

# Oh Carolina!



Rob Clare is the former Course Manager at Skipton Golf Club and current Course Manager at Brough Golf Club in Humberside. In July 2010 he graduated from Myerscough College as top student on the Turf Science course and was nominated to attend Jacobsen's Future Turf Managers programme in the USA. In this short article he describes his trip to North Carolina.

**Back in the summer of 2010, I graduated from Myerscough College with a Foundation Degree in Turf Science. It had been a challenging three years, as I had been a part-time student whilst fulfilling my role as head greenkeeper of Skipton Golf Club. A few weeks before graduation, I received a letter telling me I had won the Ransomes Jacobsen Cup for best part time student in my cohort.**

I was really taken aback and honoured to win such a prestigious award. I imagined the award took the shape of a trophy in recognition of the work I had put in, so it was with great delight that I learned that I'd been nominated for an all-

expenses-paid trip to the USA. I was off to Charlotte in North Carolina on Jacobsen's Future Turf Managers programme and I was privileged to be the first European student to be invited.

I was going to their head office and manufacturing facility where I would meet up with 27 students from American colleges who had been recommended by their professors as being top level candidates with great prospects of becoming future leaders in the turf care industry. Since its inception back in the 1970s, over 700 students have participated in the programme.

So, in the middle of May I flew out to America where I was to experience a fantastic four day programme,

which was both educational and fun. We worked hard throughout, starting each day at 6.30am with breakfast then onto a coach for the day's scheduled events.

We began with a tour of the facilities at the two Jacobsen plants in Charlotte, experiencing the production process of mowers and utility vehicles from raw steel and component parts to the finished product.

This was followed by classroom presentations by Roch Gaussoin, Professor of Horticulture at the University of Nebraska and Steve Randall, Senior Manager, Chapter Outreach at the GCSAA.

After lunch we re-boarded the bus for the short drive to the Quail Hollow Club, where Course Super-



Rob receives his students at Sage Valley certificate





Some of the group at Jacobsen's



Ride and drives at Quail Hollow Club

intendent, Jeff Kent, explained how he prepared for the recently completed Wells Fargo PGA Tour Championship and the reinstatement he was doing following the tournament. We were then able to ride and drive a selection of Jacobsen equipment on a dedicated area of the course.

In the evening we were taken to a local kart racing track for rest and relaxation, but in America everything is competitive, so it was a great night racing karts in teams in a Le Mans type endurance race.

The following day we again boarded the bus immediately after breakfast and drove a couple of hours south into South Carolina, for a visit to Sage Valley Golf Club in Graniteville.

The story goes that the owner was refused membership just over the state line at Augusta National, so having made his fortune as the builder of virtually every Walmart store in the USA, he decided to construct his own course that would rival its illustrious neighbour.

The course at Sage Valley is incredible and we were fortunate to walk the course with Chuck Green, the highly entertaining Superintendent at this ultra-exclusive private members' club.

He doesn't allow rotary mowers anywhere on the course, so the rough is mown with cylinder mowers and as you would expect, it's immaculate as is the whole complex.

After a buffet lunch and tour of his greenkeeping facility we got



back on the coach heading for the state capitol, Columbia.

Here we visited to the sports facilities at the University of South Carolina. They are known as the Gamecocks and we toured the new baseball stadium and the hugely impressive 80,000-seat football stadium with Clark Cox, Field Manager. He explained the techniques he uses to maintain the different playing surfaces at both venues.

We spent the early evening at a local bistro in Columbia, before returning to the hotel in Charlotte. Some of the group went to bed and some didn't!

The final day saw a later start with a mid-morning brunch and presentation of certificates of atten-

dance and a complimentary one-year subscription to the GCSAA, courtesy of Jacobsen. Jacobsen's President, Dan Wilkinson, presented the certificates and in a closing speech thanked us for our attendance and wished us well for the future.

Overall it was a fantastic experience; we were looked after extremely well by all of the Jacobsen staff and although we worked hard, Jacobsen also made sure we were well entertained in the evenings.

I would like to thank Jacobsen for the great opportunity this trip provided, it was a real learning experience and good friends were made. It certainly made the last three years worth all the hard work!

