



Greenkeepers Training Committee



**David Golding, Education Director,
with a monthly update from the GTC**

Unsung hero is often a tribute bestowed to somebody who has quietly gone about his or her business with a quiet professionalism not seeking recognition or payment.

Well our sector may have many Unsung Heroes, but one very special man has to be mentioned in this category: W.N.S Bisset, or just Nick to so many of us, who sadly passed away, somewhat ironically on St Georges Day, April 23.

A proud Scotsman with an incredible sense of humour, a smile which he will be most remembered for and, not forgetting the wearing of his kilt at every opportunity - Nick will be missed by so many.

His wisdom and knowledge over many years has helped so many, including me personally, as he has been the Chairman of the GTC's Technical Committee in recent years.

Older greenkeepers will remember first registering as an Apprentice with Nick in the days when the GTC had no funding but who could forget the address: 66 Old Orchard, Haxby, York..... Nick, his wife, Pat, and family eventually moved from that address, but for years it was known as the home of apprentice registrations!

The registration scheme then did not require any formal training but Nick always had the vision that one day all trainee greenkeepers would receive due recognition for their skills and knowledge with a Government approved qualification.

Having attended school in St.Andrews, his love of golf and golf courses commenced on the Links and having studied at the Edinburgh College of Agriculture he took up a job as a salesman in the wheat and barley trade. This didn't last long but the connection did give him a love of good whisky!

Nick applied for a job at the STRI, in Bingley, and was appointed agronomist covering his beloved Scotland and Norfolk!

He made some great friends and colleagues during his nine years at STRI before moving into education as Greenkeeping tutor at Askham

Bryan College, York, in 1976. Initially employed on a one-year contract, Nick stayed there for 29 years!

From his early days as an STRI agronomist in Scotland, he always had a great empathy for greenkeepers and mainly through his work as a turf lecturer at Askham Bryan College near York, he orchestrated change from both behind the scenes through his work for the GTC but also at the delivery end of courses related to all levels of greenkeeping.

A gentle man, but never afraid to stand up for the principles he was Administrator to the GTC when a per-capita levy on male golfers was introduced in the 1980's with the support of the four Home Unions, The R&A and the then three greenkeeping Associations. When I first met Nick he was administering the GTC with donations from various golfing bodies totalling then £1000.

The introduction of a 2p per head levy from male golfers who were members of affiliated clubs was a major breakthrough for greenkeeper training and to this day albeit now an annual grant from the British Home Unions it has allowed so much development from a voluntary enrolment registration scheme for greenkeepers in the 60s to a Government approved structure of qualifications recognised by employers and greenkeepers throughout Britain.

At the same time, the only formal training was the week at the STRI, Bingley, but it was all about to change.....

Nick and a small band of volunteers set about identifying skills and knowledge that would make a greenkeeping qualification. City & Guilds and Scotec were born in GREENKEEPING, not Agriculture or even Horticulture.

Through the 80s and 90s a limited number of land based colleges were identified to provide greenkeeping courses aligned to the City & Guilds and Scotec Phases with supervisory and management levels added, giving us today's acknowledged career path from Apprentice to Manager.



In Brief

David pays tribute to Nick Bisset who sadly died aged 66, following a fight against cancer, and looks at a legacy of greenkeeper education and training left by Nick through his years of dedication to improve the plight of greenkeepers.

Nick was the GTC's number 1 assessor when N/SVQ's were introduced by the Government. He was also co-author of the GTC's internationally recognised Training Manual and Learning Materials and a BIGGA Master Greenkeeper advisor and examiner.

I am sure his former colleagues at STRI and Askham Bryan have many fond memories of Nick as well as the many students who passed through under his caring watch over many years.

Nick always enjoyed helping students especially those who, while being practical, struggled a little with the theory.

He was particularly proud when an Askham Bryan College student, James Braithwaite, won the Student of the Year award in 1995. This success allowed Nick, together with James to travel to the States, a trip he thoroughly enjoyed.

Pat and children, Scott and Catriona, have very fond memories of being on holiday and no matter where they were in the world, Nick was "just popping in to see a former student" who was now a Course Manager at a course which just happened to be where they were staying!

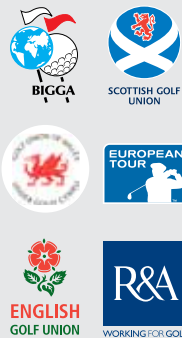
Nick was a judge for Yorkshire in Bloom and fully involved with his village Church and while knowing he was poorly my fondest memory of him was that he was determined to attend Harrogate 2011, carry out Stand duties for the GTC as Chairman of the Technical Committee meeting and asking if he could spend some time to view mowers suitable to mow the church grounds!

A true legend in our industry and a person who truly, quietly went about his life with a smile and having left us with a legacy of greenkeeper education and training in which he played a major role in establishing, we will miss him.

Our thoughts are with Pat, Catriona and Scott, daughter in law, Sally, and his two grandchildren, William and Edward.

On behalf of greenkeepers and greenkeeping, thank you Nick.

The GTC is funded by:



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