



Meet the team: the green staff at Letchworth

18" Paladin to a 40' Hi-Mac.

Tom Thrussell, with 15 years service (part-time/part-season), is our greenkeeper cum gardener cum stand-in tractor driver. Tom drove a tractor until his retirement in 1989 and we are pleased he chose not to retire completely. He is a mine of information on wild life, conservation and the weather. In short, he's a wonderful person to have in any team – we couldn't let him go!

Jonathan Haley is a seasonal worker with two years service. If it wasn't for Jonathan and his predecessors, none of the staff would be able to have summer holidays. He starts college in September on a full-time greenkeeping and golf course management course, also at Oaklands, and I know he will go far.

We also work closely with local schools and encourage work experience programmes as part of Education 2000 – we've seen four students through this programme and three, including Jonathan Haley, have expressed a wish to follow a career in golf course management. It proves to us that we must be doing something right.

The benefits of good in-house training are many and varied but the following are the most obvious. We have a product just like any other business: the golf course and how it is presented. If the staff are well-trained and above all happy, the course will show it.

Good in-house training encourages even the youngest and most inexperienced members of staff to speak up and gain confidence in thought, word and deed. We can learn from sixteen year olds – I know I have on more than one occasion. Confident, effective staff will ensure the efficient functioning of the course – even on those occasions when you are absent.

This reflects well on you as a manager, though unfortunately it is still not fully understood by many people.

In closing, here are some points which I believe we should all think about seriously.

- A member of staff will not work to his full potential if he is not trusted – we must explain fully the whys as well as the hows and trust them to get on with it.
- Spying on staff when they are carrying out their allotted tasks breeds contempt – you will soon find out if work is not being carried out to your satisfaction and can then take the necessary action. Watching over staff is time wasting and counter-productive.
- Your staff make the golf course what it is – 90% of your problems will come from those staff – it therefore seems to me common sense to devote at the very least 90% of your time to your staff.

It makes me smile when I see advertisements for head greenkeepers/course managers with the following demand: 'must be capable of controlling and motivating staff'. The practicalities are that staff cannot simply be controlled or motivated at the wave of a wand – we as managers can only create an environment in which staff wish to motivate themselves. The stick or carrot technique only works for a very short time – and golf course management is long term.

One last point. When you last moved to take up a position as course manager, especially at a course which was in need of considerable attention, did you hear something along the lines of 'you will need to sort out the staff first'? My own experiences have suggested no fault with staff – rather a fault that could easily be traced to the (lack of) in-house training and therefore management of staff.

# How you could be an 'industry assessor'

There is so much that goes on behind the scenes in greenkeeper training and education that I am sometimes staggered by the depth and intensity of it all. The Greenkeepers Training Committee beavers away with quiet efficiency and it is to the great credit of our Association, always and quite naturally at the forefront of the GTC and always looking to the main goal, that achievements in greenkeeper training are moving at such a fine pace.

Whilst the Association cannot lay claim to the nationwide introduction of NVQs and SVQs, it seems clear to me that as a body we have generated, cajoled and agitated in this sphere to an extent that bodes extremely well for our industry – we are leaving nothing to chance and the future could not be more exciting.

Already we have seen the commissioning of a new Training Manual, and this has been widely acclaimed by all sectors of the greenkeeping industry as a huge step in the right direction – there is still work to be done, however, and we will not rest on our laurels – we plan to move ever forward and upward.

One such plan which gives cause for rejoicing is the proposal to form a network of assessors and assessment centres throughout the country. Such assessors will be recruited from our own membership and give us the unique opportunity, subject to approval by the GTC, to police our own activities.

## You just need to indicate your willingness to take part

What this means in reality is that course managers and head greenkeepers who would like to be considered for training as 'Industry Assessors' and 'Regional Verifiers' need do no more than indicate their willingness. What qualifications will they need? Well, for a start, assessors will need credibility within their area or county, so candidates must be well established, front runners in their industry. Verifiers must be keenly interested in greenkeeper training and be aware of the principles of NVQs or SVQs. Of course, both assessors and verifiers must have sufficient spare time to work within the proposed structure and assessors must have the support of their own club, which would be used as a location to carry out assessments. Above all, they must be willing to receive appropriate training to become assessors or verifiers.

How much time will be necessary? Estimates suggest that the rewarding task of verifier would command roughly the same amount of time as that of a section secretary, perhaps less if more people join in the good work. For assessors, perhaps somewhat less time is necessary, though this again will be dependent upon how many head greenkeepers or course managers are recruited.

Industry assessors will become very important people, working in unison with training colleges and linked and working in liaison with regional verifiers, who in turn will liaise with the GTC. Assessors and verifiers will have their out of pocket expenses paid by the GTC.

Why is this so important for the Association? Simply that NVQs are about industries setting their own standards in accordance with the lead body for their industry, which for greenkeeping is Amenity Horticulture. By having our own trained people monitoring our own standards, we can control our own destiny, and thus raise our own already high standards.

Will you give some thought to becoming an assessor or verifier? Start by asking at regional or section level for more information, or talk to our own education expert, David Golding. His GTC number, lest it is not already indelibly printed on your mind, is 03473-640. Ring him now!