

ing, so all my study was done in my own time. Originally I told the club that I would not be away for day release because it was online, but I was going to give myself flexy study time, when I could go home for a afternoon when work could spare it, that never really happened and the total time I took off for study over the course was Two days. If I could go back and do it all again I would make sure I allocated time for it.

I always got my work done; it would have just been a lot easier and a lot less stressful if I had allocated time for the course.

The whole course was on-line, in fact the graduation was the first time I had been to Myerscough College and met any of the other students.

Myerscough College On-Line Learning Network (MOLLNET) was excellent; you have your own student page to receive your on-line hand outs, which I must say were to the highest standards! I'm just glad the paper I used to print the handouts was from a Sustainable Source as there was lots of it! At the end of each lecture booklet there was a list of reading material to assist you in your studying, the BIGGA lending library was a great help with the books being aimed at greenkeeping and associated subjects to golf course management, there are nearly all the books needed for revision, but remember there will be other students with the same listing as you.

The exams were also delivered in the same way, with all the information on the subject's timetable, but the Tutors always message everyone in advance just to remind the students.

The exams would become available to print 20 minutes before the start time and they are done under exam conditions according to the information given on the exam sheets, these were posted back to the college the same day with witness statements from the Secretary on the exam procedure.

I've got to where I am today through qualifications, the NVQ's I gained were specific to my job and experience at the time helping me understand greenkeeping and course management practically and academically each stage of the way.

The HNC went back to the class room teaching us subjects compared to gathering evidence and building portfolios for the NVQs

In the HNC my favourite subject was Irrigation Design/Installation and control, this came in handy at the time as the greens at Abergele were being redesigned and recon-

structed to USGA specification, along side the greens construction was the installation of a new computerised valve in head irrigation system. At the time I was the Deputy Head and the club placed me in charge of the project, half way through I was lucky enough to take over as Course Manager

On the second phase of construction the irrigation installation was not going to plan and I noticed that the company installing the system were cutting very large corners, after many site meetings with them and the rest of the project team their contract was terminated and a new company was awarded the contract to finish the installation and to rectify the corners cut, the corner cutting and using poor quality materials would of gone unnoticed if I hadn't studied the Irrigation module in the HNC and the club would have ended up with a poor quality irrigation system.

There are many great subjects in the FdSc and I find them all useful, Increasing my knowledge in disease management/ ecology and conservation etc some subjects I had already studied in my HNC like sports surface construction and Irrigation, but stating that the FdSc is a higher qualification the subjects were delivered in much more depth giving the students more knowledge about the subjects

I would like to take this opportunity to thank David Withers and Ransomes Jacobsen for the funding, I would also like to thank all those involved from BIGGA in the decision to award the Scholarship to me for my FdSc in Sportsturf.

My qualifications have always helped me in my career and in turn helped Abergele G.C in its progression since I have worked there, whether it was being asked my opinion as a assistant, to making decisions as the Course Manager, one thing is for sure, with my latest edition to my portfolio I'm well equipped for the exciting new developments that are in the pipeline for Abergele Golf Club, adding another step in the clubs continues progression as it strides forward into its second century.

I hope my story from being a teenager with no qualifications to where I am today has encouraged not just young Greenkeepers but Greenkeepers of all ages to go to college, the Scholarship is open to all BIGGA members and you wont get it unless you look into it and apply, the scholarship could be the difference for a greenkeeper being granted of refused a college course by their club.

Peter Leach

What a fantastic three years, the most rewarding years of my life so far! After completing NVQ Level 3, I didn't feel ready to make the step up from Deputy to Head Greenkeeper but felt that it was vital to keep my education progressing. I decided that the on-line Foundation Degree SportsTurf provided by Myerscough College was the most suitable route for me personally and this was the best decision I have ever made.

When I started the course my aim was to do my best with the time that I had available. My results at the end of the first year were better than I expected and this gave me the encouragement to work really hard for the final two years. After nearly three years of assignments, deadlines and exams it was such a proud moment for me to attend the Graduation Ceremony at Myerscough College. It has been the biggest achievement of my life to pass with distinction and to be the winner of the BarenbrugTurfAward for 2010. This was presented for having the highest marks out of the on-line Foundation Degree Sports Turf students who graduated this summer from Myerscough College.

I would like to say a huge thank you to Ransomes Jacobsen who supports BIGGA's Higher Education Scholarship. The funding provided from this scholarship enabled me to comfortably meet the costs of the course. Thank you to my employer Exeter Golf and Country Club and John Parr the Course Manager for their flexibility and especially John for his information and advice. Also, I received fantastic help from Exeter's Mechanic, Brian Chidgey, and Robert Guntrip, from Devon Garden Machinery. I was very lucky to have the support and encouragement from my family throughout, thank you for putting up with me and getting me through the stressful times!

The prospect of studying a course on-line may seem daunting and I had reservations at first, however, the on-line delivery provided by Myerscough College is excellent. A bit like an e-mail account, each on-line student has their own page on the College Mollnet. Learning resources are sent each week to your page as well as regular messages from the college tutors. Assignments are delivered to your page and completed assignments can be handed in on the same page in the same way that an e-mail attachment would be sent. It is very user friendly and an E-Learning Team are easy to get hold of via

2010 Scholarships Awarded Winners

Jamie Blake - On Line Foundation Degree - Sports Turf

Craig Parry - SVQ Level 4 - Management

Timothy Johnson - BSc Honours in Turfgrass Science (online)

James Stevens - On Line Foundation Degree - Sports Turf

Gary Cunningham - NVQ Level 4 Sports Turf

Andrew Reason - HNC Golf Course Management (Online)

Derek Robson - Online Certificate in Turfgrass Management

Michael Boyes - On Line Foundation Degree - Sports Turf

Graeme Latto - SVQ Level 4 in Management

Greg Wellings - MSc By Research



ABOVE: Peter Leach

e-mail or the phone if any problems are encountered.

The actual Foundation Degree Sports Turf is a brilliant course as it is relevant, useful and challenging. I spent a lot of time actually on the golf course taking soil samples, identifying grasses, weeds and diseases and studying the ecology at Exeter Golf and Country Club. It is much more than being sat in front of a laptop with a textbook open.

The first year provides the essential good grounding with soil science and plant biology as the main subjects. The second and third years provide more specific modules for sports turf: Turf grass growth and development focusing on the science of the grass plant and a study of the different species; Turf grass disorders; Ecology and conservation; Sports turf machinery and their management; Construction; Irrigation systems; Surveying, planning and design.

Credit and thanks must go to Andy Owen and Stewart Brown and their team at Myerscough College for producing and delivering such a professional and excellent Sports Turf course. Such a course must be recognised within the industry for its quality, relevance and accessibility for full-time Greenkeepers.

Not only has the course dramatically improved my theoretical knowledge, it has provided me

with many other skills. For those studying on-line while working full-time, your time management and organisational skills will quickly improve. A little and often approach to studying is recommended although I found my time input had peaks and troughs corresponding with deadline dates. I recommend a good wall planner with deadlines clearly marked as this really helped my time management! It is also important to maintain a healthy work / life balance.

“It was most satisfying for me in the middle of winter, knowing that I was doing something to keep my career progressing, with the dark, cold and wet months passing more quickly”
Peter Leach

The course improves your computer skills in every manner including word processing, spreadsheets and presentation software; e-mailing, digital photography software, internet researching and I have even become good at annotating aerial photography. These computer skills were used to produce reports, presentations, policy documents, site analysis and appraisal, project planning and scheduling, critical appraisals, maintenance schedules and procurement reports for committees. These are all familiar documents to any Course Manager so I am grateful to have had the practise

at producing these in the context of golf course management and I am certain they will be invaluable to me in the future when I hope to make the progression up to Head Greenkeeper.

Completing Foundation Degree Sports Turf has given me a lot of confidence in my ability to be able to manage my own golf course as Head Greenkeeper in the future. Knowledge is not always retained (in my mind at least!) therefore I made sure that I printed off all of the college lecture notes and I purchased selected textbooks along the way meaning that I now have a wealth of resources to fall back on which is reassuring.

It was strange visiting Myerscough College for the first time this year as I have actually been attached to this College since 2003, when I started the work-based NVQ Level 2 Amenity Horticulture (Sports Turf), before progressing on to Level 3 and then Foundation Degree. Thank you to Myerscough College for providing me with the solid foundations for what I hope will be a long, enjoyable and successful career in greenkeeping.

A big thank you to BIGGA and the GTC for ensuring that educational opportunities are easily accessible to all who wish to learn and develop.

Whatever college or course you choose, sign up and get learning in order to continue your professional development. It was most satisfying for me in the middle of winter knowing that I was doing something to keep my career progressing forward. As well as this, it was a great distraction from the dark, cold and wet months making them pass quickly.

I would like to congratulate all who graduated this summer and to those few achieving the BSc Honours Degree, including local Devon Greenkeeper Josh Webber – well done!

