



– anything from £500 to £5,000 per Scholar for each year of their studies.

The R&A Greenkeeper Scholarship Programme is a truly international scheme. As well as home-grown greenkeepers, the programme has helped students from China, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Germany, Hungary, Iceland, India, Italy, Nepal, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, South Africa, Spain and the USA.

You can read more about our Scholars in the 'News' section of The R&A website, [www.randa.org/](http://www.randa.org/)

thegolfcourse

The session during Harrogate Week will include:

- An introduction to The R&A Greenkeeper Scholarship Programme by Steve Isaac of The R&A
- Advice on how to become an R&A Scholar and how the programme operates within the colleges by Dr Andy Owen of Myerscough College
- Information on the field study visit to Askernish by Paul Miller of Elmwood College
- An insight into the benefits of the programme from R&A Scholar, James Hutchinson, who is now a

greenkeeper at Fairhaven Golf Club in Lancashire.

There will be ample opportunity to discuss the programme with the speakers and a number of other Scholars after the formal presentations.

If you are considering taking a HE course in greenkeeping or want more information on The R&A Greenkeeper Scholarship Programme, come to the Showfloor Theatre at 11.50 am on Tuesday, January 24.

We look forward to seeing you there!

ABOVE LEFT: Josh Webber, an R&A Scholar at Myerscough College, talks to delegates at a GTC Workshop about the composting process at the Webber family run Portmore Golf Park in Devon

ABOVE RIGHT: R&A Scholar Frank Aherne, recipient of the award for the Best Overall National Certificate Greenkeeping Student from

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# A degree of success

James Hutchinson, an Assistant at Fairhaven Golf Club, in Lytham St Annes, describes how he went from someone who had not studied for 20 years to the proud holder of a Foundation Degree in Sportsturf Science

“ At the time of writing I have just completed three years of study for an on-line degree in Sportsturf Science and I am well chuffed. In fact I am over the moon!

*The Foundation Degree in Sportsturf (on-line) is designed to enable students to achieve a vocational Higher Education qualification through part – time study at a distance from Myerscough College. For those employed in the sportsturf industry traditional modes of attendance are not possible and this qualification will help to overcome this barrier and enable sports turf professionals to take that next step*



Ransomes Jacobsen has provided grants to the value of £134,320 to 120 grateful BIGGA members through the Scholarship Fund programme since 2002 and the company has expressed its commitment to continuing its support to students studying Higher Education courses.

*in their career. If you are seeking to develop your skills and knowledge in sports turf provision and management and want to progress to more senior positions at the many prestigious sporting venues around the world this is the course for you.*

These words are Myerscough’s description of the course and were among the first to sway my decision to step up to the computer table and plunge head first into on-line learning.

In all honesty, I had not studied for around 20 years and I initially found it difficult to shift my brain into learning mode. There were times during the first few months when I thought to myself “Why am I putting myself and my family

through this?”, while on one memorable occasion I can remember being face down on the keyboard, writing a long line of `|||||` with my face! I can also remember asking a question via MOLLNET (Myerscough On Line Learning Network) regarding plant growth at around 1.15am, and receiving an instant reply. This meant that other people were also awake and studying, so I wasn’t alone in my geekyness! However, the highs far outweighed the lows and soon enough I was developing graphs and curves in an Excel document with consummate ease.

The Foundation Degree is made up of 14 modules consisting of subjects such as: plant cell biology;

soil science and ecology, all of which I have found to be most useful in my professional and personal life and they have all altered the way I now look at grass growth and golf course management. In fact, last year I was awarded the title of Conservation Greenkeeper of the Year and did my learning in the ecology module help to secure this title? You bet it did. Along with the title came a trip to the US to study one or two top end golf courses such as Isleworth and the Nick Faldo-backed, Grande Vista.

The trip to the US was a great learning curve and the knowledge I gained during my three year course meant I was able to hold engaging conversations with the American Superintendents I was introduced to while not looking completely dumb.

The cost of the FdSc degree averaged at £1400 per year, but for current course costs I would contact course enquiries at Myerscough. I believe that university fees are set to almost triple and I am unsure as to how families of aspiring young (and older like me) greenkeepers are expected to fund themselves.

When I set out on the degree path, I contacted numerous Government backed schemes enquiring about possible funding and financial help. Unfortunately, as my family and I have always worked for a living and earned our own way in life, there was to be no help. I can't help thinking that if I lazed around all day and did not want to work then there would be funds galore on offer - just being honest!

I had thought about giving up on the whole idea of study as we couldn't possibly afford it, then I read that BIGGA offered a "Return of Fees" scheme for spraying courses and chainsaw certificates etc.... I saw this as an opportunity to maybe find some assistance and financial help so I contacted BIGGA and, to cut a long story short, I was offered a place on the Ransomes Jacobsen Higher Education Scholarship Scheme and, I don't mind telling you, that I was over the moon - a phrase I was to use a lot over the next three years.

I mentioned MOLLNET a little earlier and I would just like to give you a brief indication of how the system works. The assignments and course module documents are sent via MOLLNET and are simple to access as during the first week of study you are allocated your own personal page. Apart from one or two 'externals' such as soil sample analysis and the exams, everything is completed through MOLLNET. I

will say, however, that you should ideally be computer literate before approaching any on-line study. I found out this 'Pearl of Wisdom' early on in the degree, when I was asked to produce a 'mean plant growth graph' in an Excel document. This is the point in my study where the long line of `iiiiiiiiiiiiiiiiii`'s first appeared and I can assure you it wasn't to be the last.

I found most of my reading help in the form of BIGGA's lending library. BIGGA now has a wide range of topics available and are keen to share their library with any of BIGGA's members. I took full advantage of this offer and by the way, where else can you obtain in-depth Plant Science literature for the price of a stamp?

Year One included soil technology, plant biology and ecology. Year Two was based around business planning, principles of mechanisation and cultural practices while Year Three was pests and diseases, drainage construction and golf course design. Prior to your final year of study, you are given a year long project to work on.

The project should be industry related so I chose the Introduction of Native Wildflowers into a Golf Courses' Ecological Rough.

We had already started to introduce wildflowers onto an out of play area at my place of work so I already had an indication of the type of growing medium they preferred. During the project, I posted a question on BIGGA's bulletin boards for member's help re pictures of wildflowers on a golf course. The response was fabulous and I thank all those who helped the project to run smoothly. I must also give praise at this point to Andy Owen (Course Tutor), Stewart Brown (Team Leader) and the tutors from on-line team, who guided us through the degree and their lightening fast responses to questions and queries aimed in their direction.

Three years zipped by and the morning of receiving my final grade was one of excitement and panic. Excitement because I had completed a degree which was something I thought that I could never do, and panic because I wanted to progress onto a BSc but you needed to pass your FdSc at 60% or above to be accepted.

As luck would have it, I did manage to receive more than the required grade so I applied for acceptance onto the BSc and the outcome is that I start studying for the BSc degree in September - over the moon again! Preparation for graduation could now begin.

Looking around the Myerscough graduation ceremony, I could tell that the look on the graduates' faces was one of excitement and contentment while the look on the faces of their families was one of sheer pride even if their son or daughter was dressed as batman. The gown I hired for the day came in either two sizes: Large or Small, so, being around the same height as Bilbo Baggins, I opted for the small but this, however, was still too long and all I could think of while waiting to be called up to graduate was "please do not trip over your gown onto Myerscough's Principal and, in turn, pull the curtains down over the band". As luck would have it, all turned out fine and I managed to make it back to my seat with my scroll and dignity intact.

If I were asked to give advice on the degree programme (try and stop me giving advice by the way!) then it would be to do precisely as the course tutor asks you to do. For instance, if you are required to produce 2000 words on a USGA spec green then write 2000 words on a USGA spec green. Do not mention

**I was offered a place on the Ransomes Jacobsen Higher Education Scholarship Scheme and, I don't mind telling you, that I was over the moon - a phrase I was to use a lot over the next three years**

that your dad's sister's cousin once played on a natural 'push up' green and found it to be nothing like the USGA spec type; if you do include nonsense then you can watch your grades quickly descend - trust me, I know!

I could talk for hours on my thoughts on Myerscough's teaching and the help that I have received from BIGGA and Ransomes Jacobsen, but I may need a few more pages in Greenkeeper International - trust me, the aforementioned words are the revised version!

May I also quickly take this opportunity to thank Fairhaven Golf Club for their help understanding, also my work pals, Craig, Jaymo, Mike, Pete and Tom for putting up with three years of an over excited James Hutchinson and his constant talk on grass, sand or whatever he had learned about the night before - now for two more!







Allowing staff time to visit shows and demonstrations may cost money but actively 'giving' them the time to go to an event can help team moral. All forms of experience and training contribute to CPD, Continuing Professional Development, vital to the development of skills in the greenkeeping profession.

# All I want for Christmas



James de Havilland looks at a alternative route to take when it comes to Christmas presents

**If all you get for Christmas is the odd card or two from work colleagues don't worry. You are not alone. But the 'festive' season can be an opportunity to take stock on the past year and think laterally. How about using Christmas as a time to 'reward' faithful greens staff and help them meet their goals of Continuing Professional Development?**

Perhaps the greatest gift you can offer any busy person is time. A bonus 'day off' is always welcome,

but that is not quite the same as allowing someone the time to go off and do something that could well enhance how they go about about the job that they do and make a real contribution to CPD, Continuing Professional Development. Some Green staff may also feel a bit overlooked. Many turn up early every day to tend the course and disappear before senior management staff will have had a chance to talk to them.

Smaller clubs may well benefit from easier communication

between everybody, but it is all too easy for some members of a team to feel somewhat left out.

Others may feel that they could benefit from a little change, no matter how much they enjoy their job.

Some may also want to know a little bit more about the tasks they are carrying out or even to progress to carry out jobs reserved for those with more experience. These are all points that BIGGA has sought to improve through its support of CPD.

John Deere has a range of Christmas gifts to include gingerbread treats and decorative tree baubles. But the company can also offer a lot more, from overalls to training courses.



So what can a Course Manager do? One consideration could be to look at offering certain members of the team the time off and resources to attend a training course. Although there will always be those, both donor and recipient, who would not consider this a 'gift', the simple fact remains that the more involved you become as the member of a greens team, the less time you may devote to 'developing' your wider experience. No one is ever too old to pick up new ideas or skills.

A training course could also be a subtle way of helping members of the team who may benefit from a bit of guidance. Talk to those who have been put through a development course they really did not think would help and many suggest they have really learned something. The way in which they are 'sold' the course will also impact upon how willingly they take part.

Tell someone you are sending them off on a course because they need some training is not as encouraging as suggesting you want to help them develop their

skills to enable them to tackle more demanding duties or add to their qualifications. Offering a course or two as a Christmas 'gift' can also give them something to look forward to and lift those suffering from the winter doldrums.

So what courses can you consider? Cutting Edge Training, an operating division of Ransomes Jacobsen, provides course managers with a wide range of operator training to ensure that mowing equipment, tractors and ATVs are being used correctly and safely.

According to the company, the training team are all highly experienced individuals with a combination of talents to ensure that everyone attending courses gains the utmost benefit from each and every session. Each has his own area of expertise to provide the operator with 'the skills to assess the working environment, ensuring that all pre-start checks are completed and that the machine is in a safe working condition.' From a golf club or any other employers perspective that has to be a good thing.



On completion of the training each candidate is assessed and, if deemed competent, will be issued a certificate of competency by either the NPTC or LANTRA Awards, depending upon the awarding body of your choice.

Certificated courses available through Cutting Edge Training include:

- Pedestrian controlled mowers – cylinder, flail and rotary
- Tractor-mounted mowers
- Remote-controlled mowers

**INSET ABOVE:** Tablet computers are not cheap but one can be a really useful business tool. Take an image or video of something like bunker damage. Email it to an iPad or smart 'phone. Share your pain with others or send it direct to the person faced with doing the repair.





Tractor driving and related operations – compact, utility and large agricultural

Tractor loader operation  
Utility vehicle and ATVs  
Brushcutters and strimmers  
Hedge trimmers

All of the above are relevant to any manufacturer, not just Ransomes and Jacobsen products. Cutting Edge Training also promotes technical training aimed at experienced mechanics and technicians who carry out maintenance and repairs on Ransomes Jacobsen products including Ransomes municipal mowers, Jacobsen golf course equipment and Iseki tractors and ride-on mowers.

Lely's Toro training could also be 'gifted' to deserving greenkeeping teams by their clubs. Clubs often send one or two representatives to the company's St Neots training centre. But perhaps investing in

A training course 'gift' is something many would appreciate. Not only do you get a chance to learn about new equipment you can also get the chance to meet new people and share ideas.

the wider team, by sending a larger contingent, would be a welcome gift this Christmas? As with other courses, such an investment could be a real reward for individuals keen to progress their knowledge and skills.

By ensuring the greenkeeping team gets the training they need, a problem they have maybe been struggling to tackle this year could be turned into a positive as they learn how best to overcome it in 2012. It is also, of course, a great 'gift' to the greenkeeping and golf industry as a whole, helping to raise standards and improve health and safety. Lely can tailor training packages to suit any club's requirements.

It follows, of course, that other manufacturers to include John Deere and other key suppliers offer a cracking range of training opportunities. The easiest thing to do is to just ask. Manufacturers are keen to promote best practice to ensure customers get the best out of equipment. The same applies to 'specialist' equipment to include items as diverse as chainsaws, sprayers and fork lift trucks.

### More traditional Christmas treats

On a more light-hearted note, you can also tap into the merchandise offers from manufacturers. Diaries, jotters, desk tidies, ballpoint pens, calendars and posters have long been handed out by dealer 'reps' to promote business. But mark enthusiasts may also find other items that attract them. John Deere has a strong following amongst the younger generation thanks to its high visibility in sectors that

include agriculture.

So no surprise that it offers gifts to include a chocolate advent calendar, a tractor themed gingerbread and electric Christmas lights. You can even buy green and yellow Christmas tree baubles decorated with the John Deere logo.

In fact Christmas can be a good time to renew staff work clothing too. How about a nice set of overalls or coat with a key supplier logo on it? Decent work wear does not come cheap, so why not tap into some manufacturer goodwill for this Christmas!

### Technology

Those of a certain generation may bemoan the increasing dependence some seem to have upon smart 'phones, tablet computers and other digital wizardry. These tools, however, can be really useful. Those who use a tablet computer can carry it with them. This can then be used to access daily work instructions for anything from a bunker repair to detailing exactly where you would like a little extra top dressing applying – this can even be done via a video clip. The key is that you can 'gift' staff a bit of tech that will help you work with them in imaginative ways. Technology can improve communication.

A key to good staff moral is of course to foster a team spirit. A surprise Christmas lunch or 'works outing' can really help lift spirits, but a gift that lasts will always be more valued. So think beyond a simple Christmas card and you may end up giving a gift that really does more than add a little festive cheer.



An employee cannot just pick up a chainsaw and start using it. A training course can be a way of not only helping the club make use of its own personnel but also benefit the individual by adding an extra qualification to their portfolio.

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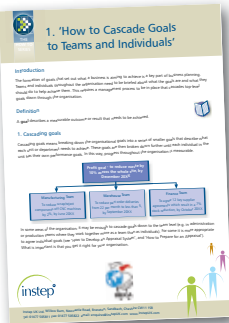


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Photo Comp



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# Hope and glory

Paul Hope, of High Post Golf Club,  
takes the crown in the sixth BIGGA  
Photographic Competition

**“I was out taking photos of the  
sunrise one morning when this  
young stag just wandered right  
into the shot”**

Paul Hope, High Post Golf Club

1st: Paul Hope. Eco Harmony, High Post Golf Club  
2nd: Adam Grieve. Early morning strimming creates mist in the sunlight, to beautiful effect, on the 3rd green bank at The Royal Eastbourne GC  
3rd: Gareth Anwell. Spectacular cloud formations compliment the surface shadows and bunker layout on the 15th hole by the old Palacio at Son Gual Golf SL





Craig Both. A lone greenkeeper patrols the horizon at Carnoustie Golf Links



Michael Williams. Ancient oaks and fresh blue bells on the 5th green at Coombe Hill Golf Club

**“This has been a very good year for our BIGGA Photographic competition. What a pity there are only twelve months on a calendar, we could have used so many more...”**

Alan Birch, Competition Judge



Ian Brodie. A sight to behold at North Berwick Sea Hole, Glen Golf Club

**The quality of entry in the BIGGA Golf Photographic Competition goes from strength to strength.**

Now in its sixth year, the standard of entry has improved to the extent that compiling the 2012 calendar is difficult because of the excellence of pictures which have to be left out rather than finding sufficient to find one for each year.

The winning entry this year came from Paul Hope, from High Post Golf Club, in Wiltshire, with a stunning picture on the course, with a deer posing for him in the right hand corner.

Runner-up was Adam Grieve, of Royal Eastbourne Golf Club, with a superb shot of early morning strimming, while Gareth Anwell, of Golf Son Gual GC, in Mallorca, Spain, was third with a superb picture of the old Palacio.

Golf course photographer and competition judge Eric Hepworth was particularly impressed with this year's entry.

“I think we all agree that this year's entries are the best ever.

Many of the entrants pictures would easily fit within my library and be thought of as a professional photographer's work.”

On Paul's winning picture Eric said: “This is a brilliant piece of photography and a worthy winner. The picture, though, is not without irony for me as I had the opportunity to take a similar picture of a huge stag with massive antlers once and a greenkeeper in a utility vehicle, scared it away!

“Paul has used the vegetation to the left extremely well and if he could have picked up the deer and placed it in the frame, he could not have chosen a better place. A fabulous picture.”

On Adam's picture Eric was equally complimentary.

“We are increasingly seeing other members of greenkeeping staff included in the pictures and this is one of the best examples of that. Shooting towards the sun is never easy in photography but Adam has pulled this off wonderfully well. The exhaust off the strimmers and the green staff's breath in the cold

conditions, has given this picture an extra facet. A great picture.”

“I put Gareth's picture on my short list as soon as I saw it. I immediately thought that this picture must have been taken by a professional. It is a truly cracking photograph and I love the way the semicircle of the trees are almost copied by the shape of the clouds.”

Fellow judge, Alan Birch was the man whose idea it was to launch the competition.

“This has been a very good year for our BIGGA Photographic competition. Congratulations and thank you all on the high standards and quality of your photographs. What a pity there are only twelve months on a calendar, we could have used so many more of photographs.”

The winner, Paul Hope. The wonderful light and all round colour makes for a truly great photograph, which could easily have won the Countryfile competition).

“Second, Adam Grieve. What a super ‘Working greenkeeper’ photograph. In the right place at the right time. Well done. Let's have more.