



tion as I could from the web and from books. I now have around 20 books, most of them about nature and golf course ecology but there are also some on pure greenkeeping.”

Having well and truly caught the education bug someone then told James that he could gain a degree by distance learning and this was something he kept in the back of his mind for around a year.

“I didn’t think I’d have the right criteria to do a degree, as I was lacking academic qualifications, but I did have 18 years in greenkeeping and what I did have was Accreditation for Prior Learning so when I got in touch with Myerscough they accepted me. I was over the moon and determined to give it my best shot,” said James, who has rigidly stuck to two hours of study every evening since and has been rewarded with results consistently over the 70% mark.

James received funding for his course from the Ransomes Jacobsen BIGGA Scholarship Fund while he has also been successful in winning an R&A Scholarship, covering the final two years of his course. He is hoping to graduate in June next year.

But while he has been putting in the hours at home in front of a computer screen James, with the full encouragement and support of Peter and the rest of the team at Fairhaven, has also ensured that the golf course is now alive with flora and fauna.

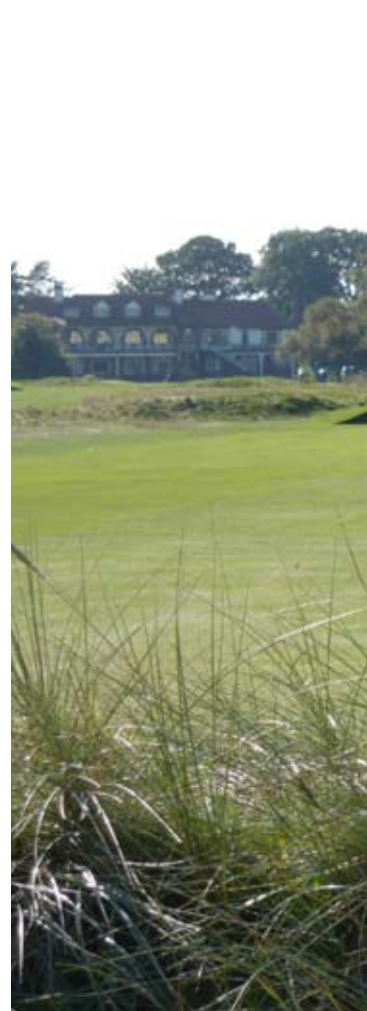
“If you had come to the course four or five years ago you would certainly have seen some wildlife but there is far, far more now. We have 17 different varieties of butterfly and we are delighted that the 73% of the 100 wildlife boxes we have erected in the last five years (many of them built by members of the team) were occupied this year, and up 1% on the year before,” he said, of the bat boxes, bee boxes, owl boxes, kestrel boxes and modified tennis balls on sticks aimed at encouraging Field Mice.

As a younger greenkeeper James didn’t push himself forward to achieve, believing that should be left to others and he actually left the profession for a couple of years around 1999 to set up his own gardening business.

“I used to do Peter’s garden for him and one day he said that one of his guys was leaving and did I want to come back. It had been driving me mad to be spending so much time on my own so my first words were ‘When can I start?’.”



The pond is part way through a three year clearance programme.



## “We do most of the work after hours, staying behind in our own time or when we have a few hours left on a Friday afternoon after we’ve done everything for the weekend”

Peter Simpson

Enthusiasm bursts from every pore when James talks about the various projects being carried out on the course – a passion which carried over to his invitation to visit the course with a host of emails urging me to pay a visit.

“My aim has been to have something on every hole as well as many of the out of play areas and we have achieved that.”

Proof needed?

There is.

Creeping Willow encouragement; Heather regeneration; Woodland management – eco piles, standing timber and Rhododendron/Sycamore management; Composting of golf course waste; Wild flower Meadow creation; 100 wildlife boxes; Orchid encouragement with three types now on the course; Marram Grass introduction; Wetland recover project; Pond clearance of Canadian Pond Weed; Dune Slack development – the green staff removed all the turf by and then replaced it piece by piece; Gorse management – a five year rotation policy of coppicing down to 50-80

mil and the introduction of home grown 100-200 mil plants to the natural links areas of the course; Common Reed encouragement and finally those Field Mice habitats made from tennis balls.

James had received news of his Conservation Greenkeeper of the Year Award from the STRI Golf Environment Competition after his invitation to visit the course but before it had actually taken place, but, in truth, he had almost given up on winning this year.

“I had been told that we would receive news the week before so when Peter came flying down to me as I was on the 12th fairway with a letter from the STRI I wasn’t too hopeful. The Club had won Best Newcomer in ’07 and was Northern Winner in ’08 and ’09 and the envelope had contained a certificate.

This letter looked a bit thin but it did contain news – right at the very end – that I’d won the individual award,” said James, who can now look forward to at Study Trip to the United States, in the company of Colin Webber, whose course, Port-

more Golf Park, in Devon, won the top Award.

“We are all very proud of him and the great thing is that he’s got the other lads interested as well. It’s just snowballed and Jim has been the main instigator. Winning the prize has been a just reward for him,” said Peter, as we spoke after a course walk.

Conscious of the ever present potential criticism of spending too much time on the nature reserve element of the golf course and not enough on the playing areas Peter is keen to ensure that the environmental work is an “add on” rather than “alternative” to the regular course management.

“We do most of the work after hours, staying behind in our own time or when we have a few hours left on a Friday afternoon after we’ve done everything for the weekend. What would we do - tidy the sheds or do a couple of hours of this work?”

The cash prize that the club received for previous success in the competition has been ring fenced for environmental work and if they need to buy Marram grass the funds are already in place to do it.

The club is not standing still in the development of the golf course from a playability perspective either and it has recently been rewarded by the R&A with the World Junior Open to be held during the



A rivetted bunker



The redesign of the par-3 5th

week of the Royal Lytham Open in 2012.

“We knew we were in line for either a Final Qualifier or The World Junior Open and are absolutely delighted to have got this. It is a big event and some of the stars of tomorrow will be playing.”

Ahead of that they are currently involved in the redesign of the par-3 5th under the direction of golf course architect, Tom McKenzie.

“We are making the green more visible from the tee, but at the same time trying to keep the bunkers in play,” said Peter, whose team are doing the construction work in-house.

In keeping with ensuring a challenge for the modern day player with the modern day equipment the club’s plan in recent years has been to take the course over 7000 yards and it now stands at 7025 from the back tees.

“That’s the end of it. We are over 7000 yards so that will be the last of the winter alterations,” said Peter, who explained that the current description of the course is “Hybrid”.

“We used to be know as a tree lined links, or semi links – we’ve got revetted bunkers and most of the course is on sand – but the current name is Hybrid.”

With Fairhaven moving forward and becoming a haven for all sorts of wildlife there is one species that



INSET ABOVE: A box for catching wildlife, and a modified tennis ball on sticks aimed at encouraging Field Mice  
RIGHT: The greenkeeping team

has made its home on the course which perhaps marks it out as different from most courses.

“We have nine ring-necked parakeet who live on the course and who we see quite regularly. They must have escaped from somewhere,” said James.

“They are quite aggressive to

the other birds, but we are a bit concerned about them becoming weaker through inter breeding.”

While those parakeets may have lost their way to have arrived at the North West seaside resort of Lytham St Annes the same can’t be said of James, who is now right on track and loving his job more than ever.





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# Thanks!

The conveyor belt of those BIGGA members who have benefited from Ransomes Jacobsen Scholarships just keeps on rolling and over £125,000 has been gifted to talented, ambitious people who could only move forward with assistance towards their course fees, since the scheme was launched in 2002

This month three of the recipients, at different stages of their careers, talk about their experiences and thank Ransomes Jacobsen for allowing it to happen

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## Paul Farrell Msc

**This June I attended my graduation at Cranfield University for the MSc in Sports Surface Technology. As a beneficiary of the Ransomes Jacobsen Scholarship Fund I would like to give a brief insight into my experience over the last two years.**

Having started out in greenkeeping 28 years ago, I have always strived to gain academic qualifications to supplement my practical knowledge and experience. Beginning with City & Guilds 2-4 and then moving on to the Higher National Diploma in Turf Science at Myerscough College. Although the knowledge I had gained was certainly of great value to me in

my career, I felt that if I gained a more scientific understanding of the subjects within our industry then it would help me make more informed judgements. I had started to look at the options for higher study, at the various colleges in my area, which included BSc degrees etc, when I spotted the advert in Greenkeeper International for the MSc in Sports Surface Technology at Cranfield University. I wrote off for the information pack and found that the module format would fit well with my work schedule as these took place over the 'winter' months.

However the costs involved did prove to be a stumbling block at the time and I gave up on the idea. That is until three years later when I came across the course informa-



Paul Farrell Msc

tion at the bottom of a folder. This got me wondering again, only this time I did have some finances available, but still not enough to finance the whole course. This is when I thought of applying for the Ransomes Jacobsen Scholarship fund through BIGGA to see if they could help. Thankfully the response was a positive one and they did grant me the scholarship, which was a great relief as this then allowed me to complete my application for the course.

When the time came to start the course, some doubt did creep in as to whether I was up to it, after all it seemed to be a big leap from HND to MSc, as I was under no illusion of the standards that would be required in terms of work submitted and in the amount of hard work and effort that was to be needed.

Also I did chat to a past MSc student to gain an idea of what to expect, he said the experience was "like putting your n\*ts in a vice and letting someone give them a good kicking for two years", although he did add it was a great experience and well worth it in the end. Surprisingly this didn't put me off, but it did give me an insight into what lay ahead, plus I had been a Head Greenkeeper for over 20 years so I already knew what that felt like anyway!

The two years that followed were tough at times, the usual highs and lows whenever you attempt anything worthwhile, however the support you get not only from the lecturers but also your peers is brilliant. Basically everything is set up to help you reach your goals, if you are prepared to work hard to achieve them.

The course was made up of eight modules, each module taken as a two week block release over two years, plus two group projects and the thesis/ individual project. The modules were varied, ranging from

subjects such as soil science to synthetic surfaces.

As mentioned an individual project/thesis was a criteria of the course. You aimed to choose a topic of original research, which seemed difficult at first – we all know from browsing the internet on greenkeeping matters the wealth of research that already exists on subjects we might be interested in.

The trick, if you are struggling, is to maybe take a subject and tackle it from a different angle if possible. Also it is important to have a genuine interest in the subject, as otherwise months of research will become a chore, which besides making you miserable, will probably reflect in the quality and end result of your thesis. The subject of my thesis was 'The Ecology of Nematodes and

• Each area was sampled and the nematode populations were identified by their feeding guilds. Each area was also tested to ascertain the levels of microbial biomass present.

• Information was gathered on soil type, the plant species present and the management strategies applied to the given areas.

• Analysis and discussion of the results took place, comparing the different turf areas.

The following is the 'abstract' taken from the thesis which consisted of over 15,000 words:

*Nematodes can destroy turfgrass surfaces creating unplayable playing areas, which can have great financial impact upon stakeholders - such as owners and users of sports facilities.*

*Although damage caused by plant parasitic nematodes in turf is recognised as a problem.*

*All nematodes play an important role within soil biota, being involved in nutrient and energy cycling.*

*These nematodes can be identified and separated into different groups by their feeding guilds. Nematodes interact with the soil biomass and are involved at every trophic level within the soil food web.*

*Therefore any management practices carried out upon a turf area should consider the effects they might have on not only nematodes but also microbial biomass populations within the soil.*

An investigation was undertaken to assess what effects management and soil type had upon the nematode and microbial biomass populations of nine different turf-grass areas.

The investigations also sort to ascertain if a relationship exists between nematode and microbial biomass populations within the turf areas.

The results found that there were significant differences in the nematode populations found and that different community structures exist across the different surfaces ( $p < 0.05$ ).

Microbial biomass populations across the turf areas also showed a significant difference ( $p < 0.001$ ).

The levels of nematodes and microbial biomass were considered in relation to the management practices carried out and soil type.

It was found that the two influenced the nematode and microbial biomass population size.

A weak positive correlation was found between the nematode and microbial biomass populations ( $r = 0.58$ ).

However it was considered that

## When the time came to start the course, some doubt did creep in as to whether I was up to it. It seemed to be a big leap from HND to MSc, and I was under no illusion of the standard required and the hard work needed"

Paul Farrell Msc

Microbial Biomass Populations in managed turf

The project was designed to determine the possible effects that turf management practices have on the dynamics of nematode communities and microbial biomass populations within different turf surfaces.

This was achieved with the following objectives –

• A selection of six different turf surfaces, four areas allocated to the playing of sport (golf, football, cricket, tennis) and two non sport surfaces (ornamental lawn, road-side verge).



this apparent relationship was more likely caused by the influence of the management practices and soil type and that the nematode and microbial biomass populations were responding in a similar way to the effects that they had upon the soil environment.

Although you may think 15,000 words is a lot, this is usually a concise version of all that you have found.

Taking on a research project, especially if for the first time can be daunting, but again the support and guidance from the lecturers is brilliant and is there throughout the process. Also you will probably find yourself having to develop new skills just to carry out the project.

My particular challenge was collecting and extracting the nematodes from the soil samples and then identifying the different nematodes by their feeding guilds under a microscope, plus the task of extracting the microbial biomass from the soil samples, along with getting to grips with the 'statistical analysis' of all the results from my investigation.

If anyone is thinking of taking on the challenge of the MSc, then one piece of advice I would give, is to ensure that you are 'PC literate' and I don't just mean how to get on 'Facebook'!

This won't help you understand the subject matter more easily, but it will help with your time management.

There is nothing more frustrating than plodding your way through computer programs when you should be doing it in two or three clicks, believe me I know. Also the nature of the Msc has now changed slightly.

Cranfield are continuing their Sports Surface Technology MSc course as a 'masters by research', which allows particular flexibility for suitably qualified part time students looking to study. Full details are available at <http://www.cranfield.ac.uk/students/courses/page1823.html>

Finally I would like to take this opportunity to thank Knights Grange sports complex for the use of their facility for my project and Dr Mark Bartlett for his support and guidance throughout the process of my thesis, also my fellow students for helping to make the whole experience an enjoyable one and of course my thanks.

Gratitude go to BIGGA and the Ransomes Jacobsen Scholarship fund who without their financial support my MSc would not have been possible.

## Darren Anderson MG

It was August 1992, the look of disappointment on my Parents faces said it all! I had just shown them my GCSE exam results and my Father who back then was also my Course Manager, leant back on his chair at the kitchen table and said. "Well you're lucky to be in a career that you can get a education in, not all kids who have just failed their GCSE's can say that", he then followed on to say "You better stick in when you go to college for your NVQ level 2 or else"! I kept quiet as I had got away very lightly with a telling off!

It was another year before I was sent to college, the reason being, so I had good basic greenkeeping knowledge practically before I went; this was also so I had more interest in the subjects being taught to the class if I had some practical experience in them. Little did I know that this would be the start of a very long education through different stages, even becoming the 46th Master Greenkeeper in 2008 and the look of pride on my parents' faces, I think I had been officially forgiven for the GCSE exam results 16 years earlier.

Throughout my education I have been lucky enough to have a training provider, North Wales Training (NWT) who funded my NVQ levels 2,3,4 with all the extra courses like NPTC training that helps towards NVQ's. In 2001, they also paid for my HNC in Golf Course Management, I told myself this was the final qualification I was going to do, but in 2008 I decided to dust off the computer and study for my Foundation Degree in Science this was On-line and the subject was Sportsturf.

The Club was supportive in me doing another qualification as they knew they would benefit from it too, but they also wanted me to look into funding to help with the costs to keep expenditure down as with most members clubs of late.

With no more funding available from NWT and almost all the avenues of funding exhausted towards the FdSc - Online at Myerscough, it didn't look like I wouldn't get a any financial help, but then I remembered the Ransomes Jacobsen scholarship that I had read about in the GI magazine and on the website, so I enquired about a Scholarship, following on to applying and then being accepted, I presented the club with the information on funding of the on-line course, also informing them that I would not be missing work through



ABOVE: Darren Anderson MG

**"I remembered the Ransomes Jacobsen scholarship that I read about in GI and on the website, so I applied and got accepted!"**  
Darren Anderson MG

day release with it being on-line, the Club happily granted the rest of the expenditure to pay for the remaining sum of money.

The FdSc - Online course at Myerscough was excellent and the staff headed by form tutor Dr Andy Owen were always happy to help.

For anyone thinking of taking up this course, I cannot state enough, it's a great course but you have to be fully committed to it! It is a step up from any other qualifications I have done and I've done a few, you will have to be regimented in allocating yourself revision time, we are all different with our circumstances so how you allocate your time up is up to you, I would suggest approximately eight hours per week, and if you can get some study time off work, take it, sadly for me, I had considerably more work commitments than usual with the run up to Abergel's Centenary and grant work to be carried out after being awarded money from the Ryder Cup Legacy Fund to build Two extra practice facilities, this made it hard to allocate time for study-

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!



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