

# Thanks!

The conveyor belt of those BIGGA members who have benefited from Ransomes Jacobsen Scholarships just keeps on rolling and over £125,000 has been gifted to talented, ambitious people who could only move forward with assistance towards their course fees, since the scheme was launched in 2002

This month three of the recipients, at different stages of their careers, talk about their experiences and thank Ransomes Jacobsen for allowing it to happen

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## Paul Farrell Msc

**This June I attended my graduation at Cranfield University for the MSc in Sports Surface Technology. As a beneficiary of the Ransomes Jacobsen Scholarship Fund I would like to give a brief insight into my experience over the last two years.**

Having started out in greenkeeping 28 years ago, I have always strived to gain academic qualifications to supplement my practical knowledge and experience. Beginning with City & Guilds 2-4 and then moving on to the Higher National Diploma in Turf Science at Myerscough College. Although the knowledge I had gained was certainly of great value to me in

my career, I felt that if I gained a more scientific understanding of the subjects within our industry then it would help me make more informed judgements. I had started to look at the options for higher study, at the various colleges in my area, which included BSc degrees etc, when I spotted the advert in Greenkeeper International for the MSc in Sports Surface Technology at Cranfield University. I wrote off for the information pack and found that the module format would fit well with my work schedule as these took place over the 'winter' months.

However the costs involved did prove to be a stumbling block at the time and I gave up on the idea. That is until three years later when I came across the course informa-



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tion at the bottom of a folder. This got me wondering again, only this time I did have some finances available, but still not enough to finance the whole course. This is when I thought of applying for the Ransomes Jacobsen Scholarship fund through BIGGA to see if they could help. Thankfully the response was a positive one and they did grant me the scholarship, which was a great relief as this then allowed me to complete my application for the course.

When the time came to start the course, some doubt did creep in as to whether I was up to it, after all it seemed to be a big leap from HND to MSc, as I was under no illusion of the standards that would be required in terms of work submitted and in the amount of hard work and effort that was to be needed.

Also I did chat to a past MSc student to gain an idea of what to expect, he said the experience was "like putting your n\*ts in a vice and letting someone give them a good kicking for two years", although he did add it was a great experience and well worth it in the end. Surprisingly this didn't put me off, but it did give me an insight into what lay ahead, plus I had been a Head Greenkeeper for over 20 years so I already knew what that felt like anyway!

The two years that followed were tough at times, the usual highs and lows whenever you attempt anything worthwhile, however the support you get not only from the lecturers but also your peers is brilliant. Basically everything is set up to help you reach your goals, if you are prepared to work hard to achieve them.

The course was made up of eight modules, each module taken as a two week block release over two years, plus two group projects and the thesis/ individual project. The modules were varied, ranging from

subjects such as soil science to synthetic surfaces.

As mentioned an individual project/thesis was a criteria of the course. You aimed to choose a topic of original research, which seemed difficult at first – we all know from browsing the internet on greenkeeping matters the wealth of research that already exists on subjects we might be interested in.

The trick, if you are struggling, is to maybe take a subject and tackle it from a different angle if possible. Also it is important to have a genuine interest in the subject, as otherwise months of research will become a chore, which besides making you miserable, will probably reflect in the quality and end result of your thesis. The subject of my thesis was 'The Ecology of Nematodes and

• Each area was sampled and the nematode populations were identified by their feeding guilds. Each area was also tested to ascertain the levels of microbial biomass present.

• Information was gathered on soil type, the plant species present and the management strategies applied to the given areas.

• Analysis and discussion of the results took place, comparing the different turf areas.

The following is the 'abstract' taken from the thesis which consisted of over 15,000 words:

*Nematodes can destroy turfgrass surfaces creating unplayable playing areas, which can have great financial impact upon stakeholders - such as owners and users of sports facilities.*

*Although damage caused by plant parasitic nematodes in turf is recognised as a problem.*

*All nematodes play an important role within soil biota, being involved in nutrient and energy cycling.*

*These nematodes can be identified and separated into different groups by their feeding guilds. Nematodes interact with the soil biomass and are involved at every trophic level within the soil food web.*

*Therefore any management practices carried out upon a turf area should consider the effects they might have on not only nematodes but also microbial biomass populations within the soil.*

An investigation was undertaken to assess what effects management and soil type had upon the nematode and microbial biomass populations of nine different turf-grass areas.

The investigations also sort to ascertain if a relationship exists between nematode and microbial biomass populations within the turf areas.

The results found that there were significant differences in the nematode populations found and that different community structures exist across the different surfaces ( $p < 0.05$ ).

Microbial biomass populations across the turf areas also showed a significant difference ( $p < 0.001$ ).

The levels of nematodes and microbial biomass were considered in relation to the management practices carried out and soil type.

It was found that the two influenced the nematode and microbial biomass population size.

A weak positive correlation was found between the nematode and microbial biomass populations ( $r = 0.58$ ).

However it was considered that

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Microbial Biomass Populations in managed turf

The project was designed to determine the possible effects that turf management practices have on the dynamics of nematode communities and microbial biomass populations within different turf surfaces.

This was achieved with the following objectives –

• A selection of six different turf surfaces, four areas allocated to the playing of sport (golf, football, cricket, tennis) and two non sport surfaces (ornamental lawn, road-side verge).



this apparent relationship was more likely caused by the influence of the management practices and soil type and that the nematode and microbial biomass populations were responding in a similar way to the effects that they had upon the soil environment.

Although you may think 15,000 words is a lot, this is usually a concise version of all that you have found.

Taking on a research project, especially if for the first time can be daunting, but again the support and guidance from the lecturers is brilliant and is there throughout the process. Also you will probably find yourself having to develop new skills just to carry out the project.

My particular challenge was collecting and extracting the nematodes from the soil samples and then identifying the different nematodes by their feeding guilds under a microscope, plus the task of extracting the microbial biomass from the soil samples, along with getting to grips with the 'statistical analysis' of all the results from my investigation.

If anyone is thinking of taking on the challenge of the MSc, then one piece of advice I would give, is to ensure that you are 'PC literate' and I don't just mean how to get on 'Facebook'!

This won't help you understand the subject matter more easily, but it will help with your time management.

There is nothing more frustrating than plodding your way through computer programs when you should be doing it in two or three clicks, believe me I know. Also the nature of the Msc has now changed slightly.

Cranfield are continuing their Sports Surface Technology MSc course as a 'masters by research', which allows particular flexibility for suitably qualified part time students looking to study. Full details are available at <http://www.cranfield.ac.uk/students/courses/page1823.html>

Finally I would like to take this opportunity to thank Knights Grange sports complex for the use of their facility for my project and Dr Mark Bartlett for his support and guidance throughout the process of my thesis, also my fellow students for helping to make the whole experience an enjoyable one and of course my thanks.

Gratitude go to BIGGA and the Ransomes Jacobsen Scholarship fund who without their financial support my MSc would not have been possible.

## Darren Anderson MG

It was August 1992, the look of disappointment on my Parents faces said it all! I had just shown them my GCSE exam results and my Father who back then was also my Course Manager, leant back on his chair at the kitchen table and said. "Well you're lucky to be in a career that you can get a education in, not all kids who have just failed their GCSE's can say that", he then followed on to say "You better stick in when you go to college for your NVQ level 2 or else"! I kept quiet as I had got away very lightly with a telling off!

It was another year before I was sent to college, the reason being, so I had good basic greenkeeping knowledge practically before I went; this was also so I had more interest in the subjects being taught to the class if I had some practical experience in them. Little did I know that this would be the start of a very long education through different stages, even becoming the 46th Master Greenkeeper in 2008 and the look of pride on my parents' faces, I think I had been officially forgiven for the GCSE exam results 16 years earlier.

Throughout my education I have been lucky enough to have a training provider, North Wales Training (NWT) who funded my NVQ levels 2,3,4 with all the extra courses like NPTC training that helps towards NVQ's. In 2001, they also paid for my HNC in Golf Course Management, I told myself this was the final qualification I was going to do, but in 2008 I decided to dust off the computer and study for my Foundation Degree in Science this was On-line and the subject was Sportsturf.

The Club was supportive in me doing another qualification as they knew they would benefit from it too, but they also wanted me to look into funding to help with the costs to keep expenditure down as with most members clubs of late.

With no more funding available from NWT and almost all the avenues of funding exhausted towards the FdSc - Online at Myerscough, it didn't look like I wouldn't get a any financial help, but then I remembered the Ransomes Jacobsen scholarship that I had read about in the GI magazine and on the website, so I enquired about a Scholarship, following on to applying and then being accepted, I presented the club with the information on funding of the on-line course, also informing them that I would not be missing work through



ABOVE: Darren Anderson MG

**"I remembered the Ransomes Jacobsen scholarship that I read about in GI and on the website, so I applied and got accepted!"**  
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day release with it being on-line, the Club happily granted the rest of the expenditure to pay for the remaining sum of money.

The FdSc - Online course at Myerscough was excellent and the staff headed by form tutor Dr Andy Owen were always happy to help.

For anyone thinking of taking up this course, I cannot state enough, it's a great course but you have to be fully committed to it! It is a step up from any other qualifications I have done and I've done a few, you will have to be regimented in allocating yourself revision time, we are all different with our circumstances so how you allocate your time up is up to you, I would suggest approximately eight hours per week, and if you can get some study time off work, take it, sadly for me, I had considerably more work commitments than usual with the run up to Abergel's Centenary and grant work to be carried out after being awarded money from the Ryder Cup Legacy Fund to build Two extra practice facilities, this made it hard to allocate time for study-