



Greenkeepers' Education And Training

Year by year, new machinery and more advanced techniques are being introduced specially for the maintenance of golf courses and the question arises what is being done to enable greenkeepers to keep pace with this technical progress? Automatic watering systems, the application of fungicides and fertilisers and health and safety regulations are some cases in point.

The craft of greenkeeping has evolved from being an odd job occupation to a highly technical business through many years of trial and error. In recent years, the expertise has increased by leaps and bounds with the assistance of technical colleges, the Sports Turf Research Institute, advice of commercial concerns and informed opinion of agronomists.

Today, many greenkeepers enjoy the respect and admiration of the golfing world but, in the absence of a uniform training system, standards throughout greenkeeping are so varied that the profession itself has not yet been accorded the status commensurate with its importance.

Elmwood College, located just a few miles from St Andrews, is regarded as one of the leaders in the field of greenkeeping education. During 1976, part-time courses were formulated and, since then, they have improved.

At the moment, there is a first-year SCOTEC course, which contains the

basic soil/grass chemistry relationship, basic horticulture and an introduction to greenkeeping.

The second and third year is a progression related entirely to greenkeeping.

Just recently, however, a new fourth year course has been established mainly to allow suitable candidates the opportunity to continue further in turf management at a supervisory level.

To assist the college and to provide guidelines, an advisory committee was formed—members of which were drawn from the trade and greenkeeping industry.

By Walter Woods Links Supervisor, St Andrews

Each year, a greenkeepers' conference is organised. This usually takes place during March. Top speakers are invited and special encouragement given to greenkeepers wishing to speak on a chosen subject. Conferences and lectures are considered necessary to highlight a chosen subject. Conferences and lectures are considered necessary to highlight and improve greenkeepers' knowledge.

To assist head greenkeepers and first assistants who might have a wealth of experience, a week-long supervisory course was organised. This course contained advice on budgets, report writing and health and safety.

This area of education is of the

utmost importance, providing a balance of learning and giving a relationship between the head greenkeeper, apprentice and technical colleges.

SIGGA is aware of the benefits received from education. We do not want a situation like that in America where only rich, aspiring superintendents receive education.

Attempts are being made to provide learning at apprentice level, combining this with a sound grounding of practical experience. Our organisation consists of an education director and a sub-committee, who take part in college committee activities. The director co-ordinates all information and reports to the SIGGA executive committee.

The main and most important co-ordinator of education, however, is the greenkeeping training committee, which is in dire straits financially. This is a sad reflection on the golf industry.

The Scottish Golf Union and Scottish greenkeepers have representatives on this important committee, which meets twice a year.

Efforts are made to have similar educational studies adopted in England but, unfortunately, the position is far more complex and solutions more difficult to find. Serious problems arise because colleges, which can offer similar courses, are under the control of independent local authorities and, owing to the distances between colleges, it is extremely difficult for organisation to take place.

However, attempts are being made to organise a link between the appropriate golf unions, the greenkeeper associations and certain colleges that might be prepared to accept training in greenkeeping.

The greater part of a young apprentice's training takes place during his working hours on the golf course and the monitoring of his training will be by a log book which, when completed, will provide the second half of the basic qualification.

Unfortunately, this is the area where problems arise. Most golf clubs keep manpower to the lowest level, compelling the apprentice to continual manual labour. The head greenkeeper usually has no time to teach the apprentice some of the more important and skillful work. This is an insular method of achievement and does nothing to promote golf or golf courses. Little do they know that, having a well-maintained course,



Foremost in greenkeeper training—Elmwood College.



The greater part of training takes place during working hours...

guarantees a well-filled clubhouse.

Although criticism is directed here at the golf club, a considerable amount should also be directed towards the head greenkeeper. He should allocate more time for the

apprentice to digest his training and by altering daily work programmes he instantly creates more interest in the work.

It's a good feeling to see a young man mature and develop into a good

greenkeeper. Sound individual and practical education, coupled with the theory received at college, gives a solid foundation and a stepping stone from which he can progress with confidence.

Perhaps if we adopt the motto of Elmwood College—Growth through Knowledge—the whole greenkeeping industry will benefit.

Forthcoming Events

- National AGM—27th March in Edinburgh
- SIGGA versus the club secretaries for the Gillies & Henderson Trophy at Gullane Golf Club on 2nd April
- East Section—outing to Glencorse GC on 10th April
- Central Section—outing to Elie GC on 18th April
- Ayrshire Section—Outing to Ayr Belleisle on 23rd April
- West Section—outing to Bellshill GC on 8th May
- North Section—outing to Carnoustie on 24th May
- The national outing will probably be in early August

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