hopefully enjoy the experience of working on golf courses in the States.

Mike adds, “It has to be acknowledged that the promotion for many years by the GTC of vocational, work based training and qualifications in Britain has resulted in outstanding competent greenkeepers whose all round skill level is admired by the American Superintendents.

The ability to do so many tasks when they arrive for their internship period is a tribute to the apprenticeship programme in Britain.”

Apprenticeships continue to be very popular with British employers and the training as it is a clear career progression and it all revolves around the golf course.

The greenkeeping apprenticeship framework not only includes the work based vocational qualifications at Levels 2 and 3 but additional requirements to ensure the apprentice has the functional skills which arguably should have been taught and achieved during school days.

Numeracy, literacy and communication skills are all now wrapped up into what the Government calls core or functional skills!

Please rest assured the GTC and its Quality Assured Centres are working within current Government policies of the day to ensure the funding support, albeit reducing, still makes the apprenticeship a very cost effective option for employers.

The GTC is currently involved in discussions to have a Higher Apprenticeship in greenkeeping.

A Higher Apprenticeship could include the work based Level 4 Management qualification and more news will follow as discussions with the relevant bodies hopefully come to fruition.

There are still many people looking to enter the profession of greenkeeping and with a clear career pathway available from apprentice to Course or General Manager how best do employers look to recruit an apprentice?

Short of the GTC offering an apprenticeship placement service, an option the GTC is currently considering, many golf clubs have found a suitable apprentice within their clubs Junior Section, maybe a chance career change application letter received direct, a local advert or in association with a GTC Quality Assured Centre.

We are aware of apprentices of all ages working on golf courses and thoroughly enjoying the experience and with support funding finally becoming available for all ages currently in most areas of Britain that doesn’t appear to be a recruitment problem.

The GTC’s Quality Assured Centres are all there to assist employers select and recruit an apprentice and explain what funding is available.

Check out the Quality Assured Centres on our website www.the-gtc.co.uk.

For any greenkeepers looking to enjoy the experience of the Ohio State University programme please contact Mike O’Keeffe on email: okrfee.1@osu.edu

September already? I have no clue where this year has gone!

IGCEMA Certification Program

The International Golf Course Equipment Managers Association (IGCEMA) launched their Certification Program in May this year. In July, BIGGA pledged support for the Certification Program and are now registered as Proctor (examination invigilator) for the program.

The Certification Program consists of six core competencies:

- Hydraulic Troubleshooting
- Electrical Troubleshooting
- Internal Combustion Engines
- Drivelines
- Mower Troubleshooting - in development (expected Jan. 2012)
- Cutting Units - in development (expected Feb. 2012)

To achieve the IGCEMA Certificate, individuals will purchase the study guides and will then take an online test for each of the competencies. The study guides are available from the IGCEMA website at a cost of $15 per guide. Each online test costs $50 (this gives you two attempts at the test). Payment for the test is made by credit card before the test begins.

On completion of all of the six competencies, individuals will be awarded the IGCEMA Certificate.

Blended CPF Credits (number to be confirmed) will be attached to each of the competencies and will be awarded on successful completion for each of the tests.

For further information visit the IGCEMA’s website www.igcema.org and click on Certificate Program.

Good Luck to all the Finalists!