

# Greenkeeper

INTERNATIONAL



**40** It's time for your Winter Health Check!

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**35** Roland Taylor gets Blown Away



**31** Simon Says...



**10** Gordon McKillop STRlves to be the Best

## A degree of accuracy?

Chris Woodhead, the Chief Inspector of Schools, wrote recently of his concerns regarding "vacuous" degree courses that are now being offered by nation's universities and colleges, describing them as "quasi-academic degrees".

To highlight his point he listed some of the prime culprits - Knitwear, Media Studies, Beauty Therapy and Pig Enterprise Management. However, the degree course with which he chose to launch his list was Golf Course Management.

He followed this up, in the article printed in The Sunday Times, by adding- "what is the point of students completing a course only to find that their degree adds little or nothing to their career prospects".

The comments were jumped on by the media and other courses were soon lumped in among those initially mentioned including Madonna Studies, Beer making, Contemporary Circus and Stand-Up Comedy.

It gave the opinion shapers of the day the chance to mount their soap boxes and have a pop. Ruth Lea, the Head of Policy at the Institute of Directors, commented that employers had given these degrees the real thumbs down.

"What is worrying about many of these degrees is that they don't give specific skills and they are not even particularly academically rigorous," she announced to the press.

In fairness to Chris Woodhead, in general terms the point he was making had some validity. While ideal for evening classes, hobbies should have little place as full blown degree courses.

However, I would hope that given time to reflect on his comments he might feel that Golf Course Management should be excluded from the shamed list.

I don't know if Chris Woodhead is a golfer but I'd wager that he has little idea of what is taught on a Golf Course Management Course. If he did he would know that it includes Plant Biology and Physiology; Turf Grass Microbiology and Horticultural Biotechnology and that students are prepared for the monumental demands that are placed on the modern day Golf Course Manager.

All are academically taxing subjects and prepare the student for the rigours of the outside world. Students who have completed such courses can command healthy salaries from golf clubs and look forward to long and rewarding careers. In fact the courses represent everything that a modern degree course should.

Let's face it, many traditional degree courses don't exactly offer a direct route into the employment market. How many jobs for Fine Art Critics or Mediaeval Historians do you see advertised in Job Centres?

The whole affair is yet another example of those with limited knowledge jumping to conclusions that people who work on golf courses do little more than cut grass and empty litter bins. It can only be damaging for green-keeping's educational courses to be derided in such a cavalier fashion.

If I were to comment on Chris Woodhead's article in much the same way as his schools' inspectors comment on the work of the nation's teachers I would say that it was "thought provoking in parts but lacking adequate preparation and a thorough knowledge of the subject matter.

"Must do better"!

**Scott MacCallum**  
Editor

