

TRAINING -

THE WAY FORWARD

"DO I really need to wear a collar and tie to be a successful head greenkeeper?"

Yes, young man, you do. Metaphorically at least, as you need to portray the image of a supervisor and have the communication skills of a manager to attain your goal.

"But what ARE my prospects? Do I aspire to the ivory towers of golf course management, and can I really expect to emulate the paths of those who manage Gleneagles, Wentworth or St. Pierre?"

I am constantly asked these questions by greenkeeping assistants attending day and block release courses at Reaseheath, as I am sure are my colleagues in other establishments.

My answer lies in the rhetorical question: "Do you want to be successful?"

In his own words, let Mark Lewis present his own 'student profile'. Mark Lewis is just 22 years of age.

"I attended Pensby Secondary School for boys in the Wirral and when I left school I started a YTS scheme at Neston Cricket Club where I gained experience in hockey, cricket and tennis. I attended Cheshire College of Agriculture, Reaseheath, for my City and Guilds in Golf Greenkeeping and Sportsturf Management, first Phase I followed by Phase II.

"When my YTS finished, I went to Tranmere Rovers Football Club as assistant groundsman and remained there for 18 months. In the latter half of 1984 I joined Heswall Golf Club as an assistant greenkeeper.

Left to right: Bill Lawson, head greenkeeper Heswall Golf Club and BIGGA Board of Management member, photographed with his greenstaff in 1986.

Raymond Hunt now head greenkeeper at Goodwood Park, Mark Lewis and assistant head greenkeeper Guy Canning, and Ben.

"During my three and a half years there, I have been involved with all aspects of greenkeeping, from tee and green construction to everyday maintenance of a golf course, all with the expert guidance of one of the country's most respected head greenkeepers, Mr Bill Lawson.

"Mr Lawson has helped me tremendously during my time as an assistant, sharing his knowledge with not only myself but with all greenstaff at Heswall. This has proved invaluable to me and has shown through as I have just been appointed assistant course manager at Goodwood Park and Country Club near Chichester in West Sussex. This is a new course designed by Donald Steel and built by Brian Pierson, which will be opened in 1989.

"I have also been involved with BIGGA, the new greenkeepers association; in the north-west section as a committee member, and recently as section secretary. The association is a growing professional force which is becoming recognised within the golfing world, which can only be beneficial to all greenkeepers - from course managers of large golfing complexes to trainee

greenkeepers of small courses. "The sooner people realise that greenkeeping is not just a question of cutting grass, the better, and that it is a professional occupation that requires a great deal of knowledge and expertise in turf culture.

"My future as a greenkeeper is very promising, with my ambitions set on becoming a course manager in the not too distant future. This has been possible due to three things: Mr Bill Lawson, City and Guilds qualifications and BIGGA".

This is by no means just an isolated profile amongst Reaseheath students, but it does require dedication on the part of the young greenkeeper, dedication on behalf of his supervisor and a commitment to training on behalf of the golf club management.

Opportunities are available in a fast expanding industry. Old and traditional skills are necessary, but so are new skills in management, budgeting and communication.

Perhaps the case of Mark Lewis may prove that by lots of hard work, study and commitment, attending college and, by no means least, being a member of BIGGA, you can climb the ladder to success.

Make no mistake, the ladder is there to be climbed if you have the willpower, the dedication and the commitment.

**By Dennis Mortram
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