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Greenkeeper

INTERNATIONAL

The official monthly magazine of the British & International Golf Greenkeepers Association

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The advertising copy deadline for inclusion in the September 2004 edition of Greenkeeper International is Monday 9 August 2004

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Circulation is by subscription. Subscription rate: UK £42 per year, Europe and Eire £55. The magazine is also distributed to BIGGA members, golf clubs, local authorities, the turf industry, libraries and central government.

ISSN: 0961-6977

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Welcome

NO MORE INTIMIDATION

There can only be one way to start this month's column. Let's hear it for Billy McLachlan and his team at Royal Troon! I can't recall another Open Championship where the course has come in for no criticism whatsoever.

It provided a fair but demanding test of golf and the set-up was just what was required.

Let's face it the pressure was on with The Open, coming so soon after the US Open at Shinnecock Hills, for which the USGA was vilified for demanding a course which ended up so tricked up that greens had to be watered to slow them down on the final day... after the first few groups had already proved that they were all but unplayable. How can that be fair?

So we needed a sensible Major Championship and Royal Troon provided it.

Of course there will be those who look at the record books in a few years time and say Todd Hamilton succeeding Ben Curtis as Champion doesn't exactly smack of identifying true Champions.

However, in each case many of the top names were there or thereabouts and had their own chances to win.

If you look back through the ages there are very few Opens which have produced unheralded Champions. More often than not it has been those regarded as the superstars, who have prevailed.

The argument is that the strength in depth is now so great it just needs one of the superstars to be slightly out of sorts on one round and his chance has all but gone. I've got a different theory and, if you'll permit me, I'll bore you with it.

It used to be all but about 10 players teed up knowing they were never going to win, not The Open Championship.

Now, many more go in with a winning mentality. If they play their best why can't they be Open Champion? I think The Open may have lost its ability to intimidate the field.

I've watched many Opens in my time and seen unheralded – it would be unfair to call them run-of-the-mill - players play out of their skin only to come a cropper on Sunday's back nine.

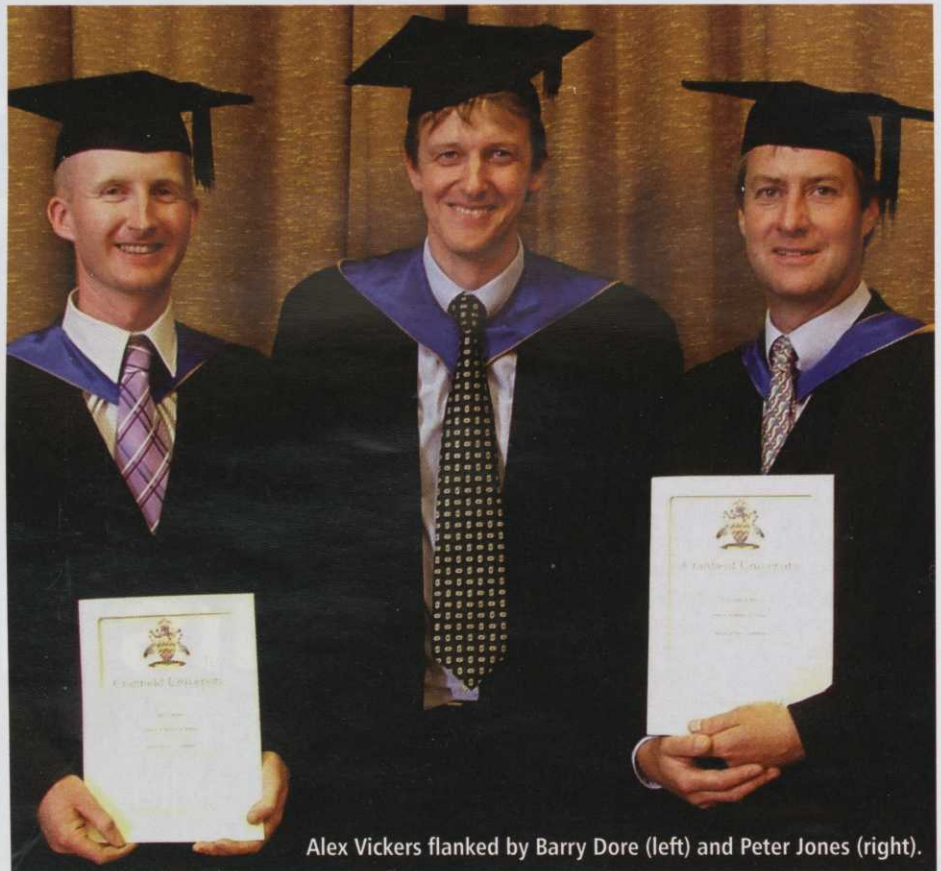
And it wasn't necessarily the big name player sitting just below them on the leaderboard but the sheer enormity of what they were about to do that caused the stumble.

There are several which spring to mind. New Zealander, Simon Owen, looked set to win the 1978 Open at St Andrews only to let Jack Nicklaus in.

You could add Doug Sanders to that list from eight years before that. The most famous missed putt in history, but since then he's recovered from the disappointment. He can now go five minutes without thinking about it.

Nowadays the fear of winning The Open is not as great for some reason - perhaps the sports psychologists can take some of the credit - and you get Ben Curtis and Todd Hamilton able to play their best golf without the intimidation factor that existed within their older colleagues.

Scott MacCallum, Editor



Alex Vickers flanked by Barry Dore (left) and Peter Jones (right).

QUALIFIED SUCCESSES

The first of the BIGGA Higher Education Scholars, sponsored by Ransomes Jacobsen Ltd were presented with their degrees at a graduation ceremony at Cranfield University in July.

Barry Dore and Peter Jones donned gown and mortar board and received the applause of a large audience as they were presented with their Msc degrees from the Chancellor of the College.

An additional BIGGA Scholarship graduate, Eoghan Buckley could not attend as he was undertaking an internship in the USA.

Both were given substantial financial support in achieving their qualification through the scholarship scheme which was set up by BIGGA two years ago.

Barry was the first to mount the stage and spoke later of the pride he felt in his achievement.

"The graduation seals the completion of the MSc course and is very satisfying indeed. Receiving this qualification means a great deal to me. The training I have received has greatly improved my knowledge of sports turf science. It will also allow me to consider employment options in the future that I would never have been in a position to consider before," said Barry.

"I can't thank BIGGA and Ransomes Jacobsen enough for the support they have given me during the course."

Peter Jones, who runs Peter Jones Associates Ltd, was equally delighted.

"It was a proud moment for me to appear on stage at Cranfield University, complete with gown and mortar board to receive my degree. It more than justifies the many, many hours spent studying and writing assignments. I am greatly indebted to BIGGA and Ransomes Jacobsen for the wonderful support they have given me and my fellow scholarship winners and I would encourage others to take advantage of the generous support there is out there for people attempting to better themselves through education," said Peter.

Accompanying Barry and Peter at the ceremony was a very proud Tutor, Alex Vickers who had guided each of them through their course.

Among those receiving Honorary Degrees at the same time as Barry and Peter was Sir Donald Curry, Chairman of the Food and Farming Strategy, DEFRA, who had been charged with developing a policy to minimise the damage of the Foot and Mouth Epidemic two years ago.

"The scholarship scheme has enabled 48 greenkeeper members of BIGGA to enrol onto Higher Education courses including the Masters Degree at Cranfield University. Greenkeepers now have access to a full range of qualifications enabling them to move their careers to an even higher level and compete for better salaries," said Ken Richardson, BIGGA's Education and Training Manager.

AWARD FOR PARKSTONE

Parkstone Golf Club has received further recognition for their commitment to environmental management.

The golf course, which is covered by an S.S.S.I., was recognised at the prestigious annual English nature S.S.S.I. awards ceremony at The Royal Show in Warwick.

Course Manager Bill Garner and Deputy Alex McCombie picked up an award for the club's commitment and work, and also flew the flag for golf clubs in UK. They stressed that hundreds of golf clubs the length and breadth of the country are carrying out some excellent environmental work and that golf has a substantial and important role to play in protecting and developing the environment.

Parkstone has been highly committed in its heathland restoration work. Thousands of trees have been removed along with an intensive scrub removal programme and the results have been encouraging.

This has been coupled with a return to traditional greenkeeping practices aimed at encouraging native grasses to the course, and in particular the greens.

The course is beginning to return to its original character and much of the original views and vistas have been reinstated. Heather is flourishing, as is the numbers of fauna that depend on this habitat.

"The team at Parkstone feel very proud of the contribution they are making to both the golf course and the environment," commented Bill. "The recognition for the work we have carried out ensures that momentum is carried forward. The programme will continue and we look forward to achieving more success in the future."

ON A NEW COURSE

Dave Austin has joined Rigby Taylor as Area Representative for the South Manchester and Cheshire area.

He joins after eight years as Course Manager at Sandiway Golf Club and was previously Course Manager at Knutsford Golf Club and The Tytherington Club.

THE 19TH BECKONS

After 50 years of service, Hawkstone Park's longest serving employee, Estate and Golf Course Manager Frank Tong is leaving behind the bunkers, fairways and greens to retire to the 19th hole.

Frank originally joined the Shropshire club in 1954 to work on the farm and shortly after transferred to the golf course, working as Assistant Greenkeeper to Alex Lyle, father of Sandy Lyle.

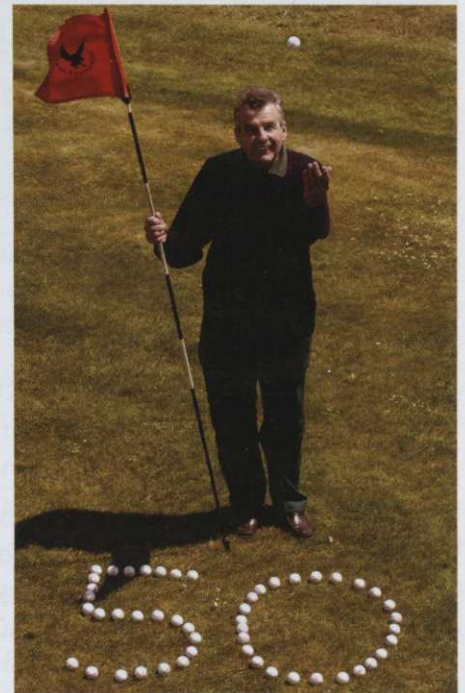
Frank's long and distinguished career at Hawkstone Park was only interrupted by National Service and short spells as Greenkeeper and Head Greenkeeper at Leamington and County Golf Club.

As Estate and Golf Course Manager, Frank's main responsibilities are the management and upkeep of the championship Hawkstone and Windmill courses and the six-hole Academy course as well as 100 acres of wooded parkland.

Commenting on his retirement, Frank said, "Over the years I've met and worked with people from every walk of life and I've never tired of the Park's beautiful surroundings. The work has been varied, often challenging but always rewarding".

He added: "I'm looking forward to retirement, I plan to spend time travelling and I hope to go to Australia to visit family."

Mike Sheehan, Managing Director of Hawkstone Park, said: "Frank has shown many



years of dedication and on behalf of everyone at Hawkstone Park I would like to thank him for his unstinting loyalty and work and wish him a long and happy retirement."

BIGGA DELEGATION COMPETITION

It's that time of a year again when BIGGA, in conjunction with Bernhard, gives the opportunity of a lifetime to 10 lucky Greenkeepers.

BIGGA members have the chance to win a trip to the first ever GCSAA & NGCOA Golf Industry Show, hosted in the USA. The 2005 event is to be held in Orlando at the Rosen Plaza on February 7 - 12.

The competition is open to all BIGGA members, and all you have to do to enter is complete the entry form attached to the outside of this month's Greenkeeper International issue and send it back to us. If for any reason this form is not attached, simply phone BIGGA HOUSE to request an entry form. The deadline for completed entry forms is September 3.

Previously known as the GCSAA Golf Course

Conference & Trade Show, the 2005 Golf Industry Show is a joint venture by the GCSAA - Golf Course Superintendents Association of America - and NGCOA - National Golf Course Owners Association - which puts together the key facility decision makers, the best golf course management solutions and the most recognisable companies in the industry all under one roof. In a 750,600 square foot facility the show will feature over 800 exhibitors.

The overall objective of the Golf Industry Show is to provide the golf industry with a dynamic, progressive trade show event that provides unparalleled networking opportunities and hands-on access to golf course and facility management solutions for the professional members that BIGGA, GCSAA and NGCOA serve.

Both the GCSAA Educational Conference and the NGCOA Solutions Summit will run during the show, providing visitors with the solutions they need for personal and professional success in the form of special events, seminars, sessions and workshops.

British greenkeepers who have attended the US event believe the benefit of their visit was invaluable. "I enjoyed the interaction with Superintendents from the US and learned new things about their practice which I can bring back to the UK," said Gordon McKie, Head Greenkeeper at St. Andrews Links Trust.

Previous BIGGA Delegate winner Jeremy Hughes, Course Manager at Vale of Llangollen commented, "From the whole experience I feel I should improve as a person and a Course Manager."

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ON COURSE TO LEARN

A prestigious scholarship offering a grand tour of some of the world's top golf courses has been won by a sports turf student from Guildford College's Merrist Wood campus

The grass may not be greener on the other side of the Atlantic but student greenkeeper Richard Pennell, 29, will have the chance to find out when he takes up the Grand Tour Scholarship in August to visit leading courses on the US west coast and learn how they are managed. The 22 courses on the three week study tour include Pebble Beach Golf Links, Spyglass Hill Golf Course and Los Angeles Country Club in California and Southern Highlands Golf Club in Las Vegas.

Richard was selected for the scholarship from hundreds of other golf course design and management students from all over the world. The scholarship was founded by golf course architect and president of Lioness Golf LLC Bettina Schrickel and is sponsored by the TORO Company in the US.

Richard is a single figure handicap golfer who left the book retail trade two years ago to become a greenkeeper at Mitcham Golf Club and study for a first diploma in sports turf at the Merrist Wood campus.

"I haven't regretted it for a second, I love working at the club and I hope to

return after my trip to the states to start an HNC level course at Merrist Wood. I'm delighted to have been given such a unique opportunity as the Grand Tour Scholarship and am very grateful to my employers and my lecturers at Merrist Wood for their ongoing encouragement and support."

Tutor Phil Mayes said that Richard's application for the scholarship had been outstanding and that his passion for his work shone through.

"The tour will develop Richard's understanding of how top courses in the US are managed and will help to forge more international links in the industry."



HEGGIE THE CHAMPION

The Scottish National Tournament took place over at Kilmacolm Golf Club, Renfrewshire on Tuesday 15 June 2004.

Kilmacolm Golf Club is an extremely attractive golf course with magnificent views over the Renfrewshire hills. With Course Manager, Ronnie Bunting at the helm they have a dedicated greenkeeper who has won various Environmental Awards and is a very committed BIGGA member. This was evident in his golf course, which drew praise from his fellow greenkeepers for its excellent condition.

Overhead conditions were sunny but with a strong breeze, which made things difficult for low scoring but never the less, there were some excellent scores returned, including a net 59.

The winner and National Champion for 2004 was Brian Heggie, Auchterarder GC, who returned a Scratch 73 winning the SGGG Challenge Cup. The Friendship Trophy for the best Nett went to Joe Bell, Millport, for the third time in four years with a score of 80-21-59, yes 59. Joe had local knowledge, as he was Deputy Head at Kilmacolm for several years. Needless to say Joe's handicap is under review.

Our thanks go to Captain Colin McGinn of Kilmacolm Golf Club and the committee of Kilmacolm GC for granting us the facilities and courtesy of the course. Our thanks also to Vic Weldin, Secretary, and the staff at Kilmacolm for their help and assistance throughout the day. Neil Mitchell and Robert T. Bruce from the trade who ably assisted the Administrator during the day.

The prizes were presented by Colin McGinn, Captain of Kilmacolm GC who welcomed everyone to Kilmacolm. Iain Barr, Scottish Chairman, on behalf of the competitors, thanked Colin for hosting the event.

RESULTS:

SGGA Challenge Cup Scratch Scottish Champion, Brian Heggie, Auchterarder GC, 73.
 Friendship Cup Best Nett. Joe Bell, Millport, 59.
 Ransomes Trophy First Class.
 1. Kenny Mitchell, St Andrews, 69
 2. Douglas McIntosh, Cathkin Braes 72 (Best last 3 holes)
 3. Denis Tweddell, Turnberry, 72
 Pattison Trophy Second Class.
 1. Mark Wilson, Douglas Park, 69 (BIH)
 2. Sandy Brawley, East Kilbride, 72
 3. Andrew Clark, Douglas Park, 74
 STRI Trophy Third Class.
 1. Hugh McLatchie, Peterhead, 74
 2. Mike Horkan, St. Andrews, 80
 3. Colin Scott, Glasgow, 85
 Dick Aitken Trophy Best Head Greenkeeper.
 Derek Scott, Scoonie, 69
 M & M Trophy. Best Assistant.
 Mike Lindsay, Scoonie, 72 (BIH)
 Souter Trophy Best Apprentice
 Gerard Broadley, 108
 SIGGA Trophy. Best Veteran
 Duncan Gray Pines, 75
 St. Mungo Trophy Team Trophy (Best 4 nett scores)
 Werst Section.
 Joe Bell, Millport, 59
 Mark Wilson, Douglas Park, 69
 Douglas McIntosh, Cathkin Braes, 72
 Sandy Brawley, East Kilbride, 72
 Total 272
 Patrons. Kevin Brunton, Greentech, 70
 Qualifiers. National Championship sponsored by Ransomes Jacobsen.
 Brian Heggie, Auchterarder and Joe Bell, Millport.
Peter Boyd
 Scottish Regional Administrator

THE NEW RECRUIT JOINS THE MAGAZINE

BIGGA have appointed an Assistant Editor in the form of Gareth Jones, who will be responsible for aiding Editor Scott MacCallum in the production of Greenkeeper International.

Gareth, 22, joins the Association after graduating from the University of Leeds in 2003, gaining a degree in Media.

Previously he has worked in the sports department of both the Yorkshire Evening Post Newspaper and BBC Radio Leeds. Gareth begins life at BIGGA after a stint working for the NHS.

A sports enthusiast, Gareth plays flanker for Leeds' based

Rugby Union club Yarnbury, is a keen runner, footballer and squash player, and he is eager to improve on his current golf handicap.

"I am excited about my new role at BIGGA, and having already met a number of BIGGA members at the Open Championship at Troon I am looking forward to meeting more in the coming months," said Gareth.

"Having Gareth on board will enable us to move the magazine forward and to improve BIGGA's communication in the golfing world," said Scott.



Following on from July's article highlighting the developments in greenkeeper education and training, GTC's Education Director, David Golding, looks at the advances in 'on the job' training.

It maybe 30 plus years since I was an apprentice greenkeeper at my home town course Buxton & High Peak in Derbyshire but some things never change in greenkeeper training!

Training "on the job" was always the most cost effective method for Head Greenkeepers to get their new staff up to speed as soon as practically possible.

True, we were very reliant on the skills and knowledge of our own Head Greenkeeper and whilst I was fortunate enough to be trained by an excellent father and son team, Bill and Ray Norton, sadly the same could not be said for all trainee greenkeepers.

Standards varied between Headmen and therefore there was no chance of any apprenticeship meeting consistent national standards!

Before all the more "mature" head greenkeepers start picking up the phone to challenge my thoughts regarding the standards of "on the job" training I will say that it is this concept of training that is gathering universal acclaim.

Many will remember the introduction of a small training manual back in the sixties which was the forerunner to today's GTC Training Manual. Head

help establish the website www.bestcourseforgolf.org, which sets out all the best principles and practices for maintaining and managing a golf course.

It is vital that the GTC upholds the tried and tested principles in greenkeeping and ensures its Approved Training Providers are also teaching students these principles.

Having agreed the content through the GTC Technical Committee and the turf review group all we require is the Government body's approval of our work. This now happens with little or no changes such as the respect our specialist sector has gained in recent years.

The whole concept of "on the job" training still does revolve round the Head Greenkeeper/Course Manager and very often at the larger courses their Deputy.

Given the fact that we can now offer all clubs an agreed set of NATIONAL standards to train and assess to let us now ascertain who is the best equipped person to deliver the skills training.

Is it the secretary/manager? Is it the Chairman of Green/Green convenor? Is it the college lecturer? NO it has to be the competent Course Manager or deputy!

It is they who have direct contact with the green staff and given they are in a better position than anyone to set out an action plan and training programme for each individual it is only natural that the GTC has invested heavily in the course managers skills to become more formal trainers and assessors.

All of this "on the job" training is supplemented by the GTC Approved Training Providers whose main job is to co-ordinate the education and training of trainees and register them with an Awarding Body such as City & Guilds or the Scottish Qualifications Authority (SQA).

All of this work is supported by the Government in that work-based training N/SVQ's are very much part of



Greenkeepers were asked to tick and "sign off" a series of tasks once the trainee had reached full competency, brilliant!

So what has changed over the years since that wonderful initiative by the then Standing Conference for Golf Greenkeeping Apprenticeship Scheme?

The two main changes involve the content of the training manual and who actually trains, educates and assesses the trainee greenkeeper.

Since the "new" GTC was born back in 1993 the golf club employers (through the Home Unions) and the greenkeepers (through BIGGA & GCSAI) have been able to ensure the content of all turf qualifications is relevant to today's standards for golf course maintenance and management.

We at the GTC are constantly reviewing one qualification or another just to ensure that in the round of reviews we have the most up to date skills and knowledge within the awards.

This is not to say we are moving away from the tried and tested principles for maintaining turf but technology and legislation change, therefore we must update the content accordingly.

It has to be stated that the GTC has worked very closely with the R&A to

their strategy to support employers wishing to invest in staff development.

I cannot emphasise enough that for "on the job" work-based training to work effectively the system does require the employer and Course Manager to "buy into" the system.

The GTC can help any employer or Course Manager with the training of their staff from a totally unbiased position of the independent body representing the greenkeeping sector.

It does not seem that long ago since I was an apprentice greenkeeper but thankfully the training system is more formal in terms of national standards.

The professionalism of course managers is the key to the future skills of the next generation of greenkeepers supported by those training providers who are "in tune" with the sectors needs!

The subject of training providers and learning materials will feature in next months GI.

For details on work-based training, apprenticeship schemes, trainer/assessor training contact David Golding at the GTC on 01347 838640 or email david@the-gtc.co.uk



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Education Update

This month's article includes an update on Ken Richardson's visit to the GCSAA Headquarters, details of the TORO Student of the Year Regional Finals and some important information on FREE training.

Toro Student of the Year Competition 2004

After travelling almost 15,000 miles and staying in four different hotels, interviewing 34 candidates, my fellow judges and I selected eight National Finalists for this year's competition.

This was the eleventh year that I have been involved with the Student of the Year and I was pleased to see that standards of presentation, preparation for interview and technical knowledge have all continued to improve. It is always difficult to choose between candidates and this year was no exception.

The judges would like to put forward all of the candidates but that is not possible and some selection must take place. It is obvious that employers are taking more of an interest in education and training and course managers have a great part to play in encouraging candidates to do their best at interview.

There were two problems with this year's interviews. Firstly, two candidates did not bother to turn up for interview, not only wasting the time of the judges but also preventing training providers putting forward an alternative candidate. Secondly, someone attempted to break into my car when it was parked in a hotel car park. The double locking system held and they did not gain access although they did cause over £300 of damage.

The National Finalists this year are:

Christopher Kerr, aged 22, from Glasgow who works at Cowglen Golf Club and was trained by GOSTA

Peter Kennedy, aged 21, from Ballymanna who worked at Pinehurst Golf Club and was trained by Reaseheath College

Stuart Glover, aged 32, from Ballygowan who works at Lisburn Golf Club and was trained by Greenmount College

Alex Shore, aged 26, from Milton Keynes who works at Woburn Golf and Country Club and was trained by Oaklands College

Robert Finnegan, aged 21, from Navan who works at the Old Course and was trained by Elmwood College

Katie Walls, aged 21, from Taunton who works at Taunton and Pickeridge and was trained by Myerscough College

Alistair Higgs, aged 19, from Reading who works at Calcot Park and was trained by Sparsholt College
James Canham aged 19, from Wisbech who works at Weston Park and was trained by the College of West Anglia.

The National Final will be held at BIGGA House on Monday 27 September.

Free training on offer in several areas

I have recently been informed of a scheme called Skills @ Work which gives free training at a number of locations around England.

Areas funded so far are Leicestershire, Berkshire, Birmingham Solihul, Derbyshire, Essex, Greater Manchester, Kent and Medway, London East, Shropshire, South Yorkshire, Tyne and Wear and Wiltshire and Swindon.

Subjects covered include: NVQ Level 2 Sportsturf, Health and Safety, First Aid, Food Hygiene, IT Training, Customer Care, Food Preparation, Bar Service, Administration and Management Skills.

I shall be sending out further information as it becomes available so start to think about what training is needed at your golf club and be prepared to take advantage of this great offer.

Visit to GCSAA Headquarters

John Pemberton and I made a flying visit to the GCSAA Headquarters in late June, where we met up with the Chairman, Andy Campbell. For those who don't know, the GCSAA Headquarters is based in the town of Lawrence, Kansas, where their 120 employees look after 120,000 members.

John, Andy and I spent two and a half days travelling and one day in meetings during our four day visit so we did not have much time for sight seeing, although Hannes and Gina gave us the quick tour of Lawrence and Kansas City. I have still not worked out why Kansas City is in Missouri and not in Kansas.

Our meeting with various members of the GCSAA staff reinforced the perception that golf course superintendents had very similar problems to greenkeepers on this side of the Atlantic. The GCSAA are working hard to improve the status of superintendents and the way golfers and the general public perceive them. They are trying to encourage golfers to think about the input of superintendents

when they have had a good round of golf and not just blame them when they have had a bad one.

They are expanding their trade show to include the golf club owners and calling their new show Golf Solutions. They are working hard to encourage international members, although their rules say that UK greenkeepers must be members of BIGGA before they can join the GCSAA. They are also having a close look at the environment and the superintendent's job in its management.

Just some of the things happening across in Lawrence, most of which are happening over here. Despite what television seems to indicate, not every golf course in the US has a massive budget, nor three times the personnel. They do have restrictions on the type and amount of pesticides that can be used and the restrictions are getting worse. Not all is gloom however. Salaries are good, the cost of living is quite low and travel is still relatively cheap. Petrol was \$1.69 (93p) per gallon when we were there.

RISK ASSESSMENTS

Tutorial Three

The previous tutorial discussed putting into place a Health and Safety Management system which should enable the club to manage all health and safety issues more effectively. Part of the system will be Risk Assessments. Only 40% of UK golf clubs have suitable and sufficient risk assessments in place.

WHY DO RISK ASSESSMENTS- because over 10,000 people are injured every year requiring hospital treatment associated with golf.

MAIN REASONS; We don't carry out the risk assessments just because the law [Management of Health and Safety At Work Regulations 1992 (MHSW)] requires it but because it allows the club and employees to better understand the hazards they are working in and to help lower the risks of injury to their staff and golfers.

WHAT IS A RISK ASSESSMENT: A risk assessment is a systematic process of identifying hazards and assessing the magnitude of the risk. A risk assessment should be documented and provide mitigation measures to lower or even eliminate the risk. A risk assessment without actions and action parties is not an effective process.

WHAT SHOULD BE RISK ASSESSED: Hazards at golf clubs are widespread and can vary from risks associated with fire to handling and maintaining course machinery.

Golf clubs should carry out risk assessments on the following main areas;

- The playability of the Course
- All Greenstaff work activities incl. vehicles
- Handling Chemicals
- Manual Handling
- Fire Risks
- Catering and cellar risk
- Use of Buggies
- The Clubhouse
- Storage
- Working With Youngsters
- Asbestos
- Legionnaires

The PROCESS; To carry out a risk assessment the club should develop a plan of action and commit to it. We would recommend as a minimum the plan should incorporate;

- Identify all areas at your club requiring risk assessments
- Develop a simple methodology to record the findings and calculate the risk levels
- Identify who at the club is best suited to complete the assessments
- Complete all of the identified areas in a set time frame
- Establish action lists to close out all risk assessment actions
- Publish a report
- Communicate the significant findings to the management
- Add to risk assessment to your management system

LONG TERM: Once a full set of risk assessments have been completed for the club and recorded the risk assessments will need reviewing at set periods to ensure their validity. It is recommended that the club's expertise review the risk assessments as a minimum yearly or earlier if any significant hardware or process changes have occurred. (EG New equipment purchased for the course). Once the assessments are part of the clubs normal workings it is unlikely that a large amount of cost or time will be required to maintain the assessments.

Many clubs are still without a suitable and sufficient set of assessments and are exposing themselves to not only increasing the likelihood of an accident, but to prosecution. It is our advice that this item forms part of the future planning activities at your club.

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