As we celebrated 25 years of BIGGA’s existence last year and the recent Harrogate Week, it was very rewarding to see how far the greenkeeping industry of golf has progressed since those days when there was no professional body, only volunteers and Honorary Secretaries running the three former greenkeeping Associations, BGGA, EIGGA and SIGGA.

I hesitate to go any further back into the history of greenkeeping, as I felt old during Harrogate, when those involved in the pre-BIGGA days kept reminding me of days and events past.

Volunteers are still very much at the heart of any successful Association but I know from my experience, the day to day dedicated professional administrators, coupled with the efforts of the volunteers, make a brilliant cocktail for success.

Without the many volunteers who willingly support the GTC I know my job and that of Fiona’s would be much more difficult.

It is not only the volunteers on the GTC Board but those individuals, who are on the three GTC Advisory Panels that help us to maintain National Occupational Standards, monitor the Delivery of Programmes and assist with the Marketing of the GTC’s “products”.

Too many to mention individually, however a full list of current volunteers can be viewed on the GTC website but a personal thanks to all of you.

It is through the collective work of all who are associated with greenkeeping, National Occupational Standards, monitor the Delivery of Programmes and assist with the Marketing of the GTC’s “products.”

This relatively new organisation has been established through a Special Project funded initially by the European Golf Association (EGA), the Federation of European Golf Greenkeepers Associations (FEGGA) and The R&H.

A working group has established a set of occupational standards and I am pleased that both the EGA and member Associations of the Federation of Golf Greenkeepers Associations (FEGGA) have adopted the three levels of standards, which will be maintained by an Advisory Group, administered by myself and approved through the EGEU Board.

The key to the success of this Special Project will be the advice and support the EGEU and its advisors can give to golf developing countries where there is little or no structure for greenkeeper education, training or qualifications.

The EGEU, now fully financially supported through a short-term special project by The R&H, has already played an important advisory role for several countries looking to establish their own structure and system of greenkeeper training.

Without looking to impose the British model of establishing an employer-led GTC on other countries, our advice would always be to involve the Golf Union or Federation in a country together with the Greenkeeping Association, if there is one.

The establishment of a Centre or Centres similar to the structure we maintain in Britain is also advised but at all times, quality of the delivery has to be paramount.

Whilst as far back as date we have worked closely with colleges and one private company to deliver the formal qualifications, other countries, especially those new to golf who have no college or institute to deliver greenkeeper education, are considering a golf club as a Centre for education and training.

It is the experience of this GTC’s Quality Assurance Centres and Training Providers are already involved outside of Britain and there is no doubt there will be further opportunities to export their expertise, training programmes and products over the coming weeks, months and years through the GTC and EGEEU.

It is the experience of the GTC and its adviser network that is acknowledged through the project we hope that the EGEU over the next few years, becomes recognised and established to promote best practice in all matters greenkeeping throughout Europe.

Visit the EGEEU website www.egeu.eu to see how Standards and Advice are the focal points of the organisation.

Wow, that was quite a Harrogate Week! The last of the L&D teams energy was taken up doing a little jig following the successful education event that BIGGA has ever presented.

We had 2359 guests through the doors of the Queen’s Suite, representing a 17.4% increase on last year’s Continue to Learn attendance. Working on the attendance figures and multiplying it by the number of hours we scheduled (152.25 hours) we delivered 3,894.50 hours of education over five days.

It’s not surprising that Rachael, Janet Jones, BIGGA’s South West and South Wales Regional Administrator, Simon Staples, Events and Education Manager from the Australian Association - AGCSA, and I were all exhausted by the end of the week.

With many sold out workshops and seminars full to capacity - and beyond on several occasions! I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of the speakers and companies who delivered workshops and training to BIGGA on our behalf. An event such as Continue to Learn would not be possible without your time and expertise.

The initial planning for Continue to Learn is now underway. If you have any suggestions please email them to sami@bigga.co.uk.

Safety Management System

Last month we announced the launch of the new Safety Management System. BIGGA and the GCMA have spent several months updating the system to make it much simpler to use. Available through the Members’ area of the BIGGA website, the updated system allows users to download and save to their own computers. Risk Profiles, Risk Assessments and access to Hazard information for seven areas of the golf club: Greenkeeping Activities, Maintenance Facility, Golf Course, Clubhouse, Kitchen, Pro Shop, Fire Safety

The original SMS will remain available for several months and users will be contacted with information on downloading and updating their Risk Profiles.

Golf Industry Show

For those of you attending the Golf Industry Show in Las Vegas at the end of the month, don’t forget to drop by and say hello. The BIGGA stand number is 2707 located near the International Resource Centre.

Learning & Development

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

New Field Guide Additions

At Harrogate Week we launched additions to two of our existing field guides:

Trees & Shrubs on the Golf Course

The additional pages for the Grasses field guide includes:

Meadow Foxtail, Smooth-Leaved Timothy, Quaking Grass, Marram, Purple Moor-grass, Bristle-Leaved Bent, Upright Bromes, Yorkshire Fog, Sweet Vernal Grass, Cockfoot, Red Pea, Sheep’s Pousse and Bent-grasses.

The additional pages for Trees & Shrubs now includes:

Sea-Buckthorn, Beech, Elm, Birch, Hornbeam, Guelder Rose, Spindle, Dogwood, Sweet Chestnut, Spindle, Wragging Treed, Blackthorn, Horse Chestnut, Ivy and Heathers.

The additional pages are available to members, free of charge. To get a copy of the new pages, please email rachael@bigga.co.uk or telephone the Learning and Development Department on 01347 833800 (option 3).

High School Education Scholarships

(sponsored by Ransomes Jacobsen)

The last scholarship of 2011 was awarded to

Martin Tuna – HND in Golf Course Management

I am delighted to announce that Ransomes Jacobsen has agreed to continue to support the High Education Scholarships in 2012 by pledging a further £8,500 to the fund. Applications are now being considered.

An application form can be downloaded from the education page of the BIGGA website.