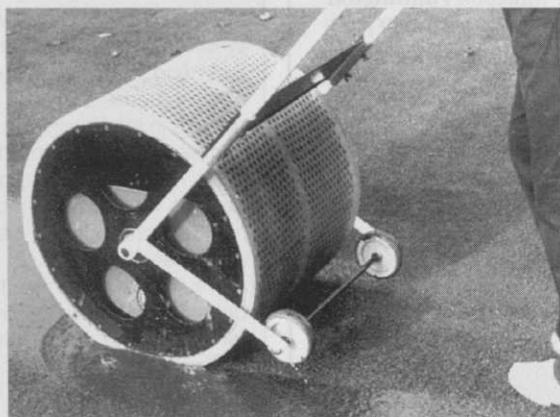


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Masters

What is the Master Greenkeeper Certificate?
How do you get it? Why should you want one?
CHRIS BOILING investigates

Why would two Americans who are at the top of their profession and who are fast approaching their 50th birthdays want to sit a six-hour written exam to gain a British qualification?

The answer is that BIGGA's Master Greenkeeper Certificate is fast becoming the highest greenkeeping qualification in the world. It takes longer to complete than the American CGCS programme and, as the Americans who have taken both say, it is tougher.

Forty-seven-year-old Terry Buchen, who runs a "very, very, very private" course in Ohio, said he took it because "It's an international award and it's very well received. The response has been overwhelming. Golf Course News ran a story last April. The response was ten times more than I got when I picked up the US award."

His boss was so proud of his achievement that he paid out \$1400 for Terry and his wife to come to Harrogate to collect the award.

Terry picked it up with two British greenkeepers – David Whitaker and Anthony Davies. This means, four years after the launch of the Master Greenkeeper Certificate, there are now eight Masters, three of whom come from America. Another American is well on his way to collecting the award – so is a Swiss greenkeeper and four from Southern Ireland.

Ninety-four greenkeepers have registered for the award, 60 of whom are still on stage 1. On average it takes about two years to get it, and you have to put in a lot of work. So why do they do it?

Terry Buchen said "I've been a certified golf course superintendent in America since 1978. I think there's over 1,000 of us now. I was one of the first 200 and I've been a member of BIGGA since 1984. I enjoy reading Greenkeeper International and when the Master Greenkeepers Certificate

came up I was interested in it but I didn't think I'd be able to qualify because the standards were set very high. But that made me more determined to check it out.

"Once I found out my educational background was OK – I only have a two-year degree, I thought I'd have to have a four-year – but because of all my experience I did qualify."

"I think the big thing was it was an international award and BIGGA is very well thought of by Americans. The stand that they have at the National Convention every year is very well received. It was another mountain to climb and it was very fulfilling taking the written exam that had no true or false questions and no multiple choice – you can guess at a lot of the things on the American test but not on this, it's strictly essay questions. Very tough but very fair."

To prepare for the examine he had to brush up on his fescues and how courses are maintained in the UK which, in any case, he believes is the right way. "I think the way they're maintained over here is the right way. In America they're too lush, too green and too soft. In the UK you have non-irrigated fairways. Golf is played on grass not on colour. We way over do it and spend far too much money on it. In the UK it's the playing conditions that matter not the colour. In the US it's the colour that's most important."

Fellow American **Robert Maibusch**, 36, course superintendent of Hinsdale Golf Club in Illinois, first read about the Master Greenkeeper Certificate in Greenkeeper International after picking up a copy on the BIGGA stand at the GCSAA convention in Las Vegas three years ago. "My interest in the Certificate was as a personal challenge at first," he said. "The work leading up to the exam forced me to go back and review everything I'd ever learned and it

of their craft



Terry Buchen receives his Master Greenkeeper Certificate from Lord Griffiths at the BTME. Looking on, in the front row, are fellow recipients Anthony Davies, left and David Whitaker

was very rewarding. The exam itself was difficult but fair. The preparation is where the benefit is."

Bil Montague, who has spent 20 years at Oakwood Club, Kirtland, Ohio, was the first American to hold both a CGCS and Master award. He got interested in the scheme when he visited the BIGGA Turf Management Exhibition a few years ago. "I joined up and then became determined to be the first American to be certified. I had reached a point where I still needed an educational challenge. It just seemed like a good thing for me to do," says the bearded 46-year-old.

The two British greenkeepers

honoured with Terry Buchen at the '94 BTME are much younger than the Americans. They're both aged 32. **Anthony Davies** is head greenkeeper at Prestbury Golf Club near Macclesfield and **David Whitaker** is course manager at Wisley Golf Club in Surrey.

Anthony told Greenkeeper International: "After receiving the first ICI Greenkeeper of the Year Award in 1990, my greens chairman, Dr James Gardiner, asked me what else was there? I said, 'Well, there's this new Master Greenkeeper Certificate.' I was told to go for it, I wanted it and I got it. It's a great achievement and I'm very proud of it."

For David, who also has a consultancy business, the reason was very simple: "I wanted to have the highest qualification in greenkeeping." The benefits are: "The golf course are very pleased, it's raised my esteem in golf and I get better recognition from my employers."

The award is based on three things: experience, ability and education. To gain a Masters Greenkeepers Certificate you need all three - in abundance.

"It is a highly meritorious award," according to BIGGA's executive director Neil Thomas. "Now four years old, it must rank as one of the Association's greatest achievements to date..."

THE CERTIFICATE

To become a Master Greenkeeper you need to 'pass' three stages. You 'pass' by collecting 'credits'.

■ Stage 1 is based on education and experience and you'll need 200 credits before you go on to the next stage. Examples of credits include: 15 credits for phase 1 City and Guilds Certificate of Greenkeeping and Sports Turf Management; 54 for phase 2 (two years), 24 for phase 3 and 24 for phase 4, and there are bonus points if these are taken at an 'approved college'. Scotvec students get six credits per 40-hour module and three per 20-hour module (up to a maximum 102). You can also collect credits by attending BIGGA-organised seminars, courses and conferences. You also get four credits for every year in greenkeeping.

■ For stage 2 two course managers/head greenkeepers visit your course during the growing season, assess it and ask you questions.

■ Stage 3 consists of two three-hour papers: 1) A case study; 2) Five questions requiring essay-style answers..

The certification process begins with receipt of a completed application form and a cheque for £10 to cover admin costs. To go on to stages 2 and 3 you will have to pay a further £150.

Application forms are available from BIGGA, Aldwark Manor, Aldwark, Aine, York YO6 2NF.

ROLL OF HONOUR

There are now eight Master Greenkeepers:

- Laurence Pithie was the first
- Robert Maibusch, Hinsdale Golf Club, Illinois
- Gordon Irvine, Mill Ride Golf Club, Surrey
- Bil Montague, Oakwood Club, Ohio
- Kerran Daly, Salisbury and South Wilts Golf Club
- David Whitaker, Wisley Golf Club, Surrey
- Anthony Davies, Prestbury Golf Club near Macclesfield
- Terry Buchen, Double Eagle Golf Club, Ohio

TERRY BUCHEN lives in the only house at the Double Eagle course in Ohio. He says the Tom Weiskopf/Jay Morrish course is "a very, very, very private club."



There are only 50 men's lockers and 16 ladies lockers for the 35 local members and 67 national members. The 7100-yard par 72 course boasts four sets of yardage markers on each hole, permanent yardage markers buried below the turf on the tees and a total absence of portable tee markers. Members can tee off where they like seven days a week. "So we don't violate the rules of golf we have two permanent tee markers below the turf so we can mow over them. A lot of people tee off within two club lengths behind," says Terry. The course is a designer's dream: four of the holes have two fairways and all the par 3s and 5s play in different directions.

Terry comes from a family of golf course superintendents and has grown-in 11 courses. He is also a former assistant agronomist on the US PGA Tour. His job was to set up all 47 tournaments on the regular tour, which meant visiting each course four-eight weeks in advance.

"Sixty percent of my job was agronomy where I'd visit with the golf course superintendent and go around the course and the other 40 percent was administration."

But it took its toll on his health and he was forced to leave. "I got pneumonia and had to have half my left lung removed. I just wore myself out. I travelled 300,000 miles each year for two years, home 27 days the first year and 33 days the second year. Fortunately I was single in those days."

Anyone who has been to Wisley Golf Club knows that **DAVID WHITAKER** is a master of his craft. After a long apprenticeship at Baildon Golf Course in Bradford, he went to Rawdon Golf and Tennis Club as head greenkeeper. At 27 he was growing-in a Pete Dye designed American-style course in Switzerland. A great experience for his next project - Wisley.



● Where's Anthony's photo and details? We're doing a big thing on Anthony Davies and Prestbury in a few issues time, so we'll tell you how great he is then.