

# The role of the

# GTC



GTC Education Unit staff, based at Aldwark Manor near York, are David Golding, Education Director and Sue Gudgeon, Administrative Officer

■ An update on the Greenkeepers Training Committee (GTC) Education Unit, in which David Golding, the unit's appointed education director, answers questions posed by David White.

*David, many readers have asked that you explain the differences between the 'old' GTC and those of the new GTC Education Unit. To begin, how did the new unit 'come about' and who now makes the decisions?*

DG: It is essentially about funding, and of a desire to see those funds directed with arrow-like accuracy toward the final goal. The recent development by the GTC to fund an education unit for golf greenkeeping proved finally that, from a period of 'marking time' due to lack of funds, a level of cash has at last been allocated which enables it to play a premier role in establishing national competence standards for the greenkeeping profession. Furthermore, and this is most important, the new unit represents both sides; the golf club and the greenkeeper.

*And what of the committee, which in the past was accused of being unwieldy?*

DG: A much more streamlined committee is now in force made up of representatives from the Royal & Ancient, the four Home Golf Unions and a nominated BIGGA member, who represents greenkeepers from the UK and Ireland.

*Tell me about your own appointment.*

DG: After working as the BIGGA education officer for four years the position with the GTC seemed a natural enough progression, akin to much of that which I had strived to achieve with BIGGA. Nevertheless, I was flattered by the offer and delighted to become the education director of the new unit. As you know, I was a working golf course manager myself, I understand the needs, aspirations and indeed fears of those in greenkeeping and I also know the thinking, their thinking, regarding 'education'. I identify with greenkeepers whole-heartedly.

*What do you see as the major benefit, the raison d'être for the new unit?*

DG: The major benefit is that it truly represents the greenkeeping profession, with no side issues whatsoever. This is proving especially invaluable with the current changes in education. For example, when an industry such as ours can be represented at meetings wearing two hats, those of employer (the club) and employee (the greenkeeper), there is a much greater acceptance of our 'united' voice. In addition we are spreading the 'gospel' directly into clubs, working with clubs in devising individually tailored training programmes. It doesn't cost the club a bean and is, I believe, another major breakthrough.

*And what of NVQ's and SVQ's, how are things*

*mat which we believe will be accepted as the levels of skill required to acquire an NVQ at level two. In due time the manual will include supervisory and management sections, and these also must become the accepted criteria for levels three and four NVQ's and SVQ's.*

*So you've taken the first initiative, and the ball is in ILBAH's court, so to speak.*

DG: Not only has the GTC taken the responsibility to set standards for greenkeeping qualifications, but it has also insisted (to ILBAH) that it must be consulted on the choice of locations where standards are assessed, and by whom. We see a danger of the NVQ and SVQ at level two in Amenity Horticulture (Greenkeeping Option) being awarded (or not, as the case may be), by assessors who have no knowledge or experience of fine turf. What is even worse, proper facilities are often lacking at these assessment centres and as a result the tests cannot be carried out in accordance with the set criteria.

*Does this situation suggest a less than happy state of affairs, a case perhaps of having to 'go it alone'?*

DG: I hope not, for with our reservations stated, the principle of vocational qualifications is something we support totally. Acknowledgement of skills, as opposed to examinations that give a pass or fail, must be welcomed by our profession. Furthermore, the offer by the GTC to set standards and to monitor them – by establishing a network of assessors and verifiers throughout the UK and Ireland – is something we believe is in line with the government's principles, that of an industry taking the lead in training and of acknowledging the skills of the workforce. Problems have arisen because the government has insisted on only a limited number of Lead Bodies being set up to represent all professions, leaving some specialist sections (such as greenkeeping), having to protect their own industry standards.

*Turning to another matter, there was always pretty close liaison between the old GTC and the colleges, and though a great many did sterling work, some were – to put it bluntly – quite ghastly, blundering along and appearing totally out of touch with the realities of greenkeeping. What changes are envisaged?*

DG: Another vitally important role of the GTC Unit is to monitor those training courses provided by a growing number of centres. One decision of the old GTC, one which became more and more acceptable by golf clubs and greenkeepers alike, was to send trainees to GTC 'approved' colleges. I know there are some excellent training establishments throughout the UK and Ireland, colleges where first rate courses are provided which complement the skills element of greenkeeping. The committee will continue a close liaison with them. In addition, we anticipate local colleges

*progressing on that front?*

DG: Never has there been a better example of an industry making a stand than with the introduction (into greenkeeping) of National Vocational Qualifications and Scottish Vocational Qualifications. Our profession has been 'attached' to the Industry Lead Body for Amenity Horticulture (ILBAH), a body which was convened some two years ago to set standards for all of those industries allied to horticulture.

*Apart from giving us yet another acronym (ILBAH) to remember, how has the 'attachment' helped?*

DG: It soon became apparent to us that greenkeeping was the minnow in ILBAH's ocean and that greenkeepers were in danger of having NVQ standards inflicted upon them by folk with scant knowledge or experience of the fine turf sector. Only after being invited into ILBAH did a voice from the greenkeeping world begin to be heard. Today the battle continues, specifically to see standards for our industry accepted by the Lead Body.

*How can this aim be achieved?*

DG: The GTC has moved swiftly in trying to protect future golf course maintenance standards by producing The GTC Training Manual, which has the craft level skills detailed in a for-

# The Last Word

Send your letters to The Editor, Greenkeeper International, 13 Firlie Close, Seaford, East Sussex BN25 2HL

## 'Them' and 'Us' concern

Having been a greenkeeper for some 25 years, working my way up through the ranks to course manager, I feel I must respond to the situation occurring in Holland at this time.

I am a BIGGA member and have been since the onset of the Association. Recently I received an invitation to attend the first BIGGA meeting in Holland but I chose to decline, fearing a situation arising of 'them' (the Netherlands Greenkeepers Association), and 'us' (BIGGA).

I recall being a member of BGGGA, at the time holding office as chairman for the Sussex section, when other members of the Association and myself were involved in the organisation of EIGGA and experiencing the 'them' and 'us' situation against SIGGA and finally, after many meetings, the formation of BIGGA.

If BIGGA is to grow in Holland, surely the correct procedure must be to involve NGA members at initial meetings, explaining the advantages of BIGGA membership to them, not an 'ego trip' for an elite few who are BIGGA members already.

**Lionel Harris, Course Manager,  
Grevelinghout Golf Club, Holland**

*Frederick ten Hage, BIGGA representative for the Netherlands, responds:*

*I understand Mr Harris's concern about developments taking place within BIGGA at the moment, especially as the Association is trying to expand the international side of greenkeeping matters. I would assume that working on this particular subject will have everyone's approval. This must be done in good harmony and understanding, i.e. beneficial to those most concerned.*

*Mr Harris's opinion of a 'them' and 'us' situation is absolutely unfounded and not of this time. It would have been more appropriate had he accepted our most serious invitation to join the meeting. Unfortunately he felt the need to decline, though I am sure that had he attended he would have concluded differently.*

*For this same reason he would not, I think, have found the need to close by speaking of an 'ego trip' for an elite few. This suggests some profound prejudicial points of view. An attitude of this kind will not contribute to the building of a sound platform, one from which we might start and maintain good relations between both associations. This is one of BIGGA's main targets for the future.*

*It is a vital and most necessary action to upgrade the profession of greenkeeping throughout the world. Furthermore, and to finish this reaction, may I suggest a referral to the BIGGA Holland column in 'Around The Green' of this issue.*

*Executive director, Neil Thomas concludes, "The recent initiative of Frederick in calling a meeting of BIGGA members in Holland is to be welcomed. The meeting came about following discussions held during the European Forum at the BTME last January. I can assure Lionel that his points are well taken and BIGGA members in Holland will wish to work very closely with members of the Netherlands Greenkeepers Association. It is our wish to see our fellow Associations in Europe flourishing and growing and BIGGA*

*remains ready to offer any practical assistance in their development which may be requested and which it is able to give. It is unfortunate that Lionel did not feel able to attend this initial meeting as I feel sure he would have come away reassured over his points of concern. Frederick will be reporting on developments in Holland during the European Forum at the 1994 BTME and I would hope that as many members of the Netherlands Greenkeepers Association as possible will attend in order to cement the relationship of our Associations. I would also point out that we enjoy an excellent relationship with the Netherlands Golf Federation which has been instrumental in the setting up of the Netherlands Greenkeepers Association".*

## Beware 'man in a pub'

On a cold March morning one of the fleet of SISIS demonstration wagons, fully laden with new and demonstration machinery, was stolen from a secure parking location. Police were immediately alerted and facts were circulated via computer links throughout the country. Friends and relations were advised, dealers were acquainted, even competitors were given a smile or two when they were put in the picture. The insurers were given the news, to add to other disasters they have had to bear.

From April through to August, information was as scant as orders in the aforementioned competitors' books. The condition of golf courses from Amsterdam to 'Ammersmiff', from Manchester to Malaga was constantly reviewed, as improved putting surfaces might well have seen Interpol on full alert.

When a confirmed sighting was eventually made, however, it was much closer to home, South Lancashire in fact. The eagle eyes of a young rep. spotted a galaxy of the famous yellow machines at a new golf club, where such units had not been seen previously.

A call to head-office was swiftly passed to the SISIS regional manager. Nudge, nudge, wink, wink, speed limit observed (but only just) and every single unit was found, some still bearing the SISIS DEMO UNIT logos, not a solitary serial number obliterated. This is probably why the police, for once, believed the one about the man in the pub.

The moral, it seems, is to always say 'no' if someone in a pub offers you some SISIS machines. We've so many reps, friends, relations, in-laws, dealers, associates and contacts - why even our competitors are friendly! With so many ears to the ground thieves hardly stand a chance of avoiding discovery.

By the way, if anyone offers you a Leyland DAF painted in the famous yellow livery (though heaven only knows what colour it might be now), you could make a few people very happy by phoning SISIS, perhaps saving a little on your next insurance premium at the same time.

**Lynn Hilton, SISIS Equipment (Macclesfield) Ltd., Macclesfield, Cheshire**

PS. Incidentally, after nearly six months using the range, the club in question found it couldn't bear to part with the Multislit, Contraseeder and Powasped - so it bought them!

becoming assessment centres for NVQ's or SVQ's. The greatest benefit to greenkeeping is that these centres will provide the training for candidates and also carry out the assessments.

In the future there will be colleges established as Regional Training and Assessment Centres: offering courses and/or assessments for craft, supervisory and management levels, together with many more 'local' centres approved for just craft level training and/or assessments.

All greenkeeper training, we believe, should involve the use of The GTC Training Manual, and that it should be used not only as an individual's evidence collector but also as a record of achievement towards an NVQ or SVQ.

By now you will have gathered that there are major changes taking place which we intend to monitor very closely. The GTC is keen to develop a partnership between those who provide training and those in the greenkeeping profession. This is already evident, with leading colleges using trained and skillful course managers (and, in some cases, their deputies) as part-time trainers and/or assessors. This is a major initiative which has our full support.

Assessor qualifications will need to be achieved by GTC approved industry representatives, and help and guidance will be given, especially as the committee has no wish to burden a mere handful of industry assessors when their priority obviously is in the workplace. On that point, if any BIGGA member needs further information on how to become an assessor, I hope that he or she will call me.

*Where does BIGGA fit in, what role will it now play?*

DG: The GTC will be looking to BIGGA for continuance of their excellent role as training providers. In addition, of course, we anticipate working together in close co-operation and consultation on such things as conferences, seminars and management courses. The GTC will continue also to work with other training providers, such as the STRI, and with the greenkeeping associations in Northern Ireland and Eire.

In summary, it is the role of the GTC to set the standards of greenkeeping qualifications, to monitor those standards, and to work closely with those who provide the training, thus ensuring that first class training is always available. I believe the relationship we enjoy with the R&A and the Home Unions, with BIGGA and other greenkeeping associations and with those interested bodies such as the PGA European Tour, will ensure that standards of greenkeeping will improve and that the quality of our courses will continue to be maintained by a highly skilled and motivated workforce.

● The GTC Unit is situated at the Aldwark Manor Golf Hotel, York. Tel: 0347 838640 Fax: 0347 838775.