

Following on from July's article highlighting the developments in greenkeeper education and training, GTC's Education Director, David Golding, looks at the advances in 'on the job' training.

It maybe 30 plus years since I was an apprentice greenkeeper at my home town course Buxton & High Peak in Derbyshire but some things never change in greenkeeper training!

Training "on the job" was always the most cost effective method for Head Greenkeepers to get their new staff up to speed as soon as practically possible.

True, we were very reliant on the skills and knowledge of our own Head Greenkeeper and whilst I was fortunate enough to be trained by an excellent father and son team, Bill and Ray Norton, sadly the same could not be said for all trainee greenkeepers.

Standards varied between Headmen and therefore there was no chance of any apprenticeship meeting consistent national standards!

Before all the more "mature" head greenkeepers start picking up the phone to challenge my thoughts regarding the standards of "on the job" training I will say that it is this concept of training that is gathering universal acclaim.

Many will remember the introduction of a small training manual back in the sixties which was the forerunner to today's GTC Training Manual. Head

help establish the website www.bestcourseforgolf.org, which sets out all the best principles and practices for maintaining and managing a golf course.

It is vital that the GTC upholds the tried and tested principles in greenkeeping and ensures its Approved Training Providers are also teaching students these principles.

Having agreed the content through the GTC Technical Committee and the turf review group all we require is the Government body's approval of our work. This now happens with little or no changes such as the respect our specialist sector has gained in recent years.

The whole concept of "on the job" training still does revolve round the Head Greenkeeper/Course Manager and very often at the larger courses their Deputy.

Given the fact that we can now offer all clubs an agreed set of NATIONAL standards to train and assess to let us now ascertain who is the best equipped person to deliver the skills training.

Is it the secretary/manager? Is it the Chairman of Green/Green convenor? Is it the college lecturer? NO it has to be the competent Course Manager or deputy!

It is they who have direct contact with the green staff and given they are in a better position than anyone to set out an action plan and training programme for each individual it is only natural that the GTC has invested heavily in the course managers skills to become more formal trainers and assessors.

All of this "on the job" training is supplemented by the GTC Approved Training Providers whose main job is to co-ordinate the education and training of trainees and register them with an Awarding Body such as City & Guilds or the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA).

All of this work is supported by the Government in that work-based training N/SVQ's are very much part of



Greenkeepers were asked to tick and "sign off" a series of tasks once the trainee had reached full competency, brilliant!

So what has changed over the years since that wonderful initiative by the then Standing Conference for Golf Greenkeeping Apprenticeship Scheme?

The two main changes involve the content of the training manual and who actually trains, educates and assesses the trainee greenkeeper.

Since the "new" GTC was born back in 1993 the golf club employers (through the Home Unions) and the greenkeepers (through BIGGA & GCSAI) have been able to ensure the content of all turf qualifications is relevant to today's standards for golf course maintenance and management.

We at the GTC are constantly reviewing one qualification or another just to ensure that in the round of reviews we have the most up to date skills and knowledge within the awards.

This is not to say we are moving away from the tried and tested principles for maintaining turf but technology and legislation change, therefore we must update the content accordingly.

It has to be stated that the GTC has worked very closely with the R&A to

their strategy to support employers wishing to invest in staff development.

I cannot emphasise enough that for "on the job" work-based training to work effectively the system does require the employer and Course Manager to "buy into" the system.

The GTC can help any employer or Course Manager with the training of their staff from a totally unbiased position of the independent body representing the greenkeeping sector.

It does not seem that long ago since I was an apprentice greenkeeper but thankfully the training system is more formal in terms of national standards.

The professionalism of course managers is the key to the future skills of the next generation of greenkeepers supported by those training providers who are "in tune" with the sectors needs!

The subject of training providers and learning materials will feature in next months GI.

For details on work-based training, apprenticeship schemes, trainer/assessor training contact David Golding at the GTC on 01347 838640 or email david@the-gtc.co.uk