

# Your Letters...

## The Greens Really Are Grassier!

As a newcomer to the greenkeeping industry, I thought you might be interested in my story. Last Easter, my life changed forever. My wife and I had just moved from London to Saffron Walden in search of a more peaceful and fulfilling life. I had made some enquiries into part time study of arboriculture or greenkeeping, something that maybe one day would take me out of the stuffy offices of banking and into a more natural environment. As I have always played sports; cricket, football and golf, one of my dreams has been to work in that field in some way. Until an interview at Writtle College in Chelmsford, with Richard Hughes and Stuart Brown, lecturers in Sports Turf, I had no idea that I was qualified enough to study for a degree, let alone my favourite subject, Sports Turf! However, with plenty of encouragement from tutors and my wife, my application to Writtle college was successful, with a start date of September 2003.

Having spent 19 years in the banking world, I could stand it no longer. So Easter 2003 I quit my job as a management accountant. My resignation was met with astonishment and envy by my colleagues. My wife had already resigned the previous year, after 22 years in the same bank, in order to study the Alexander Technique (something to do with pain, posture and performance). Which has come in really handy as she gets to straighten me out after a hard days work! So with five months before I start college, my wife and I spent much of the summer getting to know the beautiful countryside that is North West Essex.

Well, things just keep getting better and better. It turned out that our next door neighbour is a tree surgeon. A fantastic guy, who, after knowing me for only a few weeks, offered me some part time work with him during the summer. He also made his extensive horticultural library available to me to aid my future studies. He even gave me copies of trade magazines, so I could drool over the delights of tractors, grass cutting machines and other amenity machinery.

Even more good fortune was to come. One of my college courses required me to compile a conservation evaluation report on a golf course. So, a couple of months ago, I went to Saffron Walden Golf Club to seek some assistance for their management team. I was met by the Course Manager, Ray Goodsall, who couldn't have been more helpful. He gave me a guided tour of the course, lent me their STRI reports and other publications to help with my report. I was allowed to choose and photograph an appropriate site, and Ray spent much of his valuable time with me discussing his plans for the course and how he could help me in my assignment.

Then, much to my delight, he offered me a part time position on the greenkeeping staff. The position, which has been mine now for a month, and comes complete with the nickname Friday (as so far I mainly work on Fridays). My new colleagues and club members have all been fantastic, making me very welcome and answering my endless questions. They did get their own back by allowing me to clean the ladies loos on my first day (rotten lot!).

Still more good news was heading my way! After becoming a member of BIGGA, I recently saw an advertisement in Greenkeeping International for volunteers to help out at the Volvo PGA tournament at Wentworth in May. I sent off an e-mail, and to my surprise, Derek Farrington, South East Region Administrator, contacted me to invite me to be part of the team. As a complete novice to greenkeeping, Derek offered to arrange a master class in bunker raking at a friendly golf club before the tournament. As it turned out this was not necessary, because I have received extensive training on how to rake bunkers "Bermuda style" at Saffron Walden Golf Club. Derek also sent me a couple of complementary tickets so that both my wife and father could join in the experience of attending a professional golf tournament.

There is, however, only one downside: as member of BIGGA, every month when Greenkeeper International arrives through the post, I have to fight with my wife to read it first!

I am so grateful to everyone that has given me support over the past year. Not once have I regretted my change of career, even though there is still a long way to go. At 37, I am nearly one of the youngest "mature" students at Writtle college and I do not think I have left it too late to change the course of my working life. I am sure I will find a great job when I qualify in three years time.

One last word: on my leaving card, presented to me by my banking colleagues, one of them said they hoped the "greens would be grassier". Well, next time I see him, I'll have to say "so far, so good!"  
John Coote, Undergraduate at Writtle College, Great Sampford, Saffron Walden

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## YOUR LETTERS ARE REQUESTED!

Send to: Scott MacCallum, Editor, Greenkeeper International, BIGGA HOUSE, Aldwark, Alne, York YO61 1UF, or email them to: [scott@bigga.co.uk](mailto:scott@bigga.co.uk)



# Your Letters...

## An Inspirational Piece

It was with some pleasure that I read the article HNC Managing Sports Turf: Improving an area, by Nigel White in the June edition of Greenkeeper International.

There are many within our industry who try to decry the need for higher education, insisting that NVQs are the only qualification needed. Nigel is one of my HNC students at the Warwickshire College and the article shows the benefits of studying at this higher level. A.H.E. qualification teaches research skills, how to evaluate the information and then to apply and present the information in a professional manner.

I teach sports turf qualifications at Level 2 & 3 and have seen many greenkeepers greatly benefit from their studies, enabling them to progress with their careers. However, qualifications such as the HNC, HND and the new Foundation Degree provide greenkeepers with the depth of knowledge required of modern, credible and professional turf managers. I hope this article by Nigel inspires others to enquire about studying at this level.

Andrew Turnbull, Sports Turf Tutor,  
Warwickshire College

## Good Issue

I would like to congratulate all concerned with the June magazine. The inclusion of the GTC Notes by David Golding, now working very closely with Ken Richardson makes very interesting reading. The course feature was again outstanding as was all the other feature articles. It was also good to see Martyn Jones in the May issue again and nice to hear that he is fit again.

Bill Lawson,  
BIGGA Founder Member, Retired

## Thank You and Fairwell...

Would you be so kind as to allow me to use your "letters" page to convey my thanks and farewell to the Membership. As you are aware I left the employment of the Association at the end of May having been Regional Administrator for the South East for eight years or so and for

almost a year helping out in the South West and South Wales Region. During these years it has been my privilege to meet some wonderful people. I attended as many Section days as I could this year in an effort to say my farewells but of course not all of the Membership plays golf or attends these days.

I was also kept pretty busy with arrangements for the 'Greenkeeping Support Team for the VOLVO PGA Championship at Wentworth so it has been impossible to say good bye to everyone.

I would just like to say thanks for the welcome I always received when visiting Greenkeepers on their course or meeting them at Harrogate or wherever. You really are the "salt of the earth" and if I had one wish it would be that all of the golf clubs who employ you recognise the effort and dedication that you give to your job.

Apart from the Greenkeeping Membership I would also like to express my thanks to the Trade. They were always ready to support my efforts with sponsorship for Regional events and it would be more than fair to say that they made my job a lot easier with their generosity. I would also like to thank the Trade for me never having to buy a pen!

That just leaves the 'Legal Helpline'. I am proud to say that through the Association I was able to support some Greenkeepers through some very difficult times, especially with regards to employment. Like the Trade the Helpline made my job so much easier know that good sound legal advice was available at the end of a telephone.

I am sure that some of our paths will cross again in the not too distant future but in the meantime thanks to all of you for eight wonderful years.

Derek Farrington

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