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Get yourself to Harrogate

Happy New Year. We may be in the depths of a recession which is showing no signs of ending but 2012 does contain some highlights that should keep us all interested.

Aside from the London Olympics and the European Football Championships, closer to home, BIGGA celebrates its 25th birthday – a quarter century of providing education and raising the professional profile of greenkeepers.

The Silver Anniversary, along with an Exhibition to mark 100 Years of Greenkeeping Associations, will be celebrated at Harrogate this year. Look out for our new Anniversary logo.

The Continue to Learn programme this year is exceptional and if you are still undecided on whether or not to attend I would urge you to get pre-registered and along there. I've never met anyone who has regretted going to Harrogate.

The phrase "Lifelong learning" is one which you hear increasingly these days, but there can be few people to whom it is more relevant than Paul Mitchell, Head Greenkeeper, at Harrogate Golf Club.

Paul was a junior member of the club, who began working as a greenkeeper when he left school. He became Deputy Head Greenkeeper in the mid 80s and made sure he was attending BIGGA training courses and keeping himself educated and up to date. When the Head Greenkeeper retired Paul wasn't automatically given the job but had to go through an intensive interview process. Not having had an interview since he was a 15 year old, it was the BIGGA training courses and the fact that he was in tune with current greenkeeping developments that gave him the skills and belief to do well and he was offered the job at the ripe old age of 50.

Having been given that vote of confidence Paul has gone from strength to strength and, as you can read this month, so has Harrogate Golf Club.

On the same theme, we have an article on how technology has impacted on the greenkeeping industry with smart phones being almost as vital a greenkeeping tool as a hole cutter. It goes to reinforce the need to keep up to date with the requirements of the job. Whereas an ability to mow a straight line would be enough for you to stand out as a young apprentice at the beginning of a career, dealing with Spreadsheets, computerised irrigation systems and Safety Management Systems – you can also see news of this in this month's issue – to mark you out as a top Course Manager.

There can be few jobs where the jump between initial requirements of the job and those later on in a career as quite so vast and that is where BIGGA offers so much help. The training courses that the Association can provide ensures any gap in education can be filled at a fraction of the cost of similar courses in other industries, thanks to the support that BIGGA receives from its industry partners in the Gold Key Learning and Development Fund.

I hope you do have a successful 2012 and that I will have the opportunity to see you in Harrogate

Best wishes
Scott MacCallum
Editor