

# GTC News



## Retiring GTC Board of Directors' Chairman, Gordon Huddy, reviews his time with the organisation and what has been achieved in a short period.

After 11 years on the GTC Management Committee, half of them as Chairman, David Golding, the Education Director, asked me to write a short piece, before my retirement, on how things have changed over the years and what the prospects and challenges for the future are. Certainly a lot has changed in that time and most has been for the good in the training of greenkeepers.

If I look back to the early to mid nineties, one can recall the heated debate of the idea of vocational qualifications, the way they were taught and how they were assessed. At that time many people challenged the modern methods and were in favour of assessment by exams with pass and fail standards. There was much resistance to the idea of Course Managers and Head Greenkeepers as assessors and a great deal of debate about the use of these assessors, where they were allocated and how much they were used. It all seems a long time ago and now the work-based delivery and assessment is well accepted and the GTC has trained over 1000 assessors all over the country, with plans to train a further 200 this year.

It has also standardised the syllabus - learning materials - which are taught as the underpinning knowledge elements both for NVQ2 and NVQ3. There is work to be done however on the delivery of these syllabuses and the GTC will be looking into this in the future.

On the operational side of the business, the GTC has moved out of its rather old temporary accommodation into a new modern, well equipped office with the full range of modern office equipment. The GTC's status had been changed to a Limited Company by guarantee and the structure of the organisation has been changed to include a Technical Committee reporting to the Board. Their function is to provide a constant input of new ideas to the Board for approval and finance. BIGGA has a strong representation on the Committee and their input is vital to the current and future work of the GTC on behalf of the sector.

Outside the regular income from its supporting bodies there is now a provision to finance special projects, with Board approval. Our thanks are due to Dr Mike Canaway for chairing this Committee so ably. All this progress has been the result of the work and dedication of David Golding and his loyal but limited staff. They are to be congratulated for all their hard work, often done in difficult circumstances and their ability to work together and overcome problems. I would like to thank not only David himself but also Fiona and Yvonne for their invaluable contributions.

What about the future? There is work to be done. We are living in an age of electronic communications and already it is possible to learn the underpinning knowledge for VQ's and, more recently, the Foundation Degree on the Internet. I was visiting Augusta for the Masters a few years

ago and made contact with Wendy O'Brien, currently a greenkeeper at the Carden Park Resort near Chester. She was on an assignment as a greenkeeper at Augusta and she was actually doing her NVQ 3 via the Internet during her time off work at the golf course. Extraordinary but this may well become normal in the future!

The changes in the game in the future will impact on the technology of greenkeeping and, in time, on the syllabus to be taught and the skills to be learnt. Global warming and resultant climate change are probably going to call for grass to be cut throughout the year and for the development of alternatives suitable for doing this. Increasingly members of golf clubs are not going to be satisfied with their course being closed for a lot of the winter months and having to play off temporary tee and temporary greens.

They will want their course to be playable on the finest grasses possible for the whole year. Drainage will become a key factor. Pay and play courses are going to spread and grasses to withstand the heavy wear and tear are going to be needed.

There will be further developments in combating the effect of improving skills and improving equipment on the top players in the world, bunker design and maintenance, control of rough and course design are due to change in the future. All of this will expand the syllabus of knowledge and practical skills needed by the greenkeeper and the GTC's job will be to ensure that training will not only keep up with the changes but actually to lead the way forward. I feel very confident that David Golding and his staff will be up to the challenge.

There are some excellent competent greenkeepers and Course Managers working on our golf courses and if I was to leave one message with employers it is to invest in your staff's training and your members and visitors will be rewarded by a better maintained and managed course.

Finally, having spent so much of my time with the GTC listening to the importance of skills training and having the related knowledge, I am now able to go off to cut my fescue/bent lawns at the right height for the time of year with a machine correctly set and wearing the appropriate clothing and footwear!

Yours aye

**Gordon Huddy**

**Chairman, Board of Directors GTC**