Greenkeepers Training Committee

This month David looks at the education and training ladder for greenkeepers with a particular emphasis on career progression once you have joined the greenkeeping profession.

Stepping onto the first rung of a ladder for the first time can be a hairy moment and often it is with uncertainty as to how high you will eventually climb the ladder, but when it comes to a greenkeeping career, the GTC can help you climb the ladder to the very top!

The golf club employers in Britain have, for many years, been very well served by the tried and tested Greenkeeping Apprenticeship Scheme which has produced many of today’s top Course Managers, and long may it continue.

Government funding has and continues to help many employers opt to employ an apprentice with the valued input from the Course Manager/Head Greenkeeper, progress with the chosen GTC Quality Assured Centre, can be rapid.

The Apprenticeship includes the Level 2 Work based Diploma in England and Wales, SVQ Level 2 in Scotland and with some additional qualifications to benefit the apprentice and progression into WBQ/SVQ Level 3, which often is the natural progression route.

The Government is forever changing its funding priorities, but 16-19 year olds always qualify for some funding support, however some QA Centres have introduced some level of employer contribution, as subsidies continue to be reduced for all ages.

The GTC firmly believes that many employers will invest in training if the courses and certificates/qualifications meet both their needs and those of the learner.

At this point, we have to highlight that more and more enquiries to the GTC, on becoming a greenkeeper, are from the more mature person and many feel they are too old to become an apprentice greenkeeper. The Apprentice Framework is there to be used for all ages; it is the funding support which varies between age groups.

Some employers offer placements for volunteers and again education and training to become a greenkeeper can commence on day 1 of employment.

The GTC’s Level 2 Training Manual and CD-Rom of knowledge is the best “not any apprentice can use in association with their chosen Quality Assured Centre to have their skills and knowledge assessed and recorded.

For those not able to gain any sort of work on a golf course there are courses such as the National Certificate in Greenkeeping offered by several Centres.

This qualification very much compliments the Level 2 Work Based Diploma/SVQ as there is both the knowledge and practical elements included with either experience gained at the college’s golf course or work experience organised for the learner on a golf course.

The progression from Level 2 to Level 3 can be smooth IF the employer allows their learner to gain the required experience on the job but often the learner struggles if they are not allowed to become involved in supervisory duties.

However, this is not always possible if the learner is say 17 or 18 years of age.

This is when a training plan agreed between the employer, learner and Centre should allow for progression up the career ladder.

The same progression “stumble” on the career ladder can occur from Level 3 to Level 4/5 but it should never be two steps forward one step back!

Further progression is through a formal course leading to a qualification offered by a QA Centre or a more informal education and training programme, GTC and its Quality Assured Centres and Training Providers are there to help.

Short courses, seminars and workshops are excellent and are often hosted locally by BIGGA’s Regions and Sections not forgetting as well as the Continue to Learn programme in Harrogate every January.

It doesn’t have to be the work based route to get you to the top rung of the ladder but experience and the practical skills, as you climb the ladder, are crucial.

Higher Education has become more and more popular as colleges make the qualifications more accessible.

When it comes to formal qualifications this sector has all bases covered, from the work based Apprenticeship to a Degree and everything in between!
The GTC is funded by:

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The Golf Club Employers in Britain with a particular emphasis on career and training ladder for greenkeepers. This month David looks at the education and training to become a greenkeeper, GTC and continues to help many and long may it continue.

The Apprentice Framework is well served by the tried and tested and the natural progression route. WBD/SVQ Level 3, which often is the best "tool" any apprentice can use in association with their chosen Manual and CD-Rom of knowledge and recorded. Some employers offer placements for all ages. It doesn't have to be the work base, however, this is not always assre and funding support which varies from the same level. The Apprentice Framework is accessible. The Government funding has made the qualifications more accessible. More and more popular as colleges continue to reduce some level of employer contribution, however, some funding support, however, the Government is forever changing its funding priorities, but allowing for progression up the career ladder. The GTC firmly believes that the more and more enquiries to the Grapekeepers Training Committee (GTC) on becoming a greenkeeper, the greater the appreciation from the more mature person in training if the courses and bases covered, from the work based training programme, GTC and happening. The Apprenticeship includes the Level 2 Work based Diploma/SVQ as there is no Level 2 Certificate in Greenkeeping offered by several Centres.

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About the person

As a proven and qualified Golf Course manager your technical knowledge combined with your previous management experience will be crucial in grounding in this rewarding role. However, equally important will be your inspirational and pragmatic approach to management and your ability to enable you to effortlessly spot what needs to happen and make it so.

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Applications should be made in writing and accompanied by a CV to Mr Robert Bowes, Secretary, Royal Wimbledon Golf Club, 24 George Road, Wimbledon, London SW19 4DF.

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The Back Nine
A new column for writers and members to air and share their views on golf greenkeeping topics

This month, BIGGA Past Chairman, Paul Worster talks about empowering the team...

A well-qualified staff team is an obvious asset to any company. But is this enough? Does simply "sending your guys to college" to gain NVQ-type qualifications, completely meet the needs of the modern workplace?

Sure, the College system plays an important role in every greenkeepers personal development. The pathway of his or her evolution from raw apprentice into fully-fledged Assistant Greenkeeper is great moulded by the type of qualifications which impart the skills, the task-specific knowledge, the introduction to Health & Safety at Work and various underpinning Acts, which are all part of todays workplace. But can we do more?

I believe we can, and with a little time and planning, can really set out along a path of empowerment for our staff.

As an example – a while ago one of our Assistant Greenkeepers wrote in appraisal about feeling stale and stifled. He had realised, as I suspect greenkeepers up and down the country do at times, that career progression can be slow with opportunities sometimes being limited. I can still remember feeling exactly the same in my mid-twenties - feeling as though I’d hit the wall in terms of personal development, because vacancies and opportunities for advancement were difficult to come by.

In the case of my excellent Assistant I was able to say that I didn’t think he was stifled at all and that there was plenty of development work that he could do for him which would help his self-confidence, and eventually his career. This included:

• His participation in an Autumn evening presentation to club members about recent work on the course – so he’ll need to work on a PowerPoint and as a result improve presentation skills.

• The annual update of our Health & Safety System - we agreed that he would carry this out, and then make a presentation to the whole staff.

• Attendance at Green Committee Meetings – to help him appreciate the complexities of committee, and how the Chairman and the agenda are crucial to running a good meeting and making progress.

• Assisting other senior staff in the delegation of daily duties through out the greenkeeping team – to help his appreciation of the importance of teamwork and the difficulties often faced in delegation to a staff team, each member of which has his own aims and expectations.

• Most importantly my Assistant worked with other members of the team to design and deliver a number of “toolbox” talks and demonstrations for the staff team. These are little basic refresher techniques – e.g. best practice in hole changing, bunker raking, tee marker positioning, greens mowing – all those little things out on the course where attention to detail makes all the difference. He and other colleagues presented these to the whole team out on the course, e.g. in real life workplace situations, and with the proper equipment.

As they were doing this I realised they were actually taking responsibility for the standards at which those tasks should be carried out – not just at that specific time, but in general from that moment onwards. Having taken the time and trouble to design the talks, and then to have stood up in front of the others meant they had invested in the work and these tasks were now their babies.

This is about empowerment. These guys are now empowered to confidently watch over others in various elements of routine golf course presentation. These are the points we need to get across to our people – the building of self-confidence and awareness is crucial to personal development. Developed greenkeepers make a larger contribution to the team, and also to an overall professional culture within the G&L Club.

Most importantly the Assistant and I are both in agreement that he has developed as a team member and is also better equipped for promotion within the team or if he pursues career progression elsewhere.

It is also about engagement. As managers and greenkeepers – we need to be engaged with the objectives of our business. We need to understand how our actions and output impact upon the success of the business and the objectives of Committee and members. Golf Clubs are no longer minor institutions, but are serious businesses and need to operate as such at all levels.

Greenkeeping itself as a profession has developed rapidly in recent times, and the signs are that it will continue to do so in the years to come. Now, with the recession and the spectre of economic downturn never far away, a greater pressure is brought to bear upon the manager, which requires the delivery of far better products and services than ever before.

Against this background, it is empowered and engaged greenkeepers who will spread a Culture of Professionalism throughout their whole organisation, and deliver course conditions which align perfectly with the expectations and aspirations of committees and members alike.

With planning, we can set out along a path of empowerment and is also better equipped for promotion within the team or if he pursues career progression elsewhere.

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This month, BIGGA Past Chairman, Paul Worster talks about empowering the team...

A well-qualified staff team is an obvious asset to any company. But is this enough? Does simply "sending your guys to college" to gain NVQ-type qualifications, completely meet the needs of the modern workplace?

Sure, the College system plays an important role in every greenkeeper’s personal development. The pathway of his or her evolution from raw apprentice into fully-qualified Assistant Greenkeeper is greatly smoothed by the type of qualifications which impart the skills, the task-specific knowledge, the introduction to Health & Safety at Work and various underpinning Acts, which are all part of today’s workplace. But can we do more?

I believe we can, and with a little time and planning, can really set out along a path of empowerment for our staff.

As an example – a while ago one of our Assistant Greenkeepers wrote in appraisal about feeling stale and stifled. He had realised, as I suspect greenkeepers up and down the country do at times, that career progression can be slow with opportunities sometimes being limited. I can still remember feeling exactly the same in my mid-twenties – feeling as though I’d hit the wall in terms of personal development, because vacancies and opportunities for advancement were difficult to come by.

In the case of my excellent Assis-
tant I was able to say that I didn’t think he was stifled at all and that there was plenty of development work that he could do for himself which would help his self-confidence, and eventually his career. This included:

• His participation in an Autumn evening presentation to club members about recent work on the course – so he didn’t need to work on a PowerPoint and as a result improve his presentation skills.

With planning, we can set out along a path of empowerment and is also better equipped for promotion within the team or the pursues career progression elsewhere.

It is also about engagement. As managers and greenkeepers – we need to be engaged with the objectives of our business. We need to understand how our actions and output impact upon the success of the business and the objectives of Committee and members. Golf Clubs are no longer minor institutions, but are serious businesses and need to operate as such at all levels.

Greenkeeping itself as a profession has developed rapidly in recent times, and the sign is that it will continue to do so in the years to come. Now, with the recession and the spectre of economic downturn never far away, a greater pressure is brought to bear upon the manager, which requires the delivery of far better products and services than ever before.

Against this background, it is empowered and engaged greenkeepers who will spread a Culture of Professionalism throughout their whole organisation, and deliver course conditions which align perfectly with the expectations and aspirations of committees and members alike.

We can help them by presenting new approaches which impart the skills, the knowledge, the understanding of their role and responsibilities.

BIGGA Board of Management

Paul Worster has been on the Board since 2005.

The Back Nine

A new column for writers and members to air and share their views on golf greenkeeping topics.