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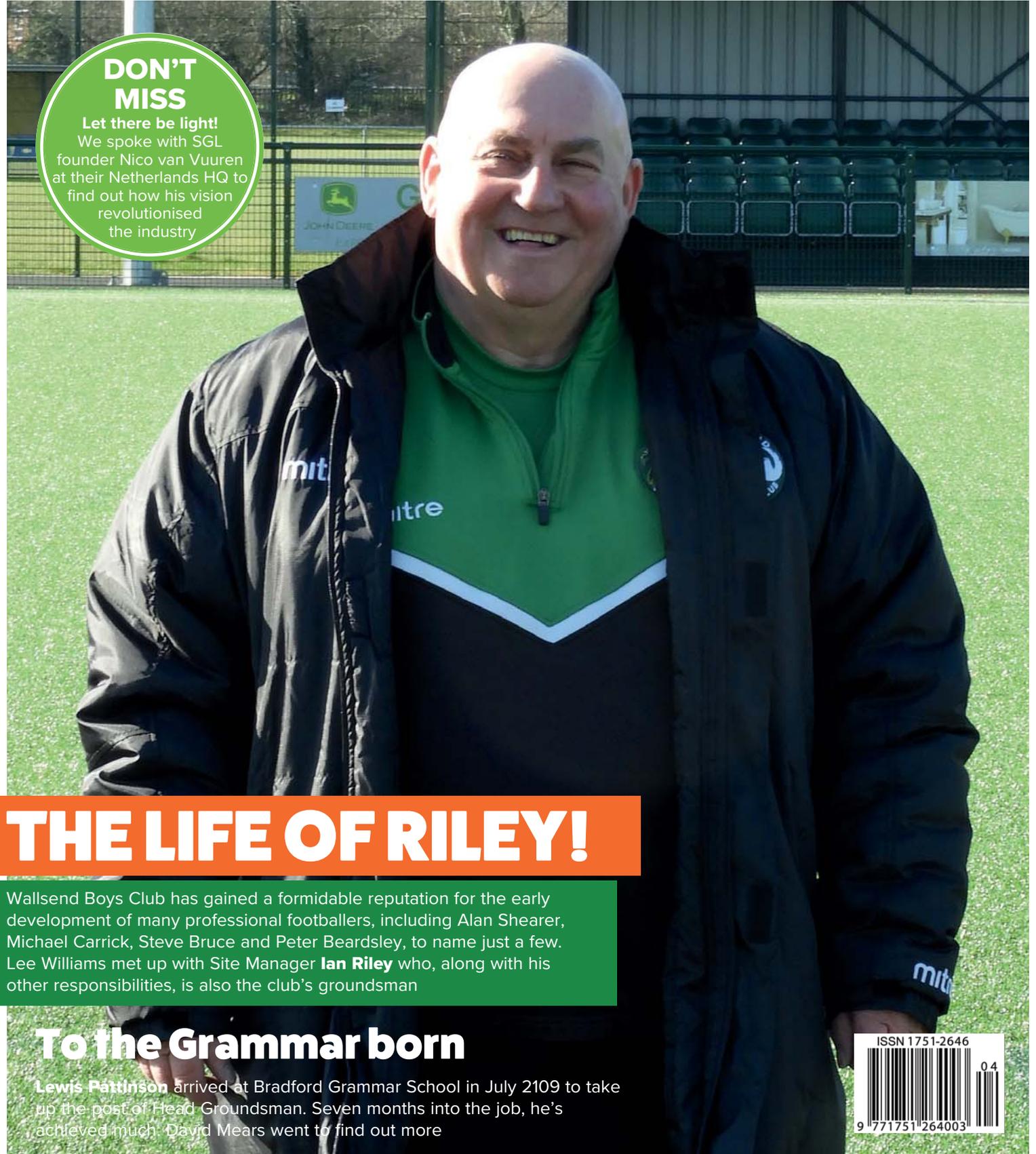
The turfcare magazine from pitchcare.com

April/May 2020

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DON'T MISS

Let there be light!
We spoke with SGL founder Nico van Vuuren at their Netherlands HQ to find out how his vision revolutionised the industry



THE LIFE OF RILEY!

Wallsend Boys Club has gained a formidable reputation for the early development of many professional footballers, including Alan Shearer, Michael Carrick, Steve Bruce and Peter Beardsley, to name just a few. Lee Williams met up with Site Manager **Ian Riley** who, along with his other responsibilities, is also the club's groundsman

To the Grammar born

Lewis Pattinson arrived at Bradford Grammar School in July 2109 to take up the post of Head Groundsman. Seven months into the job, he's achieved much. David Mears went to find out more

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WELCOME TO

PITCHCARE

Against all odds ...

Whilst this is my first foreword for Pitchcare, many of you will know that I have been editor for a while - it's merely part of the natural progression of Pitchcare that I will address you going forward.

It's a very strange time for everyone and, as I write this, Wimbledon and The Open have both been cancelled, sport in general is effectively closed for business, all pubs, restaurants, theatres etc. remain closed and the impact of Covid-19 on our everyday lives has become even greater.

Governing bodies have set out guidelines for each sector in order to carry out 'interim works', but I'm sure this is affecting each club in many different ways. Understandably, people are worried about the general economic outlook, and who knows when we will return to a sense of normality?

However, it's encouraging to see so many images on social media of you all maintaining surfaces, even with reduced resources and restrictions.

I appreciate everything is currently 'ticking over', however, in this issue, we continue to provide articles that represent facilities in their 'normal' environment. In these quieter times, if anyone would like to speak to us about their current situation or conduct a telephone/video interview for a future article, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Here at Pitchcare we have, like so many businesses, adapted to alternative ways of working, with most staff members working from home. However, our online shop remains fully functional and we have actually seen a record number of sales from the retail sector. At least this hopefully means most people are staying at home!

Understandably, in doing this, our regular routines are affected, and we can no longer enjoy so many of our usual activities with family and friends - which may have an impact on our mental health.

It's important to recognise when we're struggling and reach out to fellow industry colleagues or loved ones. It is important to remember that it is okay to feel worried, scared or helpless and that everyone reacts differently. Remember, this situation is temporary and, for most of us, these difficult feelings will pass. Staying at home may be challenging, but you are helping to protect yourself and others by doing so.

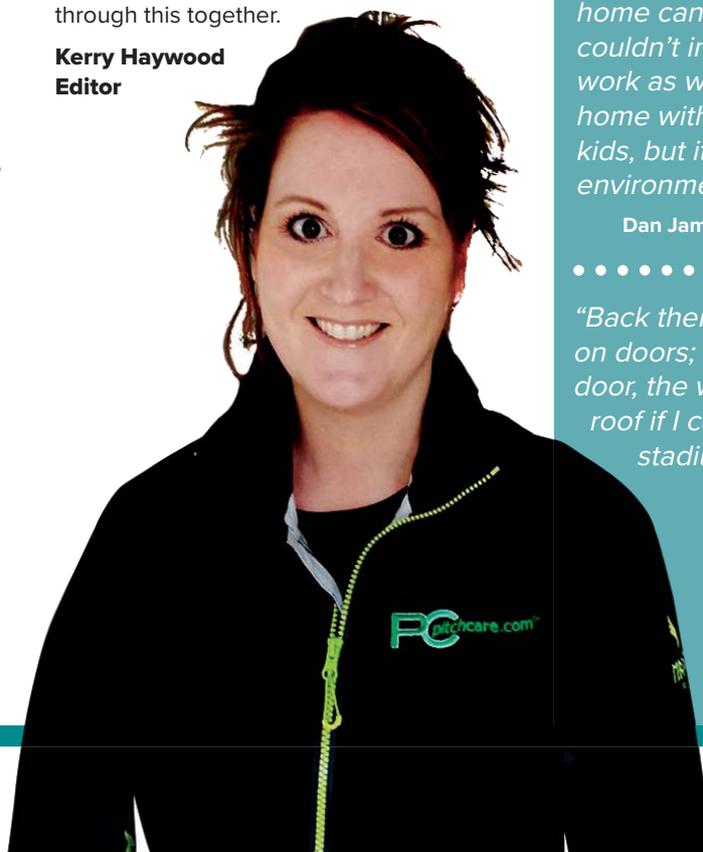
There are a number of websites you can visit should you need support, help or guidance in these challenging times (see page 5), whilst your associations are also able to offer help and guidance.

When all this is over, I do believe that our sports facilities will, given your undoubted talents, recover very quickly and we will get back to 'normal' in quick time.

Finally, I would like to thank those advertisers who retained their presence in this issue, with a view to getting those machinery and product deliveries underway and demonstrations booked in due course.

Keep talking, keep safe and we will get through this together.

Kerry Hayward
Editor



SAY THAT AGAIN!

"I thought I was a good groundsman before I went to London, but soon realised that wasn't the case!"

Lewis Pattinson, Bradford Grammar

"It was common to hear that one species or another 'definitely was not there', but it turned out that often the site owner was just not looking in the right place!"

Richard Mullen, Banchory Golf Club

"I love getting involved with the team. I still call myself a head greenkeeper and not a course manager. I'm a greenkeeper more than a manager; that's what I do best"

Paul Newcombe, East Devon Golf Club

"Masking symptoms instead of solving the underlying problems is still the accepted management practice for most turf managers"

Martin Ward, Symbio

"I've got three kids, so being at home can be stressful at times. I couldn't imagine having stress at work as well. I love being at home with my girlfriend and the kids, but it can be a hyper environment"

Dan James, Ford Sports & Social Club

"Back then, I would go banging on doors; the front door, back door, the windows and even the roof if I could, to gain access to stadiums"

Nico van Vuuren, SGL

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Issue 90 April/May 2020

Ian Riley, Wallsend Boys Club

COVER STORY: The Life of Riley

Wallsend Boys Club has gained a formidable reputation for the early development of many professional footballers, including Alan Shearer, Michael Carrick, Steve Bruce and Peter Beardsley, to name just a few. Lee Williams met up with Site Manager Ian Riley who, along with his other responsibilities, is also the club's groundsman. **P54**

GOLF

Walking in Jim's footsteps!

The cliff tops overlooking the English Channel is where Lee Williams met with Paul Newcombe, East Devon Golf Club's long-serving Head Greenkeeper, whose original dream was to be a professional golfer. However, he is proud to hold East Devon's course record with a sixty-four, which he achieved at the age of sixteen. **P12**

Proper job!

Yeovil Golf Club is set in the beautiful countryside on the Somerset borders, at the eastern edge of Yeovil town centre. It boasts two excellent courses; the eighteen-hole Old Course and the nine-hole Newton Course. On a very wet day, when the course was closed for essential works on the clubhouse, Lee Williams met with Jason Connaughton, the club's Course Manager. **P20**

Relationship building!

Ramside Golf Club in County Durham comprises two 18-hole courses, but it wasn't always that way. Tucked away in the middle of the older Prince Bishop Course is the greenkeepers' sheds, which is where Lee Williams met up with brothers-in-law Roger Shaw and Craig Hardy to discover more about the young history of the club. **P28**

KEYNOTE INTERVIEW

Let there be light

There aren't many stadium images you see these days without a lighting rig in view! Kerry Haywood met with SGL founder Nico van Vuuren at their Netherlands Headquarters to find out how his vision revolutionised the industry. **P36**

WINTER SPORTS

Catering for the pitch!

Maidenhead United Football Club's York Road home ground is acknowledged by The Football Association and FIFA to be the oldest continuously used senior association football ground in the world by the same club, having been their home since 1871. This perhaps little known piece of history has seen the club awarded a blue plaque by the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead. **P46**

SCHOOLS & COLLEGES

Oldest school ties

Lewis Pattinson arrived at Bradford Grammar School in July 2109 to take up the post of Head Groundsman. Eight months into the job, he's achieved much. David Mears went to find out more. **P62**

Under pressure

Crosfields School is one of the leading co-educational schools in the country, educating pupils between the ages of three and thirteen. Grounds Manager Stuart Gower has had a varied career, spanning forty years, and we paid him a visit to find out why this is the opportunity he couldn't turn down. **P72**

The Main man

Northumbria University is regularly voted as one of the best places in the UK for students. The facilities at its Coach Lane Sports Centre include a sports hall, strength and conditioning suite, classrooms, changing rooms and several outdoor pitches - which is where Lee Williams met with Michael Main, Sport Grounds Supervisor, who has served the University for the last thirty-five years. **P80**

Contents

During the Covid-19 crisis, we will continue to provide articles that represent facilities in their 'normal' environment, whilst appreciating that everything is far from normal in our industry at the moment!

MULTI SPORTS

Building the perfect beast

Ford Sport and Social Club run two sites in Essex - at Basildon and Ilford. Blair Ferguson went to meet Dan James, the Head Groundsman at Ilford, to discover how he has been coping with just one additional staff member on such a large site, and how his 'Frankenstein' skills are being put to good use! **P88**

SUMMER SPORTS

The umpire strikes back!

Volunteer grounds professionals can tread a hard road, but a team of two can share the load, as Greg Rhodes discovered when he talked to Westgate-on-Sea Cricket Club's groundsman and umpire Rafe Kelly and his sidekick Gary Sandwell. **P96**

CONSERVATION

Winning at life on the course

Banchory Golf Club, on Deeside in Scotland, won the Syngenta Operation Pollinator Award at the Golf Environment Awards, presented at BTME 2020. Course Manager, Richard Mullen, was acclaimed for the course's success in establishing wildflower areas on rough and out of play areas that has seen biodiversity flourish by providing essential natural habitats alongside a well managed golf course. **P102**

INDUSTRY

A lasting legacy in sustainable soils

When Martin Ward launched Symbio with his brother David thirty years ago, it's fair to say that their natural approach to soil and turf management was met with scepticism from many turf professionals. Now, as he hands over the reins at Symbio, thousands of sports turf venues are committed to sustainable soil management as part of their wider environmental responsibility and the global momentum to tackle the effects of climate change continues to gather pace. He reflects on three decades of developments with Ellie Parry. **P114**

TECHNICAL

Stage V for cleaner air

For years, engine and machinery manufacturers across the outdoor power equipment industry have been working towards lower exhaust emissions and cleaner air. 2019 saw the biggest developments yet for non-road mobile machinery with the introduction of Stage V emissions regulations in the European Union. **P112**

TRAINING

Putting Things Off Part II

In Part 2 of his article, Grounds Care Trainer and Conference Speaker Frank Newberry offers ten ways we can all reduce our tendency to procrastinate. **P116**



Jason Connaughton, Yeovil Golf Club



Michael Main, Northumbria University



Jason Stewart, Maidenhead United



Rafe Kelly, Westgate-on-Sea CC

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Dan James, Ford Sports & Social Club



Floods and lockdown! Worcester Racecourse under water

Sport England's support package

£195 million package to help sport and physical activity through coronavirus

Sport England, the non-departmental public body under the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, is making up to £195 million of funding available to help the sport and physical activity sector through the ongoing coronavirus (Covid-19) crisis.

The package, which is a combination of National Lottery and government funding, is made up of the following:

- A £20 million Community Emergency Fund, which will be opened immediately for clubs and community organisations to bid into. Grants between £300 and £10,000 are available
- A £5 million pot for existing partners to bid into if they're facing specific financial difficulty
- An additional £55 million to support our sector during an ongoing period of restrictions, to fund new and innovative ways to keep people active and, when the period of restrictions is over, to help organisations get back to business and adjust to a different environment
- A £115 million rollover of current funding into 2021/22 to give long term certainty to over 100 well established partners who play a vital role in the delivery of sport and physical activity in England

Alongside this, given cashflow concerns in the sector, Sport England also agreed to consider requests to release six months of the coming year's funding (50% of awards) to partners, meaning additional funding will be available sooner.

The package follows a recent decision to offer major flexibilities to those who currently receive funding - including the ability to change timings, key performance indicators, targets and conditions, and redirect money to new activity in response to coronavirus.

Chief executive Tim Hollingsworth said he hoped the package would help the sector get through these "extremely challenging times".



Tim Hollingsworth, Sport England Chief Executive

"Sporting events are being cancelled, gyms and leisure centres are closed, clubs and community groups are not operating, and children and young people are all at home," added Tim.

"This is impacting the sector financially in a significant way, although it is heartening to see huge amounts of innovation and agility, with many operators getting classes online in a matter of days to enable home workouts for example."

"As the body responsible for the growth of sport and physical activity at a grassroots level, we have an important role to play both in ensuring that we support those with short term cashflow concerns and immediate loss of income, as well as those facing medium and long term survival challenges and financial difficulties."

"We want the sector not just to come through this crisis but to be in a position to thrive again in the future and this package will ease the pressure on a huge number of the organisations who are central to that."

Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, Oliver Dowden, said everything is being done to support the sport sector and keep Britain active through these challenging times.

"This multi-million-pound package of public funding will not only help local sports clubs facing financial concerns but also encourage people to stay fit at home," he added.

"When it is safe to do so, we want our brilliant community sport organisations to bounce back and we will work alongside Sport England and



Secretary of State for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, Oliver Dowden

others to make that happen."

"We are also working closely with local authorities and the organisations who run their leisure facilities and have been supporting this part of the sector to access the government support now available."

"We'll continue to work to consider what support is needed during this period of closure, as well as the remobilisation phase where facilities will reopen."



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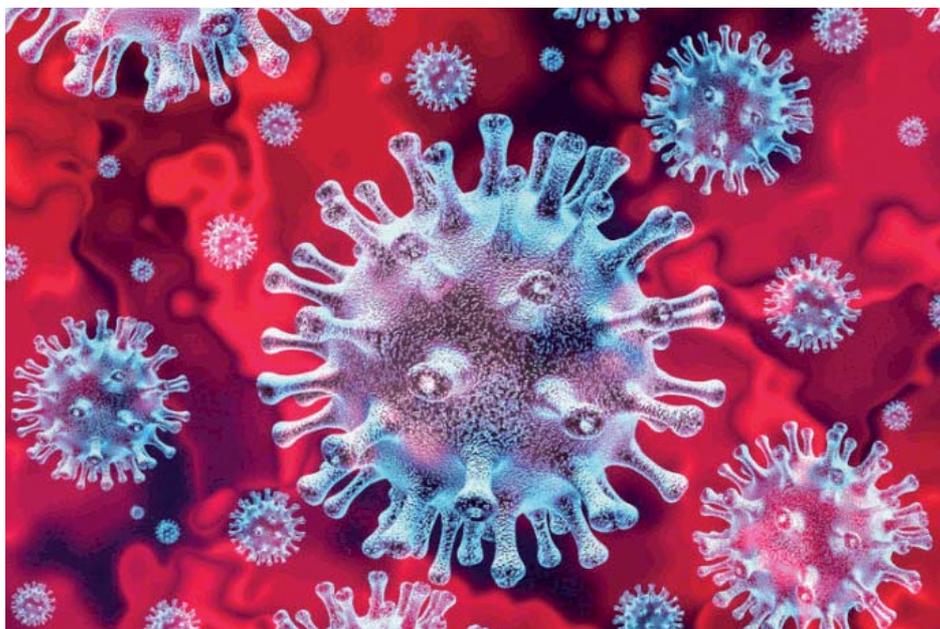
Mental health during the Coronavirus outbreak

Don't be afraid to ask for help and advice during these difficult times

For some of us, life as we know it has changed beyond recognition over the past few weeks. Coronavirus (COVID-19) has led to a massive change, more uncertainty, and new challenges for many of us and it's important we take time to think about our mental health during this time.

Government guidelines mean that more of us will be spending a lot of time at home and many of our regular social activities will no longer be available. It will help to try and see this as a different period of time in your life, and not necessarily a bad one - even if you didn't choose it.

Try and keep in touch with your friends and family, by telephone, email or social media, but it's equally important to consider muting or unfollowing accounts or hashtags that cause you to feel anxious.



Create a new daily routine that prioritises looking after yourself. You could try reading more or watching movies, having an exercise routine, trying new relaxation techniques, or finding new knowledge on the internet. Try and rest and view this as a new, if unusual, experience that might have its benefits.

There are many outlets if you need support and advice or guidance such as:

www.mentalhealth.org.uk

www.mind.org.uk

www.samaritans.org.uk

These websites all offer useful advice and a range of content designed to manage our mental health and wellbeing, advice on finance, talking to children and relationship issues etc.

As an industry, there are many people we can reach out to including our Associations; BIGGA, IOG and your sport's governing bodies for specific industry advice. Don't be afraid to ask for help or advice.

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RFU issues £7m relief package

Funding to be made available to community clubs says chief Sweeney

Rugby Football Union (RFU) chief Bill Sweeney has said the sport wants to play a major part in getting the public back to normality once the restrictions on everyday life will be lifted following the Coronavirus outbreak.

"I'm confident that rugby will play a big role in energising communities across England after this difficult period," said Sweeney, who was appointed chief executive of the RFU in February 2019.

"In the meantime, we are working hard with the wider rugby community to take the necessary measures to safeguard a financially resilient Union."

Sweeney was speaking to the media after the RFU launched a support package worth £7m, providing financial support for community clubs across England.

Funded directly from the RFU coffers, the relief package includes a £5m support loans programme, offering loans of between £2,000 and £10,000 to clubs, with deferred



repayments for six months and repayable over three years.

Clubs with outstanding loans due in March 2020 have also seen their quarterly loan repayments suspended until further notice.

RFU will also activate an early release of funding payments of around £600,000 to constituent bodies, allowing them to provide immediate support grants to the clubs most in need. The activity plans, against which the funding was originally allocated, have been suspended due to the closure of all facilities.

Sweeney added that the relief package has been made despite the national governing body experiencing a tough financial period - made worse by the inability to generate

revenues from Twickenham, the national stadium.

"We had budgeted for a loss-making year within a four-year cycle, due to the costs of the 2019 Rugby World Cup campaign and hosting only two home Six Nations games," Sweeney said.

"The loss will now be considerably more as we face challenges similar to businesses across the country."

"Our biggest asset is also a major cost and the closure of Twickenham Stadium has a significant impact on the revenues we can generate to re-invest back into the game."



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BASIS relax rules on CPD point collection

With much of the country working from home and most industry events cancelled, BASIS has taken the decision to relax its CPD requirements for Professional Register members.

Stephen Jacob, BASIS CEO, explains that ordinarily members are annually required to collect a set number of CPD points before the points-year ends on 31 May.

"Events are typically a focal point for collecting points, but with so many sadly not going ahead, we are extending the year-end period."

"This allows points to be collected into the next points-year. The only stipulation is that the full requirement of points for the 2019/20 points-year and 2020/21 points year are fulfilled for both years, by 31 May 2021," he says.

For example, members holding the Certificate in Crop Protection are required to gain 40 CPD points annually. However, they will now need to collect 80 points over the two-year period.

"This flexibility will enable our members to remain on the Professional Register, while ensuring standards remain consistent, enabling members to continue to practice essential agronomy work," says Stephen.

Depending on your qualification and membership category, the required number of points will vary. For example:

- Certificate in Crop Protection - 80 points by 31 May 2021
- Certificate in Crop Protection, with FACTS - 100 points by 31 May 2021
- FACTS only - 40 points by 31 May 2021
- Certificate in Crop Protection (amenity horticulture) - 40 points by 31 May 2021
- Certificate in Crop Protection (amenity horticulture) with FACTS - 60 points by 31 May 2021

Despite opportunities being reduced, BASIS encourages members to seek CPD points remotely in order to stay up to date with industry innovation and regulatory changes.

There are various options that can be completed at home, including reading technical publications or newsletters, as well as participating in online training sessions.

Members can check their training record and points requirements on the BASIS website or contact a member of the BASIS team on 01335 343945.



OBITUARY: John O'Connor

Tributes have poured in for a "much loved" family man and businessman who died after contracting coronavirus.



John O'Connor, 79, died at the Lister Hospital in Stevenage after he was diagnosed with the virus on March 12.

Due to underlying health conditions, John was moved into an intensive care unit but he sadly passed away at the end of March.

A father-of-two, he was chairman of grounds maintenance company, John O'Connor Grounds Maintenance, which works across Hertfordshire, particularly in Hertsmere and St Albans.

Former chairman of the British Association of Landscape Industries, John continued to play an active role in the company before he was admitted to hospital.

His son, Matt, managing director of the company, said; "My father played an active role in the company up to the time of his passing and his strong principles and values will remain the bedrock of the business. He showed great passion, not only for his business, but the industry as a whole."

"He was an immense character and much loved family man who will leave a long and lasting memory for all who met and knew him."



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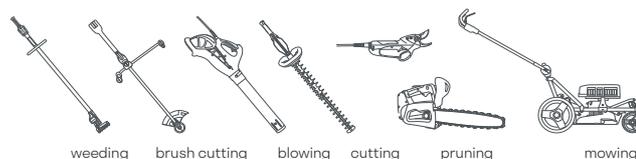
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PELLENC

Student awards postponed

Toro Student Greenkeeper of the Year Awards postponed

Following consultation between awards organisers BIGGA and sponsors Toro and Reesink UK, the 2020 edition of the Toro Student Greenkeeper of the Year Awards has been postponed.

Applications for the awards had opened in March, but the escalation of the coronavirus pandemic means that it is no longer safe or practical for the contest to take place.

Barry Beckett, senior marketing manager at The Toro Company, said: "It is with the greatest regret that the 2020 competition is postponed. We know how disappointing this will be for those who have already entered or were planning on entering this year. However, our number one priority is the health and wellbeing of all those involved in the awards and with the uncertainty we currently face, we cannot proceed with the event."

BIGGA, Toro and Reesink UK express their apologies to all those who have already entered, but with the competition deadline for entries fast approaching, a firm decision had to be made.

David Cole, managing director at Reesink UK, said: "These are unprecedented times and while we very much hope the situation in the UK will have improved drastically by the time the regional interviews were scheduled to take place, we have to react according to the Government's advice that stands now,



restricting all unnecessary travel and contact."

Jim Croxton, chief executive of BIGGA, added: "Obviously, this is disappointing news for the competitors. However, the decision is absolutely appropriate in these unprecedented times and the safety of our members is always at the forefront of our thoughts. The awards are one of the highlights of the year for the association, allowing our upcoming members the opportunity to showcase their talents."

All those who have entered the 2020 competition will automatically be put forward for the 2021 awards. Nominees who are 21 and have their birthday before the next application stage can choose whether they would like to stay in the Young Student Greenkeeper category or move up to the main award.



The Premier League, The FA and Government's charity, the Football Foundation, today announced that Robert Sullivan has been appointed as its interim Chief Executive Officer with immediate effect.

Robert joins the Football Foundation following more than a decade working at The FA, where he has led successful work in key areas such as strategy development, communications and international and corporate affairs.

He led the team that developed and delivered the pioneering Football Foundation Hubs investment model which has already seen the development of major facilities in five cities across the country, hosting over 1.5 million

players taking part in games over the past year. He also chaired the Football Foundation Advisory Group in 2018, the key body driving Football Foundation investment strategy to ensure it makes the greatest impact in the areas where it is needed most.



Chelsea Football Club has put its plans to build a new stadium on hold until "economic conditions improve".

The English Premier League received planning permission in 2017 to build a 60,000-seat venue at the site of its current Stamford Bridge stadium.

The new stadium was expected to cost around £1bn and had already received the green light from the mayor of London, Sadiq Khan.

In a statement, Chelsea FC said it would not look to utilise the planning permission it had received.

"We acknowledge that the planning permission we obtained for a new stadium expired on 31 March 2020," the statement read.

"We are grateful to all our fans and stakeholders, especially Hammersmith & Fulham Council, for their patience and understanding in the matter."

"We will continue to consider our options for a new stadium, should economic conditions improve."

BASIS Points for magazine subscribers

BASIS awards two CPD points for 'paid-for' subscribers to the hard copy version of Pitchcare magazine, due to the "diverse range of content that relates to the control, management and use of pesticides".

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register, simply by paying for a subscription to the 'hard copy' version of the Pitchcare magazine.

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Groundsmen are in uncharted territory after Covid-19 forced the suspension of all sports this spring, after a challenging winter. **Jane Carley** looks at how racecourses are coping and at the task facing one of the country's 'most flooded' cricket grounds

Testing times

Floods and lockdown!

Worcester Racecourse also suffered severe flooding - a late start to the summer jumping season may allow time for more intensive renovations than usual



Charlie Moore, Head of Clerking for Arena Racing Company (ARC)

Having battled the wettest winter on record, by mid-March racecourse grounds teams could finally look forward to a dry spell when they could catch up with renovations or prepare for the new Flat season or summer jumping.

Then the Covid-19 pandemic hit and, whilst a controversial Cheltenham Festival was held as cases of the virus rose, racing in the UK was brought to a halt on 17th March after being run behind closed doors for 24 hours. Ireland followed suit on 24th March.

With no plans to start again before 30th April at the earliest, estate managers and clerks of the course are faced with the challenge of maintaining their tracks under government conditions imposed to fight the spread of the virus, against a background of depleted revenues and possible staff absence for self-isolation or sickness.

"Racing's management is working out the best way forward to support staff and look after racecourses," explains Charlie Moore, who heads up Clerks of the Course for ARC's sixteen racecourses in the UK.

"We have to be able to present the tracks in pristine condition for the restart when it happens. There are also health and safety issues requiring us to look after the turf as growth, pests and diseases can lead to the surface being unsafe to race on, and the problems are often unknown until the track is actually used."

Charlie explains that the Racecourse Association (RCA) has established that key staff can travel as their role is considered essential work. "At the same time, we have to remain aware of the rules on social distancing to protect groundsmen and their families and develop ways of working that take this into account."

He adds that racecourses have a 'huge responsibility' to owners and trainers to make the racing surface as good, if not better than it was before, when racing resumes.

"There may even be opportunities to carry out deep renovations that the busy racing programme doesn't usually accommodate, if budgets allow and we have enough staff."

While not requiring the level of upkeep of turf surfaces, all weather tracks also need to



Groundstaff have faced the most challenging of winters - this photo, taken by Clerk of the Course Eloise Quayle on 21st December, showed that groundstaff at Uttoxeter had a tight window to repair damage for the New Year's Eve meeting



Groundstaff will need to continue the upkeep of racecourses ahead of the resumption of racing and, as such, are considered key workers

be kept in shape.

Two of ARC's all-weather tracks, Wolverhampton and Southwell, have trainers as their tenants, and they have continued to use the racing surface to exercise horses to ensure their welfare during the lockdown.

Charlie admits that it is hard to know how groundstaff teams will be impacted as the crisis reaches its zenith, but points out: "We have the advantage of being a large company with a big human resources team and management who can plan for such challenges."

Economics is another point to consider without the income from racing and other events which use the racecourse facilities, although ARC was able to rely on revenues from greyhound racing for a few more days, before that too was curtailed.

Although ARC courses didn't run behind closed doors, Charlie comments that it seemed to work for Wetherby and Taunton before the shutdown and, if the sport were to recommence under those restrictions, at least it would mean that horses were able to run and the industry re-start.

"It's a difficult time for trainers too, with some choosing to take horses out of training or focus on young horses being prepared for racing. We're hopeful that the industry won't suffer long-term harm in the way that point-to-point racing did after foot-and-mouth."

Arising from the flood

Being flooded is nothing new for Worcestershire County Cricket Club, and its scenic location next to the River Severn is the reason that home fixtures at New Road don't start in a 'normal' year until the last week of April.

However, this winter has been nothing like normal for head groundsman Tim Packwood.

"Our first flood was on 26th October, just three weeks after we'd finished post-season renovations," he explains. "We were under water for twelve days, and its earliness was a major issue. If we flood in November, the new grass has come through and can withstand it, but twenty-three days after seeding the square, and nineteen days for the outfield, there was no chance. It all needs overseeding again."

The club has already invested significantly to protect itself against the impact of flooding - all new buildings are above the 100 or 50 year flood level so that it can operate as a 365 day business for events and conferences; only the closure of a local road meant that the club was not operational for one day over the winter.

However, the ground spent seventy-three days in total underwater and, by the end of March, Tim had only just been able to get on to assess the damage.

At the same time, ECB announced that it had suspended professional cricket until 28th May.

"What happens next depends on when cricket restarts," he comments. "If we are aiming to play in May, we'll just overseed to get the grass back, but if there is further delay we might have a chance to scarify or topdress."

However, budget constraints may prove a limiting factor.

"If there's no cricket, there's no income. Currently, I have a team of three groundsmen and we have already put on hold plans to recruit a fourth."

"We've certainly got plenty to keep us busy, but it's difficult to plan until we know what's ahead."



Tim Packwood, Head Groundsman



New Road's idyllic setting means that flooding is a common occurrence and investment has been made to protect the buildings



New Road had only just emerged from the floodwater by mid-March



East Devon Golf Club

Walking in Jim's footsteps!

The cliff tops overlooking the English Channel is where Lee Williams met with **Paul Newcombe**, East Devon Golf Club's long-serving Head Greenkeeper, whose original dream was to be a professional golfer. However, he is proud to hold East Devon's course record with a sixty-four, which he achieved at the age of sixteen





Caption

Set in the East Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, on the clifftop on the western edge of Budleigh Salterton, East Devon Golf Club is a heathland golf course measuring 6,344 yards and rising to 450 feet at its highest point. It is renowned for its fast greens and spectacular views across Devon and Lyme Bay, from Haytor on Dartmoor to Portland Bill in Dorset.

Paul left school in 1979, playing off a two handicap and fully intending to be a professional golfer. "At this time, my father told me I had to get a job and I was lucky enough to get a summer position here working as a greenkeeper, which I loved. I then moved to St. Pierre in Chepstow, but still with a view of turning pro. I had a good colleague, who was involved in Whitbread at the time, and he got me a job up there, but I didn't feel comfortable a long way from home and got pretty homesick."

"I came back down to Devon where I got a job as a greenkeeper at Exeter Golf and Country Club within three days of being back. I spent a happy seven years there working my way up to the first assistant role."

Whilst working as a greenkeeper, Paul didn't give up on his golf. He was now playing off scratch, playing county golf and the odd big national event. "I was very much a part-time golfer, but I was getting some good results," he comments.

In 1987, Paul was approached, out of the blue, by the President of Downes Crediton Golf Club. "He rang me and asked if I would like to be Head Greenkeeper. I accepted the offer and spent three very happy years there. Then, in 1990, the opportunity arose for me to apply for the position of Head Greenkeeper here at East Devon. After going through the interview process, I was lucky enough to get the job, and I have been here for nearly thirty years; and I have

enjoyed every minute of it. I do sometimes wonder if I could have become a pro, but I had no backing. That's why my father said, 'you have to find a job son'. I love what I do, greenkeeping is a fantastic job, and I have no regrets. I see myself as a working head greenkeeper; I love being hands-on and getting involved with the team. That's why I still call myself a head greenkeeper and not a course manager. I'm a greenkeeper more than a manager; that's what I do best."

Paul has attended many educational courses and achieved various qualifications to broaden his knowledge over the years. "In the early days, I took a lot of IOG courses, long before City & Guilds qualifications were available, which I have also done. I continue to this day - management, first aid, chainsaws, and obviously spraying tickets - so I have continued to learn. The most recent course was to improve my chainsaw tickets because of the projects we have going on; and I lost two of my staff who were trained up."

A few people have inspired Paul in his career, especially in the early days, but the one that stands out is Jim Arthur who wrote many articles and books, including Practical Greenkeeping which was published by the

Head Greenkeeper,
Paul Newcombe

//

We are really pushing to get back to as pure heathland as we can. We know we are going to have some gorse, but the plan is to stop the scrub trees coming up



We have a plan and a vision of how it should look and, alongside the experts, I'm sure they will deliver the end result

R&A in 1997. During his long career, Jim Arthur was an advisor to more than 550 golf clubs in Britain and Europe. He had a reputation for plain-speaking, and his consistent theme was that the traditional methods are the simplest and most effective, both in terms of condition and cost.

“Firstly, I have to mention Geoff Mills at Exeter who was absolutely brilliant, and he is still a good friend now, and I wouldn't be here if it weren't for him.”

“Secondly, Jim Arthur, of all people, was a very good friend of mine. Where my parents lived in Budleigh, which is a stone's throw from the course, the girl who wrote up all of Jim's notes when he was doing his agronomy lived opposite my parents. So, when I came back to Budleigh, I asked her if she would have a word with Jim for me as he had a fallen out with my club; as he did with several clubs back in the day. He originally came back and said he didn't want to be

involved but, a month later, I received a call from him. He'd had a change of heart and said he would love to walk the course with me and have a chat. We did this many times over the years and, even though he was retired, he gave up his time for me. We became good friends; he was a top bloke and I owe a lot to him. We didn't agree on everything. He always felt I was cutting the greens to low; he was very much a Fescue man and I was a golfer; I wanted



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Getting Personal

Paul Newcombe - I hope he doesn't show his wife this!

Who are you? Paul Newcombe, Head Greenkeeper at East Devon Golf Club.

Family status. Married (for too long) with a son Luke, who also works at the club.

Who's your hero and why?

Away from family, Jim Arthur. Agronomy legend and personal friend. We shared a coffee most Fridays before his passing, as he lived 300 yards from our 18th green.

What has been the highlight of your grounds career so far?

Being lucky enough to get my dream job at East Devon, some thirty years ago.

If your younger self saw you now, what would he think?

You've done ok! Your putting could be sharper though.

What famous people wind you up?

Politicians.

What job would you love, other than your own?

Tournament Professional Golfer.

What was the most embarrassing moment in your life?

Taking an unwanted George Foreman grill back to Comet saying it was unused. Standing at customer service, as the packaging was removed, a sliver of fat slid out of the side in front of a sizeable queue!

What is your favourite film?

Not a huge film watcher, but I loved Con Air.

What scares you?

Not a great deal.

What would your autobiography be called and who would play you in the film?

The Golfing Greenkeeper, played by James Dimond.

What is your favourite sport?

Cricket - it's the finest sport in the world!!

What would you cast into Room 101?

Never heard of it. It can't be on the sports channels.

Which historical time and place would you most like to visit?

I don't like to look back.



Do you have a lifetime ambition?

To attend The Isle of Man TT races.

Which three people, living or dead, would you invite to a dinner party?

My sporting heroes; Tom Watson, Tiger Woods and Valentino Rossi.

What's the best advice you were ever given?

If in doubt, don't. Jim Arthur.

What's your favourite smell?

Cyren. Not the most pleasant smell, but you always knew it did the business. Sadly missed.

Which three albums would you take to a desert island?

Really tricky one that. I love anything from Muse to Sinatra. Hard to pick just three though! ... Bjork would surely be there.

What's the daftest work-related question you have ever been asked?

Why is the course closed? Stood next to a fully submerged 18th green.

What's your favourite piece of kit?

I love the Baroness LM greens machine for the perfect finish, plus the Wiedenmann Terra Spike XF for keeping grass there.

What is the single most useful thing you could tell a 16-year-old groundsperson/greenkeeper?

Ask questions on why you do everything.

What talent would you like to have?

Play any instrument to a high standard.

What law/legislation would you like to see introduced?

I'll leave that to the experts. Most golf clubs have them in abundance!



reasonable pace. Geoff and Jim have been a great inspiration to me."

The club has started an exciting long-term project to bring the course back to what it once was; a true heathland course. This has been backed by the Director of Golf, Steve Morton, who has worked hard to up the budgets for the heather restoration project and has helped push it along in the last four years. Paul explains: "Originally, it was a Harry Colt design, and James Braid has been involved a little bit too, but it's still very much a Harry Colt course. It was formed in 1902 and, if you look back at the old pictures, you can see it was a pure heathland course. In recent times, we

have involved Frank Pont, a Dutch course architect who is a Harry Colt specialist. He has helped to point us in the right direction. Tree expert John Nicholson, who has worked at 600 clubs around the country, has provided us with a tree survey. We have also had an ecology survey carried out with the backing of Clinton Devon Estates who are our landlords. We have utilised the RSPB who have brought in heather brushings for us, which have been planted on top of areas we have already cleared."

I asked Paul how long he thought the project would go on for and if the members were onboard with the changes? "It will be carrying on long after I have





I love getting involved with the team. I still call myself a head greenkeeper and not a course manager. I'm a greenkeeper more than a manager; that's what I do best

retired; we need to get the course back to where it once was and take it into the next hundred years. There's a lot of work to be done; we are pushing forward with it, and it's going well."

Whilst on this topic, Helen Chivers, the club's Head of Marketing, joined us and told me her thoughts as she is also a firm believer in the project. "Change is difficult, and people remember what they see now. Paul's

been here for years and he is well aware that a lot of the gorse you see now wasn't here in the seventies and eighties. We have had some people saying that it's been there forever, and then we show them pictures from thirty years ago and there is no gorse at all. The initial shock when you take out a lot of gorse which has been there for fifteen years or more is one of disappointment, but then they see the trees that we have

uncovered, and they see the topography and views they haven't seen for years, perhaps never! Then, almost universally, they say 'this is amazing, why did we not do this earlier?'

I suggested to Helen this will only be good for the future of the course and will be a great marketing tool to attract even more golfers in the years to come. "Yes, that's true," she exclaims. "It also helps make Paul's and his team's job much easier

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once we get it in a state where they can use machines to trim it, which we will invest in when the time arrives. I would also like to point out that lowland heathland is in decline across the whole of the UK and there are only two heathland courses in the whole of Devon. We are not prepared to lose one of the unique qualities we have, alongside being on top of a cliff overlooking the coast and being a Harry Colt golf course. Our uniqueness comes from having that heather and the pine trees and, if we were to lose that, we just become another parkland course on top of a cliff. Heather is in decline, and we need to ensure that we keep these different ecologies and biodiversity. That's all part of it; it's exciting."

Paul remembers starting a similar project back in the nineties, after they were given the same advice, so began to clear areas. But they then started to get a lot of grief from the membership and the pressure to stop was overwhelming and the areas just went back to gorse. "We are now fortunate enough to have a great team of people

behind us who are all singing off the same hymn sheet. So, as we are doing the work and clearing new areas, we are also spraying off the gorse that has grown back in the past, killing it off. This is allowing the heather to come back naturally, as well as planting new brushes we have been provided from the RSPB. We are really pushing to get back to as pure heathland as we can. We know we are going to have some gorse, but the plan is to stop the scrub trees coming up."

Helen explains: "The board wants this to happen, we want the course to be here in another hundred years. So, we are backing Paul and the team to do it. We have a plan and a vision of how it should look and, alongside the experts, I'm sure they will deliver the end result. As Paul said, we have tried before and it lost momentum, you need that long-term assurance and backing that it's going to carry on."

Paul adds, "I joined in 1975, and the gorse was very young, and it looked lovely when it was in flower, so I can understand that the golfers weren't too

happy at the beginning. But, thirty years down the line, it is straggly, past its sell-by date and it's turned into bracken. It then gets fertile; the trees grow up through it, and you start losing your heathland and, as we have been told, the heathland was turning into parkland. We decided it was time we did something about it."

In 2011, another big project was carried out to protect the club's future and its identity. The sea is slowly eroding the coastline, so the club had to act. "The idea was to keep the course as close to what it has been for the last hundred years for the next hundred years. So, what we did was bring the sixteenth hole in, we moved the thirteenth sideways, and we swapped the seventeenth tee over to the other side of the sixteenth green. That has now taken everything away from the cliff and we feel we now have another hundred years of the golf course without change, and we have kept it as close to what it was before. The idea was not to improve the course, but to keep its integrity, as the thirteenth was already a nice hole and would have been difficult to improve on."

Finally, I asked Paul how far away from going into the sea, was it? "The coastal heritage path which was there in 2010 is now on the beach, and the old seventeenth tee is only fifteen paces away from the edge of the cliff now! So, yes, it was very close."

History

Golf has been played in Budleigh Salterton since 1894, with the original Budleigh Salterton Golf Club being a nine-hole course situated on the east bank of the River Otter. Although benefitting from similarly commanding views to those of the current course, there were problems with the location, notably, the lack of a full 18 holes and difficult access.

East Devon Golf Club as we know it today opened on 31 March 1902 on a moorland course laid out by Captain Robert Tosswill. The current course largely created in the 1920s by one of the most significant course architects of all time, Harry S. Colt. The famous James Braid added to the Colt design during his time as course advisor in the 1930s, his main legacy being

the current 8th hole and 18th green and surrounding bunkers.

During its 120 year history, East Devon Golf Club has played host to Royalty, HRH The Prince of Wales (the future Edward VIII) played the course in 1921; famous sporting names, including Australian cricketers Sir Donald Bradman, Richie Benaud, Greg and Ian Chappell; celebrities and golfing greats such as Peter Alliss, who considered the view from the 16th tee to be "one of the best views in golf".

More recently, the club has become an England Golf championship venue, hosting the 2012 Ladies County Finals, the 2017 English Club Championship and the 2018 English Girls' Open Championship.



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Yeovil Golf Club

Proper job!

Yeovil Golf Club is set in the beautiful countryside on the Somerset borders, at the eastern edge of Yeovil town centre. It boasts two excellent courses; the eighteen-hole Old Course and the nine-hole Newton Course. On a very wet day, when the course was closed for essential works on the clubhouse, Lee Williams met with **Jason Connaughton**, the club's Course Manager



Jason has been involved in golf from a young age; his grandfather was the caddy master at the prestigious Elm Park Golf Club in Dublin for forty-three years. “He unfortunately died of a massive heart failure on the golf course. Ironically, he was playing with three doctors, and the course backs onto a hospital, but they couldn’t save him. I was ten when he died but, whilst he was alive, I spent a lot of time with him on the golf course. His love of the game was infectious, so golf has always been in the family.”

Jason has gained a lot of experience whilst working at various clubs in Ireland, England and Australia. “I’m from County Wicklow, just South of Dublin where there are lots of golf clubs and I loved to play golf as often as I could. When I was sixteen years old, it was time for me to start looking for a part-time summer job and, obviously, the natural choice was to be greenkeeper.”

“My first taste of the industry was as a seasonal worker at Charlesland Golf Club. After a week or two, I went home to my mother and told her this is what I want to do - my mind was made up. The next step for me would be to attend college in England, studying sportsturf management, whilst supplementing my learning by carrying out seasonal work at various golf clubs to gain experience. After college in England, I then moved over to Sydney, Australia with my girlfriend, who I met in England and is my now wife (she’s a garden designer). It was a great experience; I worked at The Australian Club and Cromer Golf Club as an assistant greenkeeper. We lived out there for eight months, before we both got homesick and missed our families.”

“We moved back to Ireland and I was offered a position at Glen of the Downs Golf

Club, where I worked for six years. Then, the recession hit, and I was put on a three-day week. My wages reduced by twenty-five per cent and, unfortunately at the same time, my wife suffered the same fate. She’s from Saffron Walden in Essex, so we made the decision we should try to move back to England. I started to apply for jobs and one day my wife rang me out the blue and told me there was a position for a greenkeeper/mechanic at Saffron Walden Golf Club on the BIGGA website; it was too good to be true. I applied and got the job, and we moved over straight away. After three years, I was made Deputy Course Manager; I stayed for one more year.”

“After volunteering to work at the Irish Open at Portstewart Golf Club, I came back with so much confidence that I felt it was time to take the next step. I applied for two course manager jobs - here at Yeovil Golf Club and Panel Golf Course in Harrogate. Luckily, I got the job here two years ago and I couldn’t believe it as it’s always been a dream. To be honest, it’s been a big learning curve, but I enjoy every minute of it.”

The twenty-seven-hole parkland course, which covers one-hundred and eighty



This year has been bad for wormcasts and is getting progressively worse, but it’s also been wetter. However, I don’t think we are suffering as bad as some places



acres, is split over two counties and is built on a sandy-clay soil. Jason tells me it's much more free draining than London and Essex clays.

"It's pretty decent and we drain really well because of it, but not to say we don't get wet in areas. We have the river Yeo which runs through here which means the Old Course is situated in Dorset, but if you go down to the Newton Course, you're in Somerset. The Newton is built on a flood

plain, which means the sixteenth green and seventeenth tee are at that same level, so they flood. There has been a lot of drainage installed down there in the past to help cope with this issue, but we don't have a lot of drainage throughout the site, not helped by the fact we pretty much have two holes running by each other everywhere. Having said that, we don't have a vast amount of land out where water sits and, on the whole, it drains well. We do have trouble spots that

need to be drained, but that's something we are going to work on in the future."

The greens on the Old Course are soil push-ups and, on the Newton Course, they are sand based. Historically, the ninth green has always had drainage problems; the whole soil profile is messy and anaerobic and, before Jason arrived, work was planned to drain it at two-metre centres.

"I remember walking the course before my first interview on a beautiful day in September. That morning, they'd had a little rain and the ninth green was squelching underfoot when I walked over it. On my first day, the first job was to oversee work on the green, which was carried out by MJ Abbott and, with regular deep tining, it's now so much better."

"The eighth is now our worst green but, in all honesty, if we get a decent amount of rain you can be pretty sure there will be a couple of greens this side of the road that will be closed and on temps. We are planning to drain greens five to eleven, but I want to know more about passive capillary drainage (PCD) before I put my plans forward; I'm a bit of a sceptic at the moment. I plan to visit some courses that are currently



MJ Abbott at work



I was ten when he died, but whilst he was alive, I spent a lot of time with him on the golf course. His love of the game was infectious, so golf has always been in the family



having it installed and make a decision from there, once I have answers to my questions.”

The club wants to move forward and improving the drainage on the greens is a big part of that with golf being played seven days a week. “We have a great General Manager, Chris Huggins, who is very level-headed and proactive. We like to sit down and talk through issues members have; recently, when it rains, the eighth green is off a lot, so we cut out a better temporary

green because of that. Chris and I will turn around and say ‘why don’t we just sort the problem out so you can play on that green, rather than put a bandage on it’.”

Both courses have a fully automatic Rainbird Stratus system, with valve in-head sprinklers on the greens, aprons and some selected fairways. It’s fed by a borehole with three large-sized tanks.

Jason talks me through the maintenance of the greens, aprons, tees and fairways.



Everywhere I have worked in the past, I’ve battled with fungicides, but it’s never really sat well with me

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Covid-19

No one could have ever predicted that we would be in our current situation. How things have escalated over the last few weeks is beyond comprehension. Here at Yeovil Golf Club, we have put as many measures in place as we can to ensure that we are as safe and healthy as we can be. Morning meetings now take place outside, everyone is lone working, but also ensuring that we are in constant communication with each other. Disinfecting of all machinery and tools takes place after every use.

At the time of writing this, we have closed for business. The club and I are happy to continue with minimal maintenance out on the course, as long as it is safe to do so. We have raised heights on greens and are going to keep everything else at winter height for the moment. My main focus for the foreseeable future will be plant health on greens. I feel if greens are left to grow that we may need to spend more money to get them back to where they need to be. This is not just cutting grass that we are talking about. This is about keeping people in jobs and doing the best we can to keep the business alive. Some will survive, but, unfortunately, others will not.

I think it's time for us all to band together and help each other more than ever. If you are running out of a product and can't get a delivery, don't be afraid to reach out to others and ask for help. We can all get through this collectively.



“We try to stick to a cutting height of 4mm, but it might drop to 3.5mm, depending on the circumstances in summer. In winter, we will lift the height of cut to 5mm. We have a John Deere 2500B to cut the Newton course and Toro 3400 Triflex for the Old course, I would like to hand-mow greens in winter, but we are not quite there yet. In summer, aprons and tees will be cut at 10mm and, in winter, 12mm but, considering the way it's going with wormcasts, I'm considering going a bit higher in winter. All fairways are cut at 16mm using the Toro 3610 Reelmaster.”

“In April, we have a maintenance week in which we will hollow core selected greens and solid tine the rest. We would look to give them a deep verti-cut two ways, using our GreenTek Thatch-Away units at a depth of 4-5mm, depending on how the machine copes. We will overseed with 80kg of bent seed, over twenty-seven greens, and apply

a light topdressing. I will be looking at going with five tonnes of sand every two/three weeks after that this season - if the weather allows. I want to go with a 'little and often approach' so that ball roll is not affected too much, and let the wind and rain help get it into the ground.”

“I like to get the Toro ProCore out as often as I can using the needle tines, but this can be difficult as we are a very busy course and the golfers always want a true running surface. So, throughout the season, we often go out with the sarel rollers as this is much faster with minimal disturbance. Last season, instead of going over the greens with the verti-drain, we hired the Air2G2 for the first time. We used the nine-inch tines and I was impressed with the results; we will definitely be hiring it again this season.”

Jason uses two separate fertiliser companies to get his soil test results and compares the two before deciding on is





What's in the shed

Toro Greensmaster TriFlex 3400 x 2
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 Toro Sidewinder 3500
 Toro Sidewinder 3100
 Toro Reelmaster 5610
 TruTurf roller
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 John Deere F1145 rough mower
 Grillo climber
 Toro Multi Pro 1750 sprayer
 John Deere 3520 Tractor
 John Deere 4600 Tractor
 John Deere Gator HPX
 Toro MDX x2
 Toro Workman HDX-D
 Toro ProForce blower
 Imants Shockwave
 Trilo S3
 Toro ProPass topdresser
 Toro belt dresser
 GreenTek Thatch-Away Supa-System cassettes
 Bernhard 3000 series grinders

nutritional inputs. "I believe it's the wise thing to do. In terms of our fertility, we try to keep it quite low under 100kg of N a year. I'm not on a low nitrogen crusade as we are not dealing with fescues here. I'm massively learning and adapting things here as I go along. Everywhere I have worked in the past, the levels have been higher in comparison and we've battled with fungicides, but it's never really sat well with me."

When purchasing most of their machines,

the club tend to go with a five-year payment plan, or a financing option, rather than buying machines outright. "It all depends on what the machine is; things like our sprayer that was replaced, I see as a longer-term purchase. I gave two options to the GM; buy it outright, as it will last a long time, or look at repairing what we have. But we tend to go with a five-year replacement plan."

Jason tends to sway towards Toro machinery and uses local dealer Devon

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Getting Personal

Jason Connaughton - he's not a Katie Hopkins fan. But, is anyone?

Who are you? Jason Connaughton, Course Manager at Yeovil Golf Club.

Family status. Married to Andrea, with two beautiful boys (Finn 6 and Feidhlim 1).

Who's your hero and why? I have two heroes. My dad Jody, who is currently winning his fight with stage 4 cancer; I haven't heard him complain about it once! And my wife Andrea. She gave everything up to bring up our two boys and she's doing an incredible job.

What's been the highlight of your grounds career so far? Getting to the point that I'm at now. Hopefully, something tops that in the future.

If your younger self saw you now, what would he think? You need to get to the gym.

Which famous people wind you up? Katie Hopkins.

What job would you love, other than your own? Motorsport engineering.

What is your favourite film? Shawshank Redemption.

What was the most embarrassing moment in your life? At a job interview, finding out that my mother in law had decided to call the golf club a few days before to try and seal the deal!

What scares you? Having a daughter.

What would your autobiography be called... and who would play you in the film? Lost in Translation. No idea who would play me though.

What is your favourite sport? Golf.

What would you cast into Room 101? Katie Hopkins.

Which historical time and place would you most like to visit? I'd love to go back and see the Roman Empire in full flow.

Do you have a lifetime ambition? To hopefully go to



the Masters.

Which three people, living or dead, would you invite to a dinner party? Milligan, Cleese and Everett.

What's the best advice you have ever been given? Enjoy what you do, and you will never work a day in your life.

What's your favourite piece of trivia? A snail can sleep for three years.

What's your favourite smell? Bacon cooking.

Which three albums would you take to a desert island? Stevie Wonder: Songs in the Key of Life, Jordan Rakei; Cloak and Jurassic 5; Power in Numbers.

What's the daftest work-related question you have ever been asked? What temperature does the greens iron actually get up to?!

What's your favourite piece of kit? Toro ProCore 648 and the moisture meter.

What three words would you use to describe yourself? Patient, kind and loyal.

What is the single most useful thing you could tell a 16-year-old groundsperson/greenkeeper? Get yourself out there. Volunteer for events and talk to others in the industry. You never know what might come of it.

What law/legislation would you like to see introduced? Better control on benefit fraud.



Garden Machinery. "I like Toro equipment, but I do believe in buying the right machinery for the job for me. It just happens that always seems to be Toro for cutting machinery and John Deere for utility vehicles/tractors."

In the past year, Jason has seen a significant increase in worm casts, with the withdrawal of suppressants from the market. "This year has been bad and it's getting progressively worse, but it's also been wetter. However, I don't think we are suffering as bad as some places. They have been a big problem on tees; we have kind of adapted to it, getting the guys to switch

beforehand, just to try and knock them off. The team have been great - you see them getting off the machine and scraping the rollers off because they know it needs to be done."

"Last year, we had an issue with chafer grubs down on the Newton, where we lost a fair chunk of the seventh fairway and we lost a bit on the sixteenth on the Old course - mainly in the rough. We put some chafer traps out with the pheromone, and we didn't get one, but that doesn't mean we haven't had activity since. To repair the damage, we just dressed it out and seeded it. We have to start being as adaptable as possible."

Club history

In late 1907, The Yeovil and South Somerset Golf Club was founded. The original course was laid out over nine holes at Abbey Farm. In 1920, the club was renamed to Yeovil Golf Club and land was purchased at its present location at Babylon Hill. Nine holes were built in that year and designed by Charles Hugh Alison. In 1936, it was decided that the course would be extended across Bradford Hollow to eighteen holes and that more land would be rented from the north farm. The extension was completed and opened for play in 1938.

In 1954, the owner of the land passed away and the entirety of the land that the course was situated on went to auction. The members of Yeovil Golf Club successfully purchased the land for £6,000.

In 1989, Yeovil Golf Club approached neighbouring Newton House about the possibility of purchasing some land to build a nine-hole course. A deal was struck and forty-four acres were purchased. The STRI were chosen as course designers and construction started in 1990. One year later, the nine-hole Newton Course was opened to members.



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Ramside Golf Club

Relationship building!

Ramside Golf Club in County Durham comprises two 18-hole courses, but it wasn't always that way. Tucked away in the middle of the older Prince Bishop Course are the greenkeepers' sheds, which is where Lee Williams met up with brothers-in-law **Roger Shaw** and **Craig Hardy** to discover more about the young history of the club

For brothers-in-law Roger Shaw and Craig Hardy, working at Ramside Golf Club has been a family affair for the last twenty-six years. Their working association began in 1994 with the construction of the original twenty-seven-hole project - the Prince Bishop course - a nine hole Cathedral Course and also a sixteen bay driving range.

The duo talk me through how their journey in the industry began. "I started my greenkeeping apprenticeship in 1973 at Billingham Golf Course," began Roger. "Then, in 1976, I went to Darlington Golf Club as Head Greenkeeper working alongside the old course manager who was in ill health. After a year, I was asked to take over as course manager. Then, ten years

later, I was asked to apply for the job at Brancepeth Castle Golf Club, where I spent another ten years."

"Then the dream of the owner of Ramside Hall Hotel, Michael Adamson (who sadly passed away in 2010, at the age of seventy-four), was to build a golf course around the hotel. As I had known Michael since being a kid in my hometown of Sedgfield, I approached him to see what his plans were. Cutting a long story short, we had a really good conversation at his house one evening. He was totally lost and being bombarded by people in the industry wanting to come in and design and build the course. I told him I was potentially looking for a development to get stuck into and suggested that I could build his golf course and stay on and







manage it. By the end of that night, we had shaken hands, and that was the deal done. The next day, it was officially confirmed and I handed my notice in at Brancepeth.”

“We started work on the Prince Bishop course in 1994. I was responsible for the whole project from choosing the architect - Jonathan Gaunt at Gaunt Golf Design - the contracting team which included two project managers, Ian Martin was responsible for the construction/build and Bob Hornegold for the finishing works. Then Craig and I, along with our previous head greenkeeper Harry Lees, worked with them through construction to the final prep of the course.”

I asked Craig when he first joined up with Roger. “I was encouraged into the job by Roger and started at Brancepeth in 1988 as an apprentice, eventually working my way up to assistant greenkeeper. After six years, I left to join Roger at Ramside as Deputy Head greenkeeper in the first year of construction. I was initially involved in doing a lot of ‘muck shifting’. As soon as we started seeding and the grass began to germinate, I switched over to the growing-in phase, essentially going back to being a greenkeeper. I was

promoted to Head Greenkeeper four years ago when Harry retired.”

Construction of all twenty-seven-holes, each with USGA spec greens, was completed in an astonishing six months. Roger explains to me how this was possible. “We had the perfect summer, except for getting washed out once in August where we had to recultivate and overseed. To take advantage of the conditions, we were all working thirteen-hour days, seven days a week. That said, it went like clockwork; it felt quite easy building that course, compared to the new eighteen-hole Cathedral course.”

“Craig will remember the fairway and semi-rough from tee to green on the nineteenth hole, which was a par three and was the last thing to be finished off. The project manager said we would have to come back and finish that in the spring. I was adamant the course was going to be finished, so I got a local farmer in with a Suzuki jeep with a Vicon spreader attached to it. Craig and I stood at either end of the fairway with flags and, with his one headlight turned on, we managed to get the seeding done so that night we were finished. The next day, it tanked it down and



I was potentially looking for a development to get stuck into and suggested that I could build his golf course and stay on and manage it





When I first went in there with the tractor and flail, the grass and shrubbery was literally over the bonnet

didn't stop; we literally shut the door on the whole thing until the grass came through and we could get back on the course."

It was then a matter of Roger getting his greenkeeping team together to help maintain and shape the course. "1995 was classed as our growing in year," explains Roger, "and we opened the course in August to limited play. Michael had some of his business friends play the course to show it off, and we had already sold some

memberships who also got some limited golf. We then closed down over winter and re-opened up all twenty-seven-holes fully in the spring of 1996."

Roger tells me that, as the years went by, Michael's vision grew to build a spa and more bedrooms onto the hotel. To fund that, they managed to get planning approval for some new houses on part of the third nine holes. This meant a few areas were sold off for housing, taking the course down to

eighteen holes in the autumn of 2011. "It was heartbreaking watching the contractors come in that winter and destroy all the hard work we originally put into building those holes," bemoans Craig.

The silver lining for Roger and Craig was that they were already in advanced planning for eighteen new holes which would eventually become the Cathedral course. Roger comments: "we were working with Jonathan Gaunt again, and we had the plans

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Team talk

DANIEL HARDY - MECHANIC

How did you first make the decision to start a career in the sports turf industry? I was fortunate enough to have family who already worked in the industry, I originally started part-time on the golf course while I was at sixth form. Once I finished sixth form, I was then offered a role in the workshop being a full-time mechanic working alongside the Head Mechanic Nick.

What are the biggest challenges you face? There are lots of different challenges I face everyday such as solving new problems or working on a machine I've never worked on before. Luckily Nick possess a lot of mechanical knowledge and is always there to guide me if I need help.

Are you currently working towards a qualification or taking out any extra training? I completed my NVQ Level 2 Land-based Service Engineering qualification at Askham Bryan College last year.

What do you enjoy most about the job? Being a mechanic there is a lot of diversity and each day there's a new problem to be solved. The process of successfully diagnosing and fixing a problem is very satisfying.

What do you find the most difficult part of the job? Has to be the early mornings; I've never been a morning person. LOL.

How could the industry as a whole help support and help further your career? I feel the industry needs to focus on providing enough resources for the younger generation. For example, there is no specific qualification for a "Golf Course Maintenance Technician" available in my area.

Do you attend industry shows or educational days? I have attended a couple BTME shows, I think shows like this are important for the industry as it allows you to meet new people and provide more opportunities.

Where do you see yourself in the future? In the future I see myself moving away and working abroad in a hotter climate. I may continue to work as a golf course mechanic, who knows? Time will tell.

Is there anyone person in the industry who has inspired you so far? I'd like to say a special thanks to Nick Scott as I wouldn't be where I am today if it wasn't for him passing on his knowledge and guiding me through my apprenticeship. Honestly don't know how he's coped with me the past three years!



Dan Hardy

and the contractors ready to go. So, as soon as John Adamson gave us the go-ahead in 2012, we started construction."

The new course was to be built on the existing five holes of the Cathedral course alongside a hundred acres of derelict farmland over the main Pittington lane road. The land was purchased eight years prior to starting the work. "A tunnel had to be built under the road to give access to the new land. We had one week to complete this work whilst the road was closed or we would incur big fines," explains Roger. "The contractors did a great job and completed it on time. We built fourteen holes - the third to the sixteenth - on what was called Hill-Top Farm, with the first, second, seventeenth and eighteenth built on the original Cathedral course land."

Building the second course proved to be more challenging than the first. The farm was named Hill-Top Farm for a reason as it was sat on top of the brow of a hill. "Fifty acres of land you would class as 'slightly

sloping back to the main road'," exclaims Roger. "Then you literally fell over a cliff into the valley, and this land had not been farmed for the thirty-five years prior to us taking it on. When I first went in there with the tractor and flail, the grass and shrubbery was literally over the bonnet. We cut it down, as well as spraying it with glyphosate, and 'farmed' it for a few years just to try and clean it up. This meant that, the day we started construction, we could get straight in."

"The biggest challenge we faced was discovering we were sat on a massive sand pile. When we started digging out one of the lakes on construction, I said to the guy on the job that I would be 'back in two hours to see how he was getting on'. When I returned, it just looked like an enormous bunker."

"All the site had been stripped of topsoil into big piles. The subbase was taken off and being moved to areas where we had to elevate the course from the road. One of





Covid-19

Craig explains the situation they face with Covid-19. "After the announcement from the government on Monday 23rd March, we arrived at work on the Tuesday morning and had a meeting at a safe distance. Then, immediately after that, we had assurance from our director that we were able to carry on working to maintain the two courses and surrounding areas. We are following the government's guidelines on social distancing, having staggered starts and lunchtimes to limit contact with one another. It's very surreal as the whole complex is on lockdown; only the greenkeeping team are working within the whole company."

the conditions was that we had to send all of the water down into the low side at Pitlington Beck, a stream to the west of the course. We weren't allowed to send any water back to the Prince Bishops course. We basically had to mound it so it would fall that way, so that resulted in a massive muck shift and a cut and fill in some cases up to four metres which we achieved, but it took some time."

"As well as some of the more difficult issues we had to face compared to our first build, that year, we had a lot of rainfall - way above the yearly average. So, we didn't finish construction, which was very disappointing, and we locked the door on the place in mid-October 2012. In 2013, we got a better year and a good start, and we achieved what we set out to do. By the end



A lot of our members call it an inland links because it can get so windy

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Saxon pedestrian mowers x 4
 Jacobsen HR 9016 wide area rough mower
 John Deere 1200 sprayer
 John Deere 2500A triple mower
 John Deere 2653
 Trilo scarifier/vacuum
 Saxon LM26 tees mower
 Case IH 125 MXU tractor
 Jacobsen Groom Master II sand rake
 Ferris IS 5000 zero turn mowers x 2
 Charterhouse Verti-Core 1700 aerator
 Imants Shockwave 2.1m
 Imants Shockwave 2.2m
 John Deere 3245C rotary mower
 Allett scarifier
 John Deere 4720 tractor x 2
 Toro Workman 4300D
 Toro Workman 200 sprayer
 John Deere 4720 tractor
 Jacobson Eclipse 2wd greens mowers x 3
 Jacobson Eclipse 3wd greens mowers x 2
 John Deere 3235C fairway mower x 2
 Progressive TD15 wide area mower
 Dakota 440 material handling unit
 John Deere 8700A x 2
 John Deere 2500EH x 2
 Charterhouse Verti-Drain 2220
 Massey Ferguson 5612 tractor with loader
 John Deere Greenstar 6000 GPS system
 Wacker Neuson E65 excavator
 John Deere 9009A rough mowers x 2
 Charterhouse Core Harvester 1200SP
 Charterhouse Speed Brush
 Classen HSC185E Pro Hydro
 Shelton Chain Trencher + Trimble Laser
 John Deere Gators x 3
 John Deere Pro Gator
 Dakota 410 Turf Tender
 Bernhard Express Dual 3000 Grinder
 Bernard Angle Master 3000
 Bernard Express Relief Grinder



of the season, we had a great coverage of grass. Then, in June 2014, we opened up nine holes of the Cathedral course for play and after a few more months of growing in we fully opened the course in September. We certainly saw two sides of the coin on construction though!"

Craig added: "Roger deserves huge credit for all his hard work whilst solely project managing the Cathedral course construction. He managed the entire build; dealing with all contractors on site on a daily basis ordering materials etc. which is no small task"

Helping Roger and Craig maintain the vast site to the highest standards is Nick Scott, Head Mechanic, 12 years at the club, 48 years old; Daniel Hardy, Qualified Mechanic, 3 years' service, 21 years old; Andrew Shaw, Qualified Greenkeeper, 12 years at the club, 28 years old; Nick Mansell, Qualified Greenkeeper, 2 years at the club, 53 years old; Shaun Embleton, Qualified Greenkeeper, 1 year, 40 years old; Jonathan Flowers, Qualified Greenkeeper, 9 years, 43 years old; Victor Southwart, Qualified Greenkeeper, 3.5 years, 33 years

old; Chris Lumley, Qualified Greenkeeper, 1 year, 35 years old; Scott Lyons, Apprentice Greenkeeper, 2 years, 20 years old and Mick Dobson, Greenkeeper, 15 years' service and 67 years old.

Roger and Craig feel there is a contrast between the two courses. "The new one is quite open, and it is definitely not a heathland. We have introduced a lot of tall grasses, some gorse has also self-sown and it is very windswept. A lot of our members call it an inland links because it can get so windy. It's good to have as it gives the members two different options and a talking point."



History

In 1820, Thomas Pemberton demolished an old hall known as Ramside and built a new home which he called Belmont Hall. In 1900, John S G Pemberton lived there. He was MP for Sunderland where the family had many connections. In the 1960s, when the family sold the estate, it reverted to its original name of Ramside Hall and was converted to a hotel under the ownership of Michael Adamson.

As detailed in the article, Ramside Golf Club features two highly regarded courses; the Prince Bishop and the Cathedral.

The par 72 Prince Bishop Course, measuring 6,851 yards from its championship tees, has views of the world-famous Durham Cathedral, a

UNESCO World Heritage Site. The Prince Bishops' course is named after the warrior clergymen who ruled over the lawless north of England from Durham Castle after the Norman Conquest in the 11th Century.

The par 72 Cathedral Course, measuring 7176 yards from its championships tees, opened in September 2014 and was inspired by Durham Cathedral. It was built on rolling countryside between the villages of Belmont and Pitlington with breathtaking natural features including ridges, becks and valleys. The course extends out over a broad hill-top with views of Durham Cathedral and as far afield as the Angel of the North in Gateshead.

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Keynote interview

Let there be light

There aren't many stadium images you see these days without a lighting rig in view! Kerry Haywood met with SGL founder **Nico van Vuuren** at their Netherlands Headquarters to find out how his vision revolutionised the industry

Professional rose grower and football enthusiast, Nico was sick of watching top of the bill football games being played on not so top of the bill pitches. In winter, goalmouths didn't show even a leaf of grass anymore and world class players were slipping and sliding across the pitch. How could it be that he was capable of growing thousands of roses per day, even during the dark Dutch winters, whilst the grass in many football stadiums in Europe had serious trouble surviving?

The concept - rose growing

The answer derived from Nico's rose growing background. In the rose

greenhouse environment at Porta Nova, all growth factors were considered, monitored and improved, and Nico knew that this same process could be introduced in a lighting system, consisting of metal rigs with lighting armatures.

Pitchcare: How long did it take to develop the idea?

Nico van Vuuren: In 1998, we started to develop the idea and build the first systems, but it wasn't until October 2002 that the first machine made it out into the field. In most stadiums, natural light is not sufficient for steady growth all year long, because of shaded areas, shorter and colder days in winter, and sometimes even in summer,





Wimbledon Centre Court



Because we know the running hours of every rig, we know when bulbs should be replaced and if there are any issues

the sunlight is not enough to recover from the damage. I knew that, if I could control the light input in a greenhouse, I could introduce the same technology for pitches and the grass would grow, regardless of the limiting factors. At the time, people said I was crazy; how can a rose grower know anything about improving pitch quality and how can these lights work? To a certain extent, they were scared about something different coming into the market and could not understand how introducing huge two tonne rigs onto the turf would work.

Where/how was the system first trialled?

Back then, I would go banging on doors; the front door, back door, the windows and even the roof if I could, to gain access to stadiums. I was so passionate about the product and knew what a difference the lights would make. In 2002, the first system was trialled, ironically, at the Stadium of Light, home of Sunderland FC. We set up a prototype rig in the penalty box and the results were simply mind blowing. So, we invited a number of groundsmen to view the results for themselves including Paul Burgess, Keith Kent, Tony Bell, Eddie Rutherford and Lee Jackson, to name a few - and they were all astounded.

Which facility was the first to install the system?

After the conference at Sunderland, we really started to build credibility and interest. In 2004, PSV Eindhoven were the very first European customer and Newcastle were first in the UK. In 2005, Arsenal were the first UK stadium to treat a full pitch, in at Highbury Stadium. Arsène Wenger was the only member of the Board to vote against it; he said they would damage the pitch and they would look unsightly. Then,



Managing Director, Nico van Vuuren with long-serving Sales Director, Frank van Beusekom



Analyser monitoring system



Rose greenhouse



How could he grow thousands of roses per day, even during the dark Dutch winters, whilst the grass in many football stadiums in Europe had serious trouble surviving

one very cold evening in January 2005, I was standing pitchside at a game against Manchester United and there was a tap on my shoulder. Mr Wenger said: "I'm sorry. I have never seen this quality of pitch at the beginning of January."

We were very much still learning at this point, and it was invaluable to have feedback from these guys in order to develop the machines further. Product development cycles at the time were very

short, as we listened and made changes to adapt to customer requirements. Today, customer focus is still very much key; we have 350 worldwide and we are proud to be the market leader defending that title.

Are the lights suitable for any cultivars?

Yes. We tested this from the very beginning, and brought it into practice in Australia from 2008 then America from 2010. We have our dedicated test centre, situated

next to our offices, where different light sources and light intensities are being tested and also their effect on a variety of grasses. The centre is divided into different sections and, on each section, a separate situation is created to calculate growth. SGL analysers then measure the different values of each section and results are reviewed and compared by our in-house agronomists. These results are included in the developments of new products.

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During winter reconstruction at Wembley stadium, where eighteen units were used to cover the full pitch



Masterclasses started fourteen years ago with a few people in a room, who were offered a Snickers and a banana for lunch, and now have grown into a key event in the sportsturf calendar

In the early days, my son (who has a background in agriculture), was amazed at how I could grow roses without collating any information. He criticised me for only looking at the roses which were growing well and said: "You have to know your input and output, to allow calculations of data in order to follow a science." That was the creation of our model - both for SGL and in the greenhouse, where we now look at temperature, humidity, biomass etc. to achieve results.

How does a groundsperson know how long to activate the system for?

What was very apparent from the beginning, was that we could easily add light to the surface, but you cannot grow a high-quality pitch from only controlling the light input. You need to be aware of all the growing circumstances as much as possible. Monitoring and analysing is crucial when managing a playing surface. So, the next step, was to develop an analysing system, with an online portal, displaying all necessary data and lighting advice from SGL agronomists. The SGL system became a

complete grass management tool.

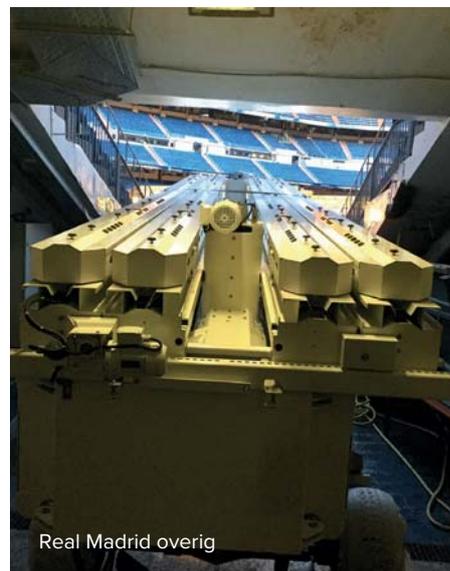
What this means is that, when we have a new customer, we analyse their stadium, we calculate exactly how much light comes onto the pitch and we use climate databases to determine conditions. All of this data is combined to provide start up advice and can also be used to evaluate a customer's requirements and build a model of how many systems are required etc. Many of those customers go on to use the portal for 24-hour analysis to monitor the conditions of the soil and every aspect of the conditions in the stadium. We offer three different levels of support for the portal; from weekly reports to monitoring the equipment themselves with the data provided.

Are there restrictions around dimensions and how they can be stored?

New stadium builds now consider light storage in their floor plans, however, a lot of grounds obviously don't have this luxury. Quite often, the lights are stored in car parks and the problem comes on match days, when the car park needs to make money. We are constantly looking at how to achieve



Separate situations are created in the test centre to calculate growth



Real Madrid overig



LU440's in use at Twickenham Stadium



LED lighting

the biggest possible footprint, alongside the smallest possible storage solution.

Can they be operated remotely?

Yes. The LU440 system has an advanced control panel, which offers a remote-control function anytime, anywhere. This installed SmartBox is connected to the stadium base station and allows the user to set the timer, consult analyser data real-time and monitor power consumption and running hours.

How much does the system cost to run annually?

The yearly power consumption depends on the number of lighting hours required for the pitch treatment. This is different for each stadium and purely depends on the size of the stadium, which mostly would also be relative to the budget available. With our growth models, our agronomists can precisely forecast the power consumption and related costs for a full year.

What are your views on the use of LED?

We are already actively selling and using LED light, with large systems installed in Munich and Wolfsburg and even a full pitch in the carpark of the new Spurs stadium, for when they are in NFL mode and the grass pitch sits in the carpark. We have quite a few customers already around the world using our smaller LED system. The thing is that, in most climates and most stadiums, the heat that comes off HPS lights (as a side product)

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BU50



Green Bay Packers



TC50 at Manchester City FC

is used in a very effective and efficient way to increase growth. LED does not radiate heat. So, we believe in LED, but only when it is fit for purpose and offers true benefits; our agronomy team can calculate this precisely.

Is there a system that makes it affordable for smaller clubs?

Our systems are not just for the big and famous clubs. At Saltex last year, we launched the BU50, which is the most affordable and user-friendly grass grow lighting system we built yet. The total cost of ownership for this machine would be approximately £2 per hour (with an average of 1,000 running hours per year). Due to advanced engineering and clever production, the BU50 stands for low investment costs, minimised shipping costs and reduced operational costs and can treat a surface of 50 square metres. Loughborough University have recently trialled this system with fantastic results

(look out for a feature covering the trial results in a future issue of Pitchcare).

Also launched last year was the BU10, which is a compact, plug and play grow system ideal as a first aid kit for any pitch. It applies high light levels to recover damaged grass quickly and strongly. The BU10 is fitted with a standard household plug, making it accessible to anyone. Because of the compact design and foldable legs, the BU10 is very easy and quick to place, move and store.

There are also the SGL Select products; refurbished systems sold at lower prices.

How difficult are these smaller systems to put together?

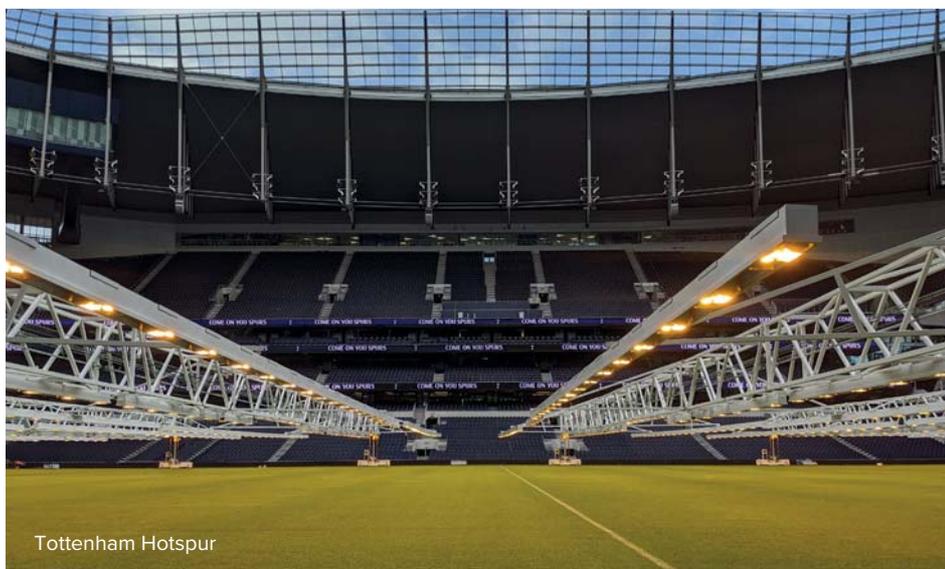
The BU50 and BU10 system are both delivered on a pallet for instalment on site (which also reduces shipping costs). These are aimed at making the system accessible for everyone, including smaller grounds and training facilities. For the BU50, the initial assembly takes a couple of hours, whilst the



Back then, I would go banging on doors; the front door, back door, the windows and even the roof if I could, to gain access to stadiums



UVC180 in use at Borussia Dortmund FC



Tottenham Hotspur

BU10 is assembled in a few minutes.

Can you alter the intensity/height of the system?

The height is fixed and calculated on the distance and spread whilst, most importantly, considering the uniformity of the light. Obviously, customers don't want one area to grow faster/better than others, so everything is focused on having the right balance and consistency of growth. There

are a couple of UK stadiums that have bespoke height adjustment systems, but that's more to allow for restricted access.

SGL is often known for introducing the lights for sports pitches, but you do more than that?

Our goal is to help groundsmen optimise all growing conditions and create an ideal climate for healthy grass growth. Since chemicals are banned in many countries,



All of the knowledge and expertise is developed in-house with our own R&D, agronomists and marketing department

we have developed different technologies to prevent diseases in an environmentally friendly way. We have developed a machine that is specifically designed to prevent fungal diseases on sports pitches, by means of UV-C light: the UVC180. The UV-C light destroys the DNA of active fungi, which prevents disease outbreaks - without affecting the grass plant and the environment. Another preventive technology is the TC50, which consists of

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SGL



Our systems are not just for the big and famous clubs. Last year, we launched the BU50, which is the most affordable and user-friendly grass grow lighting system we built yet



2019 Masterclass



Research and Development Centre

a fan and a cooling mechanism that cools down the pitch in summer, to prevent plant stress and grass diseases.

How often do you run Masterclasses?

Historically, I used to travel around the world visiting stadium managers and groundmen and we found, in the most part, that customers didn't talk to each other about the systems, so the Masterclass was born to allow attendees to come together. They started fourteen years ago with a few people in a room, who were offered a Snickers and a banana for lunch, and now have grown into a key event in the sportsturf calendar. They are currently held annually for our customers (by invite only) and comprise two days of speakers and workshops. We don't want them to be commercially led and about selling our products; they are based on gaining knowledge and an exchange of information. In the future, we may have to look at multiple events; Europe, UK, Asia and

America, to accommodate the vast number of attendees from all corners of the globe.

How many staff do SGL employ?

We currently have thirty plus staff - which we often find people are surprised by. All of the knowledge and expertise is developed in-house with our own R&D, agronomists, marketing department etc. and then much of the production is outsourced with close partners.

Do you sell direct or through a dealer network?

We mostly sell direct, although, we do have a few partners we work with in certain parts of the world such as Japan to help with the language barriers. Moving forward, we will be looking to work with UK distributors for the supply of the BU series, but the larger systems would always require a personal approach.

Thank you for your time.



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SGL team

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PROFESSIONAL X

Maidenhead United FC

Catering for the pitch!

Maidenhead United Football Club was established in 1870. Their York Road home ground is acknowledged by The Football Association and FIFA to be the oldest continuously used senior association football ground in the world by the same club, having been their home since 1871. This perhaps little known piece of history has seen the club awarded a blue plaque by the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead

Maidenhead United Football are currently members of the National League, the fifth tier of English football. At the time of writing, they were lying uncomfortably just above the relegation zone. Their York Road stadium is floodlight and has a capacity of 4500 with 450 seats.

On what has been a very wet winter so far, and on yet another very damp day, Lee Williams met up with twenty-seven-year-old Jason Stewart, the club's Head Groundsman/ Catering Manager.

Working at the club has been a family affair, which began when Jason's granddad Brian Stewart used to run the turnstiles years ago. Jason has been looking after the pitch at York Road since he was eighteen years

old, with help from his dad Mark Stewart who is a director at the club. Jason also took on the club's matchday catering five years ago.

Jason has no formal qualifications in groundsmanship, but he does his best to keep up with what is new in the industry through social media platforms, industry magazines and websites. "I would like to look at doing an NVQ or some form of certificate in the future to help improve my knowledge, but it is hard to find the time to fit it in. I'm very comfortable here, and I have great respect for the chairman so, as long as he his around and he's happy with my work, I don't plan on working anywhere else in the foreseeable future."

Jason's pitch maintenance budget is small, which is the case with many lower



I remember this time of the year being a lot colder and even getting some snow now and again. The summer months are getting hotter for longer, especially in the last two years. It's been a real struggle to keep the pitch from burning off





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I do have a good relationship with the chairman, who does his best to support me. I appreciate the money constraints the club has to work with, and I do my best to provide the best pitch possible with what we have available



During the game, while I'm busy flipping burgers for the fans, I have a volunteer - Gary Trenby - who will divot the pitch for me at half time

league football clubs around the country. "I do have a good relationship with the chairman, who does his best to support me when I need fertiliser or a machine needs to be fixed. I appreciate the money constraints the club has to work with, and I do my best to provide the best pitch possible with what we have available."

The club has no agronomists or consultants to offer advice on the pitch; Jason relies on Martyn Parish at Agrovista Amenity to provide him with information and advice when he has needed it. "Martyn has been very good to me since I met him. I respect his sound knowledge of sportsturf management, and I trust him to recommend the right products that work within my limited budget."

"Since working with Martyn, I have seen a marked improvement in the quality of the pitch. It has also helped that the first team are not training on the pitch as much this season. I would say the pitch has been the best it's ever been."

The pitch is a mixture of clay, sand and soil with partial drainage. "From the eighteen-yard line to the opposite goal line, we have no drainage, and the drainage we do have doesn't go all the way across the pitch!" So, with all the rain this winter, how has the pitch coped? "It's been a tough one, but we haven't had any games called off in the league, just a trophy game a few weeks ago. The pitch does drain well considering the lack of drainage; it seems to soak away naturally."





Irrigating the pitch in summer can be a long drawn out affair, with Jason having to use the mains tap, a hose, a pump and a travelling sprinkler to water the pitch. "It takes three and a half hours to do one run, and it takes three runs to cover all of the pitch: if it's windy, four runs. It's non-stop. I often find myself working into the night. It does help massively having access to some water. If the club said I couldn't water the pitch for any reason during the hot periods,

then we would lose grass cover fast."

Since starting his career as a groundsman, Jason has seen significant changes in the weather. "I think it's changed big time; I remember this time of the year being a lot colder and even getting some snow now and again, the last two winters have been a lot milder and wetter with heavy bursts of rain. The summer months are getting hotter for longer, especially in the last two years. It's been a real struggle

to keep the pitch from burning off."

Jason's maintenance regime is limited by the amount of machinery available to him, but he tries to keep to the basics. "I used to cut the pitch with a ride on rotary mower but, at the end of last season, I told the club this was not the ideal way to be cutting the grass as it tears the leaf and doesn't give as clean a cut as a cylinder mower. So, we bought a Ransomes Mastiff from a local cricket club and the difference in the cut is



We have not had as much disease, which is ideal for us as we cannot afford a preventative fungicide programme



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Getting Personal

Jason Stewart - you never know what's around the corner

Who are you?

Jason Stewart,
Head Groundman at
Maidenhead United
Football Club.



Family status. In a relationship and a father to my two beautiful children.

Who's your hero and why? Peter Griffin, the Chairman. He gave me the opportunity to work full-time at the club and to do what I really enjoy.

What's been the highlight of your grounds career so far? Maidenhead United winning the National League South in 2016-17. And, this season; 2019-20 because the pitch has never been so good.

If your younger self saw you now, what would he think? Hopefully he would be proud, as I'm working very hard.

Which famous people wind you up? Reality TV stars.

What job would you love, other than your own? I love what I'm doing so I don't really know.

What is your favourite film? Jack Frost.

What scares you? The future - you never know what's around the corner.

What is your favourite sport? Football. I don't play, but I like watching.

Do you have a lifetime ambition? Just to carry on with what I'm doing.

What's the best advice you have ever been given? Never give up and always ask if you're not sure about something.

What's your favourite smell? I love the smell of freshly cut grass (just as well really).

Which three albums would you take to a desert island? I'm not really sure as I can't see myself going to a desert island.

What's the daftest work-related question you have ever been asked? Have you just cut the pitch?

What's your favourite piece of kit? Ransomes cylinder mower.

What three words would you use to describe yourself? Hardworking, ambitious and proactive.

What is the single most useful thing you could tell a 16-year-old groundsperson/greenkeeper? Do things the best you can and, if you're not sure about something, ask someone!



fantastic. It's a lot cleaner, meaning less chance of disease. It's meant a lot more walking for me, but it is worth it when it comes to the presentation of the pitch. I cut the pitch at 26mm all season with the box on. The day after a game, I will go over the pitch with the rotary mower, which has had new brushes attached recently, this picks up a lot of the dead grass left on the pitch. During the game, while I'm busy flipping burgers for the fans, I have a volunteer - Gary Trenby - who will divot the pitch for me at half time. Then, immediately after the game, I will spend a few hours divoting."

The pitch is verti-drained twice a season by Shorts, a contractor from nearby Winkfield and, if the budget allows, Jason will carry out a third pass before the end of the season.

Jason undertook some of the renovations of the pitch himself at the end of last season, starting by building back up the goalmouths and linesman's runs using a rootzone mixed with grass seed. He then brought in Shorts to carry out the rest of the works. "They came in, verti-drained, overseeded with a disc seeder applying sixteen bags of Pro Master grass seed; the pitch was then toppedressed with eighty tonnes of sports field sand which was brushed in. Finally, a 12:6:6 pre-seed fertiliser was applied."

The club bought Jason a 50-litre pedestrian sprayer eighteen months ago which has enabled him to spray the pitch with seaweed, and he believes he has seen significant benefits. "I sprayed the pitch post-germination and then followed this up every six weeks with a





mix of SeaAction liquid seaweed and Bullet liquid iron to provide some colour and help strengthen the plant. The pitch has played much better so far this season with fewer divots after a match. The roots have got a lot stronger, and you can feel that when you are divoting. We have not had as much disease, which is ideal for us as we cannot afford a preventative fungicide programme.”

All machinery bought by the club is generally second-hand and bought outright, like the recently purchased cylinder mower. But, if money was no object, what would Jason like to invest in? “Where do I start? I would love a new tractor, verti-drain and disc-seeder so I could carry out my own renovations and, at the same time, it would provide me with the means to put a

What’s in the shed

- Ransomes Mastiff
- Sisis Quadraplay
- Ford 1210 tractor
- EvenSprey 50 litre sprayer
- Westwood S1500 rotary Mower



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I have seen a marked improvement in the quality of the pitch. I would say the pitch has been the best it's ever been



more intensive aeration programme together. Also, a tractor-mounted sprayer would be nice. I'm grateful that the club invested in the pedestrian sprayer, but it can be a nightmare pushing it up and down the pitch but, at the same time, I don't mind too much as it's helped greatly."

Jason has a real problem with worm casts now that carbendazim has been withdrawn. "We used to

spray all the time for worms. In summer, it's not as big a problem as they dry up and are easily spread about with the brush or when cutting. The wet months of winter is when you really notice them the most. They stick to the rollers, making the job twice as long. So, before I cut or roll, it is now a case of drag-matting or brushing, and I also have a switch; it works, but it takes a lot out of you."

History

The origins of senior football in Maidenhead - the fourth largest town in the Royal County of Berkshire - can be traced back to October 1870 with the formation of Maidenhead Football Club, who subsequently played their first-ever fixture in December 1870 against Windsor Home Park. The York Road site is now officially acknowledged as the oldest continually used football ground in the world, eclipsing Northwich Victoria's previous claim by several years. The club was one of the original fifteen entrants for the first-ever FA Cup competition in 1871-72. Maidenhead Norfolkians, meanwhile, was founded in 1884 and amalgamated with their neighbours after the Great War. The "United" suffix was adopted two years later.

Maidenhead moved to York Road in 1871, after playing their early matches at Kidwell's Park, which later became home to the Norfolkians until the merger. As Kerry Miller (co-author of the Non-league Football Year Book) recalls, at that time the site was much larger, with the pitch at ninety degrees to its current position. One goal was close to the railway line, which today runs parallel to the far touchline. A thatched pavilion was provided in one corner.

As one would expect for such an old ground, York Road has experienced more than its fair share of ups and downs during its long history, including fire and an abandoned clubhouse project that almost ruined the club in the 1990s.

In 1922, a 500-seat wooden stand was erected on the north side of the ground, along the near touchline. Banked terracing on all four sides utilised old railway sleepers which gradually made way to concrete. The far side of the ground was the first to benefit, including the creation of a tea bar, which now serves as the club shop.

In 1935, the Supporters' Club raised enough funds for the building of a further covered enclosure along the railway touchline. Sadly, the wooden stand, which featured a beautiful gabled roof, was gutted by fire in 1986 and demolished, leaving a tell-tell gap in the concrete terracing on either side. Following the fire, 100 seats were added to the enclosure on the railway side, with more acquired from Millwall's old ground at The Den. Looking closely from behind and the sides at what now serves as the main stand, one can clearly see how the original enclosure has been adapted for its

new purpose. Sadly, however, the view is very much a low-level one and obscured by numerous supporting pillars.

In 1974, there were grandiose plans to develop a new clubhouse on the north-east side of the ground, necessitating levelling of the terracing in that corner of the ground. However, the building was never completed, and the shell of the structure remains as a testament to a project that almost crippled the club. These days the area is used for contract car parking in the town centre, from which the club derives valuable income. Instead, more modest facilities are now in place on the site of the old stand.

Both ends of the ground are terraced. The original terracing is still in place behind the west goal (the Bell Road End), where there are two large covered areas providing the requisite shelter. The current tea bar stands at the near corner, but of particular interest at this end of the ground, is a mural painted onto the wall at the opposite corner, depicting various stages in the club's history. In recent years, the eastern end of the ground has been updated, with the addition of shallow terracing and a covered area behind the goal.

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Wallsend Boys Club

The life of Riley!

Wallsend Boys Club in North Tyneside has gained a formidable reputation for the early development of many professional footballers, including Alan Shearer, Michael Carrick, Steve Bruce and Peter Beardsley, to name just a few. Lee Williams met up with Site Manager **Ian Riley** who, along with his other responsibilities, is also the club's groundsman

In June 2011, Wallsend Boys Club opened its first football centre alongside the Wallsend Sports Centre. Prior to this, they had been playing on park and local authority pitches. The new centre provided two senior grass pitches, five junior grass pitches, one mini-soccer grass pitch and a changing pavilion. It was funded by grants of £850,000 from the Football Foundation, £150,000 from The FA and £301,000 from North Tyneside Council, with the club itself raising £114,000 towards the scheme.

Ian Riley's first involvement with the club was as a player at the age of fifteen. Later in life, he found himself back at the club with his grandsons and fell into the groundsman's role. "I worked for Imperial Tobacco," Ian explained, "and took early redundancy when I was fifty years old. I then

started working for myself, as a handyman fitting kitchens and bathrooms and general repairs, whilst volunteering as a coach at the club."

Then, in 2010, the club suddenly realised that they needed a groundsman! "You may get all these grants to improve pitches but, at the same time, they need to be looked after," commented Ian. "So, I started cutting the pitches part-time, getting paid twenty-five hours a week, but working seven days a week! But I do it because I love it. I also run the canteen, but we have recently employed some extra staff as there was just too much for me to do. Also, I coach here, and I successfully took my under-eights up to under-elevens; we have won the league each year and remain unbeaten. This has led to me becoming lead coordinator for the football section, so I'm now organising the







If we get the time, we will go over the pitches with dragmats to remove the dew from the grass to help with disease control

football managers and coaches at the club.”

Ian had no previous experience of maintaining grass and synthetic sports pitches but, over the years, managed to improve the pitches in ‘leaps and bounds’. “I have completed the IOG Level One day course, but I have no other official qualifications. I depend on what I have learned from those professionals around me at Northumbria University and South Shields, I will knock on anybody’s door for advice if I have a problem. A lot of stuff I will figure out myself, but Mark Robertson from Agrovista Amenity also comes in to take

regular soil samples and provide me with sound advice.”

Being site manager, Ian is not only responsible for expenditure on the pitches. “I look after ordering of all the kit and equipment for our thirty-six teams. I also carry out all ordering for the maintenance of the pitches and the stock for the café, as well as keeping the day to day accounts up-to-date for both the senior men’s and ladies’ teams. These are then passed on to John Percival, recently brought into the club as Facilities Manager, who transfers them to our accountant.”

The club is growing and needs to look at expanding their facilities in order to cope with demand from the local community. “We recently had planning permission passed for stage two of our project to redevelop and expand our existing building, adding a second floor. This will provide a community hub area along with a physio room, classroom, changing rooms, kitchen, office and meeting room. The hub will focus on activities for younger people but will also cater for everyone in the community. Once we have completed stage two, which will cost around one million pounds, we plan to seek funding for stage three, which will include an indoor 3G Futsal arena.”



What’s in the shed

- John Deere 2653 A triple mower
- John Deere X series ride-on-mower
- Bobcat
- Mac Allister grass trimmer x 2
- Stanley grass trimmer
- Large roller
- Sorrel roller
- Efco backpack blower
- Fleet Kombi linemarker



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Also, I coach here, and I successfully took my under-eights up to under-elevens, and we have won the league each year

Helping Ian look after the pitches is David Gallagher, an apprentice groundsman who previously worked for North Tyneside council. David is working towards his NVQ in Sportsturf and regularly has a college tutor visit him to check on his progress. Last year, he was runner up North Tyneside Apprentice of the Year.

The site covers fifteen acres which includes all the grass pitches mentioned previously, along with a new, full-size 3G

pitch. "The site was closed for nine months whilst the reconstruction of the pitches took place."

All pitches have full drainage but, like many other sporting venues up and down the country, the club has struggled to get fixtures played. "Some people reckon we have issues with the drainage, but I don't think so. We are no different to any other club at our level. We have had a lot of rain and, in all honesty, if they are wet, I will not

let them play on them. I am not going to have them wrecked unnecessarily. We are lucky enough to have a full size 3G, so we have played a lot of our games on there to ease the pressure on fixtures."

When the grass pitches are available for use, they must accommodate a lot of wear with training three nights a week and matches played on Saturday and Sunday.

Ian talks me through the monthly maintenance of the 3G and grass pitches.

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Getting Personal

Ian Riley - I'm sure we all want to ask Hitler why?!

Who are you? Ian Riley - Site Manager, Wallsend Boys Club.

Family status. Father of a son and daughter, grandfather to five.

Who's your hero and why? Alan Shearer. He always endeavoured to be the best and never gave up.

What's been the highlight of your grounds career so far? Being asked to stage cup finals on our grass pitches.

If your younger self saw you now, what would he think? The boy has done well.

Which famous people wind you up? Jeremy Corbyn.

What job would you love, other than your own? To be Prime minister.

What was the most embarrassing moment in your life? I fainted when my 2nd child was born.

What is your favourite film? Once upon a time in America.

What scares you? Nothing.

What would your autobiography be called... and who would play you in the film? The Life of Riley ... played by Tim Healy.

What is your favourite sport? Football.

What would you cast into Room 101? Cruelty to animals.

Which historical time and place would you most like to visit? Battle of Hastings 1066 and tell Harold to duck.

Do you have a lifetime ambition? To live as long as possible.

Which three people, living or dead, would you invite to a dinner party? Henry



VIII, Adolf Hitler - to ask him why and Joan of Arc.

What's the best advice you have ever been given? Look after the pennies and the pounds will look after themselves.

What's your favourite piece of trivia? The code to my safe.

What's your favourite smell? Mint sauce.

Which three albums would you take to a desert island? Say Hello Wave Goodbye, Russell Watson Greatest Hits, The Pogues Greatest Hits.

What's the daftest work-related question you have ever been asked? What are the pitches like (after a huge downpour of rain)?

What's your favourite piece of kit? John Deere 2653A triple mower.

What three words would you use to describe yourself? Honest, conscientious and hard-working.

What is the single most useful thing you could tell a 16-year-old groundsman/greenkeeper? Work hard and be observant.

What talent would you like to have? Play the piano.

What law/legislation would you like to see introduced? Capital punishment for paedophiles.



"We brush the 3G ourselves three times a week so we can keep it in tip-top condition with the amount of use. Every six months, we have a contractor come in to deep clean the surface and spray for weeds. We must look after it, so we have some strict rules in place like no metal studs, no food or hot beverages and, if I see anyone not following these rules, I politely ask them to obey our rules."

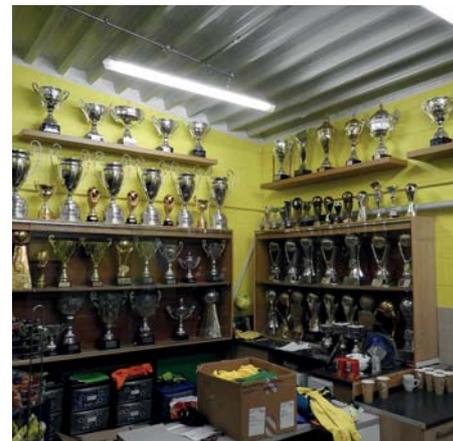
"To cut the pitches, we use a John Deere 2653 triple cylinder mower and a John Deere X Series ride-on-rotary mower, which are both set at the height of 25mm. This does not change all season. For most of the

cutting, we will use the rotary mower as it's quicker. Then, for match preparation, we use the triple to provide a cleaner cut and a nice stripe. We do roll the pitches quite a bit, switching between the wider heavy solid roller and the smaller sorrel roller throughout the season to keep the levels. If we get the time, we will go over the pitches with dragmats to remove the dew from the grass to help with disease control."

Ian likes to bring in an outside contractor at least twice a season to verti-drain the pitches at a depth of ten inches to keep the link from the surface to the drains.

Renovations are carried out





each year on all the grass pitches in the second week of June, after the football trials have finished. "This year, we will scarify the pitches ourselves using the Wiedenmann Terra Rake we purchased through a Northumberland FA scheme called Pitch Perfect. Then we will get the contractor to come in to spray with a selective weedkiller - T2green - and Xtra Sol 46:0:0, a liquid

feed. Following this, they will verti-drain, topdress with medium sand and overseed with the Vredo disc seeder using CC Renovation, a seed mix with a Tetraploid. Finally, we will apply Marathon Sport Pre-Seed Repair, which is an extended-release fertiliser."

The pitches are fertilised five times a year, depending on the weather and the

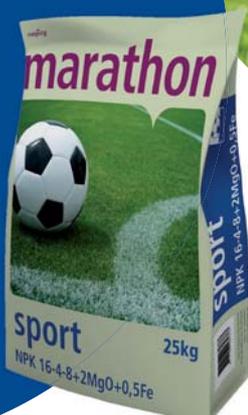


"Marathon Sport leads to a better sward with improved wear tolerance thanks to steady, controlled growth."

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Head of Amenity

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03/20



People reckon we have issues with the drainage, but I don't think so. We are no different to any other club

History

Wallsend Boys Club was founded in 1904 by the employees and directors of Swan Hunters Shipyard in order to provide recreational activities for the apprentices and young people in the area and initially specialised in boxing.

The original club premises were a series of wooden huts on Station Road, erected by workers from the shipyard. A fire destroyed the original premises and work commenced on the current club building in 1964, which was opened on 16 December 1966.

Over the years, the club has survived fires and weather damage and, despite the building being burnt down and rebuilt, then damaged and demolished, the very soul and heart of the boy's club has lived on.

In 1975, the club opened seven days a week and formed a separate sub-committee for 11-a-side football.

In 2008, the club was awarded the Freedom of the Borough of North Tyneside, in recognition of what the deputy mayor called the club's "factory line of talent", and for its community work.

In 2011, the club opened its first dedicated football centre.

readings from the soil test results. "We tend to use granular feeds like Marathon Sport from Agrovista Amenity, which is an organic, slow-release product. We have seen some great results over the years with this product, improving the density of the sward and the root system."

"Machinery has been purchased outright through various sources over the last nine years. We originally bought a piece of machinery off eBay which wasn't the best, and we have purchased second-hand machinery from golf clubs. The John Deere ride-on was purchased through the Pitch Perfect scheme. The rest of the machines were purchased through the father of one of our young players who owned a local John Deere dealer, Greenlay Ltd (which has recently

been bought out by Thomas Sherriff & Co Ltd), and we got some great deals. We are still using the local dealer to undertake all our servicing and to purchase parts for the machines."

Ian tells me next on his list of machinery purchases would be a bigger tractor, followed by a verti-drain and various other three-point linkage attachments. "It would just give us that little bit more flexibility and help us take the pitches to the next level."

Ian's talents don't stop at looking after pitches; he is also a dab hand at putting up fences and gates around the site. He also built the on-site garage with favours from different people and, after it was recently broken into, adapted some spare fencing to help secure the main door. Is there no end to this man's talents?



+

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Bradford Grammar School

A man to the Grammar born



“

My dad even bought me a petrol strimmer for Christmas, but I had to sell it back to him because I ended up scalping lawns which meant giving free cuts! I stuck to mower and shears after that!

Lewis Pattinson arrived at Bradford Grammar School in July 2109 to take up the post of Head Groundsman. Eight months into the job, he's achieved much. David Mears went to find out more

We first took a tour of the school grounds, pitches and facilities, chatting and taking photographs as we went. (How we managed a day without rain and gales beats me, but we

did!) Then it was to the shed for a cuppa, to hear more and to make some notes.

Born and raised in Sunderland before moving, at the age of six, with his family to Dewsbury ("Nice place really!" he says), Lewis Pattinson seems born to groundsmanship. "I sort of fell into it," he tells me. "I started my own small gardening business at the age of fourteen; mostly cutting lawns and gardening. My dad even bought me a petrol strimmer for Christmas, but I had to sell it back to him because I ended up scalping lawns which meant giving free cuts! I stuck to mower and shears after that!" So, enthusiasm for grounds work and to earn was definitely there and the gardening work kept Lewis active, especially during the school holidays.

I asked him where the real inspiration came from to seek a career in groundsmanship. "Sunderland AFC!" he said and smiled as I raised a curious eyebrow. "I went regularly with my dad to watch football; I loved the atmosphere and the ground was amazing. I wondered if I could be one who could make a pitch look as good as that! I was convinced that I could produce it if I worked hard."

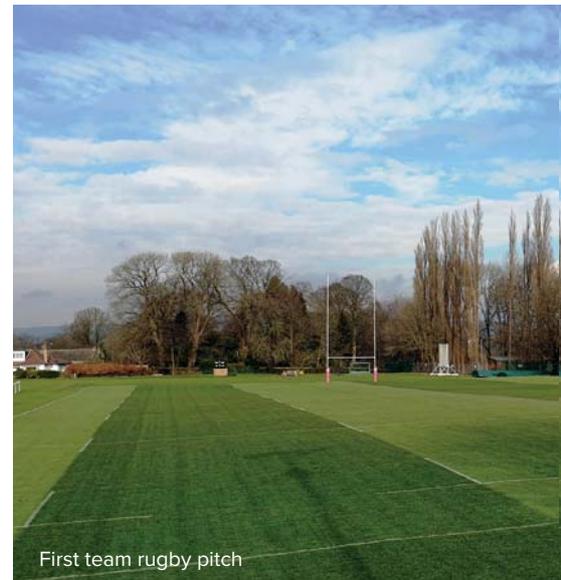
Lewis stuck to his mission and when his next door neighbour, who recognised his burning desire, asked him to work as an apprentice at his golf course, he jumped at the chance! Lewis progressed and worked at two Yorkshire golf clubs and five years as a groundsman at Headingley Stadium.



The main building at Bradford Grammar School © BGS



Bradford Grammar School © BGS



First team rugby pitch



I thought I was a good groundsman before I went to London, but soon realised that wasn't the case! I worked under Head Groundsman James Williams. We got on well from the first day

During this period, he also spent time at college, mainly at Askham Bryan College. He has achieved NVQ Level 2 in Greenkeeping, NVQ Level 3 in Sports Turf Management and NVQ Level 3 in Management – smart training and learning. He also has his PA1 and PA2 spraying certificates. One award that he's particularly proud of winning the IOG Young Groundsman of the Year 2016.

Lewis met his wife-to-be in Dewsbury and they moved to nearby Birstall into their first house. "Great!" he says. "Then what did I do after three months? I got what seemed a dream job at the London Stadium as Deputy Head Groundsman!" He and his wife talked it through at great length. The job offer came as something of a "lifesaver" as he explained; "I was falling out of love with the industry and that seemed crazy! I really needed, for my own mental health, to do this. My wife was very supportive, but time apart was difficult. I threw myself into the

job. I thought I was a good groundsman before I went to London, but soon realised that wasn't the case! I worked under Head Groundsman James Williams. We got on well from the first day."

James was just what Lewis needed at that time. "James had a great influence on my career and imparted so much knowledge. He was never afraid to include me in all that happened. He went to great lengths to explain budgeting, fertiliser knowledge, irrigation systems and people management; I'd have struggled without his help!"

Despite the great job, after two years, shared accommodation and living away from home was becoming too much after two years. Lewis longed to be back in Yorkshire. "I needed my family and some home comforts. But I also needed a life!"

Luck was on his side, it seemed, when someone from a family they knew, with children at Bradford Grammar School (BGS),



Lewis Pattinson in front of the new hockey pitch



saw an advert for head groundsman at the school and immediately thought of Lewis! Lewis applied for the position and travelled from London to the school. He was interviewed by Ian Clint (Estates Manager), Oliver Rogers (Director of Sport) and a member of the Human Resources department. A short while later, he was offered the job. Lewis, thinking back, told me he now realised that learning the basics working in Leeds and preparing him well for a multi-use environment had stood him in

good stead for the move to London and then the BGS job.

With Lewis, now 29 and eight months in and settled into the position at BGS, we went on to discuss the job, the team and the site. The team are three; Lewis - Head Groundsman, Steve Jagger and Martin Pottage (groundsmen). Steve (57) has been at the school for seventeen years. He spent time at Bradford College (12½ years) as a groundsman and gardener and Leeds City Council on grounds maintenance. He

studied Horticulture at Shipley College. Each member can perform common tasks, but each groundsman has their specialities. Steve is responsible for all garden areas at BGS. The design and appearance is all down to him; horticulture is in his blood. What he doesn't know about plants isn't worth knowing!

When I arrived, he was preparing soil next to a stone wall in a dark corner. By the end of my visit, this had been transformed into a delightful and bright small garden area with



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BGS was pleased to be able to help the local community by making pitches available to those who suffered flooding of their facilities. We also generate additional income from evening lettings of the hockey pitch

climbers at the rear to add depth, colour and cover to a wall! Lewis has tasked Steve to produce new designs for other garden areas and looks forward to his proposals.

Martin (51), with his greenkeeping background and training, has been at BGS for almost a year now and came from Woodhall Hills Golf Club. He'd previously spent thirty years as a greenkeeper at Bradford Golf Club. He attended Shipley College on a Youth Training Scheme (YTS) scheme and also studied at Askham Bryan College gaining his greenkeeping experience. Having a long greenkeeping background, Martin's skills mean he's brought a wealth of knowledge and experience with him to BGS. Turf maintenance is his forte as is his abilities with grounds machinery. Lewis has tasked

him with the total control of the in-house machinery maintenance.

The Grounds Team are responsible for all on-site outdoor sports facilities and gardens. They also maintain the area around the off-site boat house on the River Aire where students go to row. All are fully compliant with current legislation and each has the necessary spraying certification. (Spraying, incidentally, is not permitted whilst the school is in use).

Ongoing training is arranged for the team; Lewis has been on an IOSH Managing Safely course and Steve and Martin are due on a similar course shortly. As there are many mature trees on site, most with TPOs, the team have all trained in inspection and preservation techniques. BGS has an H&S officer and there are designated first aiders and fire wardens on site also. The school, to ensure they mitigate any foreseen H&S issues, have the Estates Department meet before the start of each school year to carry out risk assessments and implement new policies, if deemed necessary.

The site covers 28 acres and comprises four rugby pitches, one and a half hockey pitches (artificial, sand based), a junior under 10s rugby pitch, two tarmac netball/tennis courts, ten cricket pitches on the main square and three on the junior square. There is also a 300 metre running track. There are three cricket covers and floodlights on the tennis/hockey courts.

I asked if the pitches were used/hired by others. "Yes, particularly recently," Lewis said. "BGS was pleased to be able to help the local community by making pitches available to those who suffered flooding of





The grounds team in front of the Sports Pavilion

their facilities. We also generate additional income from evening lettings.”

Speaking of flooding led us on to other weather related issues. As Lewis said “We were waterlogged in February but then weren’t we all? High winds are an issue but we haven’t suffered any real damage.”

When Lewis first arrived, he needed to assess and prioritise tasks for the predominantly sandy site he was now

responsible for. He was given full control of the grounds budget which is agreed by Ian Clint. Lewis needed to obtain approval for major purchases over £2500. The first project was to address his main concern; the need to seek an agronomist’s opinion and plan from there. Knowing such a person, Mark Atkins, who possesses a wealth of turf and pitch experience, particularly with Premiership football clubs, a detailed survey

was agreed, carried out and reports produced. It was decided that custom made controlled release fertiliser be produced for the sports pitches by Evolution Agronomists.

Advance Grass Solutions (AGS) provided regular granular fertiliser for use across the site and continues to do so. The total treatment now adopted is the application of the Evolution Agronomists’ product. This is followed by top ups of fertiliser, as well as



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Lewis Pattinson - new rugby posts a priority



Inside the shed with latest addition Kubota GR2120 centre

What's in the shed?

- Kubota B3030 tractor with snow plough
- John Deere 2032R tractor with front bucket
- Kubota GR2120 ride-on rotary mower with collector
- Baroness LM331 cylinder triple mower - used for cutting sports pitches
- Sisis litamina 1200 rotary brush - cleaning up debris on all pitches
- Sisis Twin Play with flexicomb and straight brush
- Sisis slitter
- Stihl BR600 blowers x 2
- Stihl SH86C vacuum
- Stihl KM94RC combi tool with edger, tree pruner, rotary bristle brush and hedging attachment
- Toro flymo
- Honda Pro HRD536 roller mowers x 2
- Dennis G560 cylinder mower
- Allett Kensington 20 cylinder mower
- ICL SR2000 fertiliser spreader
- Sisis Auto Rotorake with rotary brush and verticutting cassette
- Billy Goat vacuum
- Stoother & Pitt 32RD cricket square roller
- Bowcom Atom marking machine with front disks
- Sisis Combi rake/brush - cleaning out the cricket pitches

calcium magnesium sprays. Continuous testing prevails to ensure improvements are evident. Another issue was a very acidic pH on the cricket squares. This is now improving by the regular but steady use of granular calcium oxide. The results of this project are clearly evident and Lewis can rightly claim that this project was his first major achievement!

Another project, not so big, but in Lewis' mind still important, was the rugby posts. He told me that the ones he inherited were steel and going rusty, but the big issue was their removal. It seems that, prior to his arrival, a lorry with a HIAB crane was brought in to carry out this task across the site! This was a bit of a nightmare, especially when the ground was wet. Lewis soon sourced up-to-date lightweight and hinged aluminium rugby posts which can now be taken down with ease!

Weeds across the site were in abundance and it was agreed that a contractor be brought in to resolve the problem. This one-time eradication and regular normal maintenance with a spray at the end of season, means that control is maintained now.

We next talked about renovation and

Lewis produced a Renovation 2020 document. He said that, prior to his appointment, all that happened was a topdressing of sand and verti-draining of the sports pitches. He recalled what James Williams told him: "You are only as good as your last renovation and this will define the season you have!"

With this in mind, Lewis plans to heavily scarify during the eight weeks summer holiday period. "Martin Crompton, a local contractor will carry out this work" said Lewis.

Renovation work is affected by events - summer camps and other bookings scheduled for summer when the school is closed. As part of their new regime, the team take quarterly soil samples to help ascertain work required. Day-to-day brushing/cleaning of the artificial surfaces is carried out by the team with a deep clean and renovation bi-annually. "The team have to work within budget, but it's not an issue," Lewis commented.

I asked where presentation ranked. "That's easy" said Lewis. "Presentation ranks high, but playability is king!" He went on to complain about the persistent February rain; "It just did not seem to stop! We were having





New hockey pitch and dugouts

to stay off pitches to prevent damage.” He has recorded the rainfall on-site this February as 161mm! The average is 72mm. With Bradford’s average annual rainfall being 840mm, the school has seen, in one month, 20.4% of a year’s worth of rain!

The school has an excellent environmental policy in place and local flora and fauna is important. Currently, BGS as a whole is making recycling and waste reduction a huge priority project, with the requirement that nothing goes to landfill!

A special project relating to environmental issues under construction is the use of electric machinery. BGS would like to see how this would contribute to meeting climate change and emissions legislation.

“Have there been any major projects in recent years?” I asked. The answer was a proud yes. May 2019 saw a massive £4.2million investment by BGS in sports facilities. The Barn, a huge and superb indoor sports facility, measuring 65 x 35 metres, was erected. It boasts four hi-tech tennis/netball courts. I asked Lewis to stand in the middle of the empty building to convey better the immense size of the space.

The investment also meant that the

artificial hockey pitches were constructed and floodlights erected. Tarmac tennis courts were also part of the investment, along with surrounding gardens. All of this is most impressive and does demonstrate the commitment to sports at BGS.

“What of future projects?” was my next question. Lewis said that to grade all earth-based sports pitches was in the pipeline. Undulating surfaces can be an issue at times. Looking at certain angles at some of the playing areas, I could see what he needed to address, budget permitting!

Another environmental issue that needs addressing is the machinery washpad. To ensure pollution prevention, Lewis wants to install a washpad water recycling system adjacent to the shed and hopes this project can be tackled soon. “This will not only ensure we are legally compliant, but will save thousands of litres of water by recycling.” I understand Lewis has already made enquiries.

Machinery is purchased outright, usually through Gibsons in Colne (GGM). There is no loyalty to one brand and ‘best for the job’ is the criteria. I asked which piece of recently acquired kit has helped improve playing surfaces. “Without a doubt, it’s the

Weekly maintenance regime

Our weekly maintenance regimes consist of daily mowing of the rugby pitches and cricket squares when conditions allow. We currently cut the rugby pitches at 30mm using the Baroness triple, I find the shorter the grass is cut the quicker it will dry out with high winds.

The cricket squares are maintained at 25mm with the Honda Pro rotary but, the closer we get to cricket season, we will gradually lower the height to around 15mm with the Allett, as well as thinning out the grass sward. We are drip feeding the cricket squares with (CAO) Calcium oxide to improve the soil PH.

On my arrival, we were very acidic at 4.2 but, with little and often applications, we are currently up to a PH of 5.7. This is a slow process but it also has its negative points as worms thrive in soils with a PH of 6-7.

We treat our worm problem with a product called Purity. The conditions have to be perfect, unless you are lucky enough to have an irrigation system; if the product is washed in correctly, I found it is the best thing on the market.

The rugby pitches are marked out when required with the Bowcom Atom and Quantum ready to use paint.

Garden areas are cut with the Honda pro roller and fertilised when the grass is starting to lose its colour.

Monthly maintenance regime

Monthly maintenance regimes consist of brushing the artificial hockey pitches using our Sisis Litamina 1200 to clear debris and the Sisis Twin Play brush to agitate and create a true surface.

The garden planting areas are weeded and turned over, with any damaged/dead plants replaced.

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Getting Personal

Lewis Pattinson - you'll be googling the slug dance!

Who are you? Lewis Pattinson, Head Groundsman at Bradford Grammar School.

Family status? Married - Punching and still in the honeymoon period.

Who's your hero and why? Conor McGregor, he is some man!

What would you change about yourself? 100% my height, another foot and I'd be happy!

What's your guilty pleasure? Anything on toast, I have an Instagram page for this in case you wondered: @lewis.on.toast

What's been the highlight of your career so far? It has got to be working at the London Stadium as Deputy Head Groundsman. It wasn't until after I left the role, I realised how lucky I was to be in that position. A great experience and the best decision I have ever made in my life.

What are your pet peeves? People who don't cover their face when they sneeze and drivers who don't say thank you.

If you could go anywhere right now, where would it be? Back to Las Vegas, what a place! But this time I would have to take the Mrs.

What's the best part of your job? It has got to be working outdoors and seeing the improvements from the department's hard work.

... and the worst? WORMS!!

Do you have a lifetime ambition? To get my private pilot's licence.

Which three albums would you take to a desert island? A little bit of Neil Diamond, Chronic 2001 and Notorious BIG.

Who would you choose to spend a romantic evening with? The wife.

If you won the lottery, what is the first thing you would do? The Slug (Ed. dance move!)

What would you consign to Room 101 and why? Bullies; no one likes a bully.

Which three people, living or dead, would you invite to a dinner party? Conor McGregor,



Tyson Fury and Notorious BIG. That would be some dinner party.

If you could be anyone for a day, who would it be and why? Bill Gates. I'd then transfer all his money into my bank account. Result!

Do you have any bad habits? Biting my nails.

... or any good ones? Courteous.

Do you go to bed worrying about the next day's workload? Not as much as I used to but, if you are a happy groundsman, are you doing your job right?

What are you reading at the moment? - Hard copy or online? Not a big fan of reading.

What's the best advice you have ever been given? Don't be afraid to upset people.

What's your favourite smell? Molton Brown rhubarb shower gel.

What do you do in your spare time? Chill! My wife calls it "doing nothing!"

What's the daftest work related question you have ever been asked? Are the floodlights on to get rid of the frost?

What's your favourite piece of kit? Sisis Litamina 1200.

What three words would you use to describe yourself? Hardworking, grounded and dedicated.

What talent would you like to have? Play the piano.

What law/legislation would you like to see introduced? New laws on worm control, this is a big problem for the industry.



On the tour - old and new school buildings

SISIS Litamina 1200 Rotary Brush" said Lewis, "an absolute godsend!"

BGS do not usually need to hire kit as they have machinery and tools to handle most jobs. However, they will bring in a spraying contractor occasionally.

Martin carries out the pedestrian mowers servicing in-house, whilst tractors are serviced by GGM. All is now well documented by Lewis.

"Okay, so top of your kit wish list?" I asked. "Without a doubt, a Verti-Drain!" was Lewis's response.

We then talked about the state of the industry and the value of grounds personnel. "Many in our industry consider employers will treat groundsman and

greenkeepers as bottom of the pecking order, so yes, you can understand why a number feel undervalued. Maybe this is due to a lack of knowledge of the industry? This job is not just cutting grass and painting white lines!"

Lewis's manager (Ian Clint) offered his comments on Lewis and his appointment at BGS to me and, as you'll read, they do not reflect what some grounds personnel feel: "Following a highly competitive, rigorous recruitment and selection campaign, Lewis started with us back in July 2019. He has brought a whole new level of professionalism to the grounds team here at Bradford Grammar School.



Marking out © Lewis Pattinson



Lewis shows the size (65m x 35m) of The Barn indoor sports facility

Lewis operates in a structured, methodical manner; he has systemically analysed the grounds operation and come up with a development plan, already improved operational efficiencies, and is currently drawing up a renovations schedule for the summer months."

"His Premier League grounds experience is currently paying dividends for the school, with the rugby pitches looking and playing amazingly."

"I feel he will be a real asset to the school and the wider community and look forward to working with him over the coming years."

In conclusion, it is clearly evident that, as

Bradford Grammar School moves forward from being predominantly academically orientated to now include first-class sports facilities, the commitment is there. This is exemplified by way of huge funding, appointing a committed and professional head groundsman and fully supporting the grounds team. The achievements made by Lewis with his team since last July speak for themselves.

The last words should go to Lewis: "The first and last thing prospective parents see at the school are the grounds and playing facilities. If we in the grounds department contribute even one percent to their

decision to send their children here, then we'll have done our job!"

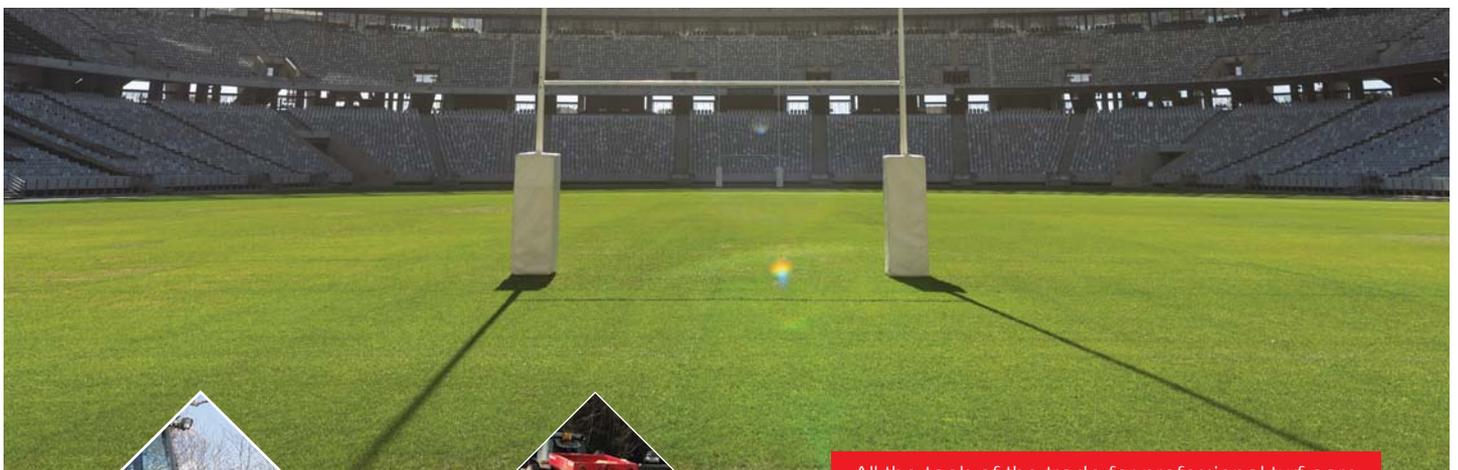
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Crosfields School

Under pressure

Crosfields School is one of the leading co-educational schools in the country, educating pupils between the ages of three and thirteen. Grounds Manager **Stuart Gower** has had a varied career, spanning forty years, and we paid him a visit to find out why this is the opportunity he couldn't turn down

Stuart found his way into the industry whilst unemployed in the 1980s. His first job as a groundsman was at the Metropolitan Police Football Club Ground (Imber Court Sports Club) in East Molesey. Stuart explains: "It was a bit daunting at first, but I slowly settled in. I was given the opportunity to go to College at Merrist Wood, Surrey where I gained my City & Guilds Levels 1 and 2 in Sports Turf Management and my PA1, 2 and 6 spraying certificates. I was at the sports club for nine years, looking after first-class football, tennis, rugby, cricket and bowls - we once even hosted American football."

"In 1998, I had to leave for personal reasons and joined the Royal Mail but, by 2005, I was getting the bug to get back in the industry. I was given the opportunity to work at the Hurlingham Club, Fulham with Peter Craig and Neil Harvey and, as you can expect, this was a great job in which I gained some valuable experience. After several years, I joined Nick Eastway at The Royal Wimbledon Golf Course, trying my hand at greenkeeping. Then, in 2010, I took a position as Deputy Head Groundsman at Rokeby School in Kingston; this was a brilliant little job based off-site from the school at Worcester Park. The standards were very high for a school and they have

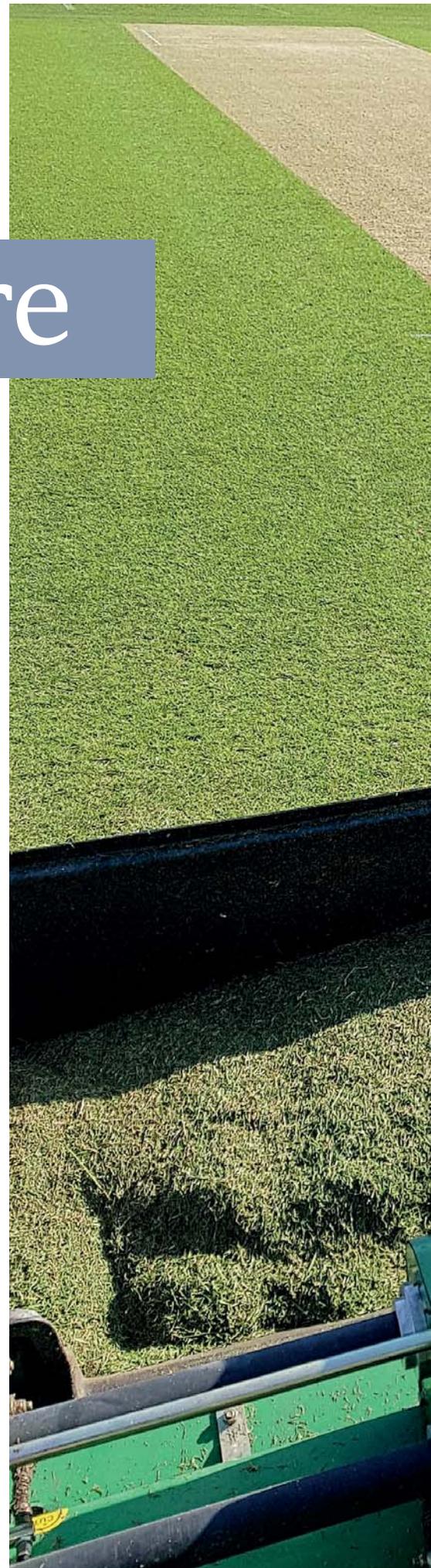


Grounds Manager, Stuart Gower

actually just got into the top one hundred cricket schools in the country. I left there in 2014, before joining Ibstock Place School in Roehampton as Site Manager. This was a small site with two full-size football pitches and a lot of training areas, but then, nineteen months ago, this job came up at



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 Farmura sprayer
 Amazone Groundkeeper
 Wiedenmann Terra Spike XP8



Crosfields School and it was an opportunity I couldn't turn down."

Based on Shinfield Road, Reading, just two miles away from Reading FC's Madejski Stadium, Stuart and his team are responsible for the upkeep of the forty-acre site, which includes the main field and backfields which are constructed on a natural sand based rootzone. Summer sports include cricket, football and athletics then, in winter, they accommodate rugby, mini rugby and various training grids. The two all-weather are 18mm sand-filled carpets which host hockey, netball, football, tennis, cricket and tag rugby. There is also a lower field which is currently under construction.

All fields have some form of drainage,

with a limited irrigation system Stuart can call upon in the summer months. "The main fields drainage system runs off towards the main road, and the backfield drains off down the slope away from the school. It does work well, but I supplement this by keeping them opened up as much as possible. Implementing a regular aeration programme of slitting every other week and terra spiking at least once a month, at a depth of twelve inches, helps to keep the pitches playable in the wet spells," Stuart continued.

"We have static sprinklers dotted around the site, which link into five water points. Water pressure isn't the best as we don't have a pump house; they are connected directly to the mains. The school has





I would love to purchase an Air2G2; we have had one on hire in the past, and I think it's a magnificent piece of kit, but they are not cheap!

a swimming pool and, if we are really struggling, we can tap into this and up the pressure a little bit which helps. Having said that, it can be a real struggle in summer. Last year, I would come in at 5.00am to get the water on, which went on for weeks. We have to constantly move the sprinklers to get good coverage, and we will hand water the worst areas. This process continues throughout the day, until it's lights out, but the hard work is worth it."

This January, Stuart felt the full effects of storm Brendan, which brought winds of up to 80mph and heavy rain. "The winds caught hold of one of our portable goals and a wicket cover, which meant they were both severely damaged and needed to be replaced. Several old oaks trees were blown down around the site, which was very disappointing to see."

Stuart talks me through the maintenance of the artificial surfaces and the grass

itches. "The new artificial pitch was opened at the end of 2019 and, to help maintain this, we recently purchased a Charterhouse Speed-Brush. This will be used every other week to brush the surface of both the all-weather - if we can get on them. In the autumn, it can be a nightmare trying to keep them clear of leaves; some days there can be three of us with blowers trying to clear it against the clock, as timing is critical. A lot of the markings are already

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Getting Personal

Stuart Gower - he would like to own a gym, but spiders aren't welcome

Who are you? Stuart Gower, Grounds Manager at Crosfields School.

Family status. With partner Sam, two daughters; Francesca (14) and Angelina (11) and mad dog Barney.

Who's your hero and why? My mum and dad. They both worked all the hours they could running a pub. I lost my mum suddenly in late 2017.

What's been the highlight of your grounds career so far? Being a grounds manager.

If your younger self saw you now, what would he think? I dread to think.

Which famous people wind you up? Politicians.

What job would you love, other than your own? To own a hard-core gym or mum and dad's old pub.

What was the most embarrassing moment in your life? There's quite a few (I stopped drinking years ago).

What is your favourite film? All the Star Wars films and Jaws.

What scares you? Spiders.

What is your favourite sport? Football; I'm an avid Chelsea and Crystal Palace supporter. I also love weight training, carp fishing and playing darts.

Which historical time and place would you most like to visit? I'm fascinated by World War II and old war movies.

Do you have a lifetime ambition? Just to keep going on doing my best although, I would move to Cornwall if I won the lottery!

Which three people, living or dead, would you invite to a dinner party? My mum and my nans, plus regulars from their pub; there was never a dull moment.



What's the best advice you have ever been given? A groundsperson's job never finishes.

What's your favourite smell? Fresh coffee, bacon, fresh cut grass and seaweed.

Which three albums would you take to a desert island? The legend Bob Marley, old 80s Brit jazz funk, chill out albums ... too many to mention.

What's the daftest work-related question you have ever been asked? Can I cut in the frost or, someone trying to mark out in snow!!!!

What's your favourite piece of kit? Air2G2.

What three words would you use to describe yourself? Honest, trustworthy, good sense of humour and hard working ... oh wait that's four things.

What is the single most useful thing you could tell a 16-year-old groundsperson/greenkeeper? Listen to your peers, gain as much knowledge as you can, use common sense and don't be afraid to ask questions.

What talent would you like to have? The ability to lose weight and shape up.

What law/legislation would you like to see introduced? I could get into trouble on this one, so I'll refrain!



on there, but still, we do have to manually mark for external uses, like netball and cricket, using a spray marker and specially formulated marking paint. Then, it is just a matter of keeping our eye on the weeds and moss."

"In summer, we will cut the pitches with the Trimax Snake between 25mm and 28mm, depending which sport is being played. Subject to the weather and the school's busy sports schedule, I like to cut at least two to three times a week. The schedule can sometimes be a nightmare, but we try and get around this by having staggered start times. The Amazone Groundkeeper is used once a week to clean up the surface, removing any clippings and debris left behind. With the various amount of sports we have to cater for, we continually have to mark out throughout the season; we tend to overmark every week,

using strings and a spray marker."

Stuart took advantage of the Easter break to carry out some mid-season renovation work on the pitches. "We hollow-cored the three main pitches, with ¾ inch tines, using our Wiedenmann Terra Spike XP8. We then recycled the cores using a drag mat, to break them up and re-incorporate them back into the surface before picking up the debris left behind with the Amazone Groundkeeper. Following this, we toppedressed with twenty tonnes of sand per pitch, using our own topdresser and then overseeded with a ryegrass seed mix. Finally, we applied a pre-seed fertiliser."

Stuart likes to adopt a more granular-based fertiliser programme throughout the season due to time constraints and the lack of water available in the summer. "We will use a



Implementing a regular aeration programme of slitting every other week and terra spiking at least once a month, at a depth of twelve inches, helps to keep the pitches playable in the wet spells



//

I don't think groundsmen and greenkeepers get the recognition they deserve, and the general public don't appreciate the amount of work that goes into providing a quality playing surface

conventional granular product at the start of the season to help kick start growth. This is then followed by the application of various manufacturers' slow-release polymer coated products. To help prevent disease and strengthen the plant, I have started to use disease prevention packages that include phosphites, iron and seaweed. Since starting to use these products, I have seen a big difference in recovery and disease stress has been reduced significantly."

Helping Stuart look after the site is groundsman Steve Herring, who has served the school for over twenty years. He is chainsaw qualified and has been on a Lantra tractor operated flail course.

The school has a good relationship with their local machinery dealer, Lister Wilders, who they use to supply all the equipment.



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A brief history

Crosfields became an independent Preparatory School in 1957. However, its roots can be traced back to a school in Castle Street, Reading called Marlborough House, established in the first half of the 19th Century. The school moved first onto the Bath Road and then, in the 1920s, to Park House, a private house in five acres of grounds on Parkside Road. (It is now the YMCA.)

At the outbreak of the Second World War, the Headmaster Mr Makins approached Leighton Park School with a view to them taking over Marlborough House and thereby ensuring a continuity of education for the pupils. The boys moved into Townson House and became LP Junior School.

After the war, the Goodrest Estate was purchased by Leighton Park, and the Junior School moved there in 1946. The name Crosfields was chosen at a boy's suggestion in memory of Hugh Crosfield, an old boy and Governor of LP who had been killed in an air raid in 1944.

By the 1950s, the number of pupils had increased to around 100, both day and boarding. A recommendation by the Schools' Inspectorate that Crosfields should become entirely a day school was seriously considered and, in January 1957, the school became a non-profit making Trust with its own board of governors and, thus, independent, though with strong links to Leighton Park.

The school is essentially non-denominational with a long tradition of welcoming children of different religious backgrounds. Christian teaching is given, and strong emphasis is placed on moral principles of kindness, tolerance, good manners, honesty and a sense of responsibility to one another and oneself.

The original buildings - the White Building and the Stable Block - have been added to steadily over the last five decades as the number of pupils has risen.



“The school have bought most of their machinery from Lister Wilders throughout the years. We recently got a great deal through their local rep Lee Hatton on the Charterhouse Speed-Brush, which was purchased outright, and the Trimax Snake which is on hire purchase. The majority of servicing and repairs is carried out by them, and they do a great job for us. I do like to stay loyal to Lister's, but if anything took my fancy that they don't sell, I would have a look at it. I would love to purchase an Air2G2; we have had one on hire in the past, and I think it's a magnificent piece of kit, but they are not cheap!”

A big project that will hopefully be completed in the summer is the construction and redevelopment of the lower field, which used to be part of a nine-hole golf course. “Most of the construction has been

carried out using recycled materials already on-site, but the contractors have got to come back in and finish off what they left because of the bad weather we have been experiencing. It's then down to us to finish off the construction of the new cricket square over the summer holidays, which I'm looking forward to.”

Stuart believes the sports turf industry is good to be involved in but can be ruthless at times. “I enjoy it, but you never know what's around the corner. The industry is changing daily; one minute you have a product, the next it has been taken off the market. I don't think groundsmen and greenkeepers get the recognition they deserve, and the general public don't appreciate the amount of work that goes into providing a quality playing surface.”



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Northumbria University

The Main man

Northumbria University is a research-rich, business-focused, professional university with a global reputation for academic excellence. It is based in the heart of Newcastle upon Tyne, which is regularly voted as one of the best places in the UK for students. Based on Coach Lane Campus is Coach Lane Sports Centre and its facilities include sports hall, strength and conditioning suite, classrooms, changing rooms and several outdoor pitches - which is where Lee Williams met with **Michael Main**, Sport Grounds Supervisor, who has served the University for the last thirty-five years



Michael first found his passion for horticulture and sportsturf whilst still at school, where he would look after the greenhouses in his spare time. When he left school, he worked at a local garden centre before getting his chance to become a temporary groundsman at a private school in Tynemouth. “Unfortunately, the groundsman at the time had a heart attack, so I stepped in for seven months whilst he was unable to work. A job then came up at Northumbria University’s Bullocksteads Sports Ground, but I didn’t get the job. Luckily, two weeks later, the university rang me about this job at Coach Lane Campus; I’ve been here ever since and I have not looked back.”

The University no longer have the sports grounds at Bullocksteads; since 2017 it has been owned by the council. Now, the majority of our university sport teams play at Coach Lane Sports Centre, where facilities include a new 3G, a sand-filled artificial surface, the main pitch (which is a rootzone construction) and, a short walk away from the site, are four soil constructed pitches - which they call Little Benton, named after the farm that once stood there.

The main pitch was used to host Team Northumbria FC who played in Northern League and there were a number of standards on and off the field we had to adhere to, which meant it had to undergo a thorough renovation process. Michael explains how this came about. “The

university’s football team were promoted to the Northern League, which meant we had to have a pitch suitable to host the games and match the league’s criteria. We hired a contractor to laser level and grade the pitch off using the original rootzone. It was then left to us to oversee and apply pre-seed fertiliser. To help germination, I borrowed germination covers from the Newcastle Falcons (situated just up the road), which helped us get the pitch playable within six weeks.”

“Our football team no longer plays within Northern League, so the pitch is now used for rugby union training and rugby league matches. We would like to play rugby union matches on the pitch, but this is not possible; rugby union rules state you





Northumbria University
NEWCASTLE



need a five-metre run off either side of the pitch, unlike rugby league that only requires three metres.”

All the grass pitches have some sort of drainage system, but they are struggling to cope with the amount of rainfall we had at the start of 2020. “Usually, contractors come in at least twice a year to carry out a deep verti-drain on all the pitches which

helps get a link between the surface and the drains. But, with the weather in the last year, we have not been able to undertake this, so the surface is just capped off.”

“Last season, it was so bad we had more cancelled games than ever before; in the last couple of years I have never seen so much rain. In fact, I would go as far to say that, I don’t think we have seasons anymore - you get your cold winter mornings and a bit of snow. When I first started here, I remember coming in some mornings to six feet of snow. Since 2010, which was a bad winter where everyone was affected, the temperatures seem to be getting higher and we just suffer more with rain - which is proving to be a nightmare for many of us throughout the country.”

Michael has worked closely with Mark Robertson from Agrovista Amenity for the last five years, to help provide soil samples, fertiliser programmes and more. “Mark has been great; I depend on him for advice and support, especially considering I work on my own and he’s an excellent sounding board when I have a problem or query.”

“When the football team played here, we



Head Groundsman, Michael Main



A lot of people seem to be moving more towards 3G surfaces, but we have to remember that they still require a lot of maintenance and are only guaranteed for a number of years



had the requirement for a higher standard pitch. Mark would provide a tailor-made report based on the analytical soil samples he had taken, which helped achieve a great surface. Now, I tend to just use the Evolution mini granular range, both in spring and summer, as this works well and provides good results."

Michael talks me through the daily maintenance of the artificial and natural surfaces. "For the artificial surfaces, I have

a small John Deere X series ride-on-mower, with an underslung brush attachment, which I use once a week. Every three months, a contractor, Replay Maintenance, comes in to give them a deep clean. In autumn, it's a matter of clearing up the leaves each morning. Then, in winter when it has rained heavily, I have the nightmare task of clearing up the sludge every morning from the surface of the ageing sand-filled artificial, before it can be used. The pitch is



If we invested in a more powerful tractor, we would carry out our own seasonal renovations

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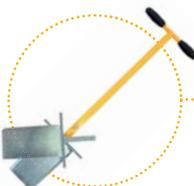
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Getting Personal

Michael Main - he never thought he would end up as a groundsman

Who are you? Michael Main, Groundsman, Northumbria University in Newcastle.

Family status. With partner Susan, one daughter, Georgia.

Who's your hero and why? My parents; they brought me up well.

What's been the highlight of your grounds career so far?

Having a first-class football pitch good enough for Northern League.

If your younger self saw you now, what would he think?

That he never thought I would end up as a groundsman.

Which famous people wind you up? Celebrity wannabes.

What job would you love, other than your own? I would have loved to be an HGV driver, like my dad.

What was the most embarrassing moment in your life? When I was younger, I was cutting the grass with a pedestrian mower, trying to be cocky.

I took the oil cap off to see how much was in and oil squirted all over of me.

What is your favourite film? One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest and Shawshank Redemption.

What scares you? Cockroaches and heights.

What would your autobiography be called... and who would play you in the film? Out in all Weathers with Neil Morrissey.

What is your favourite sport? Football.

What would you cast into Room 101? Litter droppers/louts.

Which historical time and place would you most like to visit? Dallas when JFK got shot.



Do you have a lifetime ambition? To own a bigger house and kitchen.

Which three people, living or dead, would you invite to a dinner party? Peter Kay and Ant & Dec.

What's the best advice you have ever been given? Keep your head down and your backside up! (just do your best).

What's your favourite smell? Petrol.

Which three albums would you take to a desert island? Status Quo, The Beautiful South and Madness.

What's the daftest work-related question you have ever been asked? It's not a question, but straight after renovating the main football pitch, I asked some students not to play on that area. "I have just spent hours renovating that pitch" to which one student replied: "Well you haven't done a very good job!"

What's your favourite piece of kit? Cutlass 6 feet mowing deck and Dennis Premier cylinder mower.

What three words would you use to describe yourself? Dedicated, friendly and baldy.

What talent would you like to have? To play the piano.

What law/legislation would you like to see introduced? Politics - oh so many!!



Undertaking renovations

twenty years old and at the end of its life."

"To cut the grass pitches, I have a six-foot Cutlass tractor-mounted double-bladed rotary cutter. In summer, I like to cut the pitches once a week as low as possible to around 15mm - just to keep on top of it with me being by myself. In winter, I will lift the height of cut to around 20mm which, I know seems short, but it works for me. I do have a Toro Reelmaster 5010, which came from Bullocksteads, that I would like to make more use of, but

it's not road legal. Therefore, I use this on the main pitch in summer, cutting at 30mm for the rugby; it provides a cleaner cut and a nice stripe. When required, I will mark out, as it can be very time consuming. If the lines are in and I can see them, I will just leave it until the time of the fixtures."

Along with machinery Michael already had on-site, he has also inherited a lot of equipment from the Bulluckstead sports grounds. All machinery is purchased outright and replaced





Last season, it was so bad that we had no games on the pitch for four months; in the last couple of years I have never seen so much rain

when required. "I have inherited a lot of equipment which could help me maintain the grounds."

When asking Michael what piece of machinery would help him improve the surfaces, no surprise his first reaction was a new tractor, but he didn't stop there. "I'm desperate for a scarifier; it would be ideal to help keep the surface of the pitches

clean. I have recently had a few demos of various machines and have been very impressed with the results. It would be great to get hold of a tractor that can power the Wiedenmann Terra-Spike. It would enable me to aerate the pitches a lot more frequently and I would not have to depend on a contractor. We also have a Blec Disc Seeder and a Redexim 800

topdresser so, if we invested in a more powerful tractor and a scarifier, we would have all the kit to carry out our own seasonal renovations. I believe this would reduce our costs in the long run and, at the same time, give more flexibility."

Michael tells me he would like to carry out more qualifications, but it is challenging to get the time when he

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works on his own. He has attended many IOG courses in the past, which have helped him over the years.

With Michael's thirty-five years of experience in the sports turf industry, I took the opportunity to ask him of thoughts on where we are heading. "A lot of people seem to be moving more towards 3G surfaces, but we have to remember that

they still require a lot of maintenance and are only guaranteed for a number of years. Then, there is the environmental impact when the surface must be replaced and the old one discarded. In my opinion, they will never replace grass pitches and that's where local authorities and governing bodies should be investing their money."



Temperatures seem to be getting higher and we just suffer more with rain - which is proving to be a nightmare for many of us throughout the country



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Ford Sports & Social Club

Building the perfect beast

Ford Sport and Social Club run two sites in Essex - at Basildon and Ilford. Blair Ferguson went to meet **Dan James**, the Head Groundsman at Ilford, to discover how he has been coping with just one additional staff member on such a large site, and how his 'Frankenstein' skills are being put to good use!

Many skills make a good groundsman, and one that is common among the best in the industry is pride. Having that desire to make a positive difference every day you turn up to work is as crucial as the machines you use and the budget you wield. Across the United Kingdom, Ireland and Europe there will be countless examples of those who are thinking outside the box and working extra hours so, at the end of the day, they can feel pride in their work.

In Ilford east London, Dan James, Head Groundsman at Ford Sport and Social Club, is a prime example. For thirty-five years his dad worked on the pitches, bowling green and cricket squares he now maintains and, from the age of four, he and his brother spent numerous weekends at the sports club with his dad Mark, before finally being drawn in.

When he was halfway through sixth form, one of the groundsmen left and he took up the role part-time before leaving education to pursue it on a full-time basis and is now into his thirteenth year. At the time, there were six groundsmen across the two sites and now there is only Dan and Dave Wilks at Ilford and Terry and Dave McCoy at Basildon.

The club was originally set up by the Ford Motor Company as a place for their staff to play sport and socialise, but is now open to the public through associate memberships.

To provide quality surfaces for the five Saturday, eight Sunday football teams, East London & Essex Junior Football League,

floodlit midweek league and cater for the six cricket games per weekend in season and a bowls team takes a lot of work. Dan relishes the challenge, but the pride he now has in his work hasn't always been there.

He explains: "It's weird to think back to the first few years I worked here. The passion I have now wasn't really there. Now everything is so important to me, it's hard to think back to a time when it wasn't."

"My dad and Terry used to look after the bowling green, then Terry got moved down to Basildon and, unfortunately, my dad injured his back, so the bowling green was kind of left to me with my dad's guidance. That was when I really got a taste for it. Once I started getting positive reviews, I found that pride in my work."

"The bowls team have county competitions, whoever gets into the knockout rounds votes for what neutral green they want to play on. We got the quarter-finals one year, and then the quarters and the semi-finals, so we had that two years in a row, but now we've lost it again because the bank on the edge of the green is sloping in places. It's a lot of hours and manpower to do which we don't really have because it's only myself and Dave and obviously it's a massive site."

The bowling green is what sparked Dan's interest and where the majority of his learning took place. Whilst he explains the process he went through, and the varied approach he took, you start to grasp that he is forward-thinking and isn't afraid to do things differently in an attempt to make them better.





Our verti-drain recently broke down again. Last time, we had it welded up. It's the oldest thing you'll ever see, but now there's no scope to get another one, so it's one thing we don't have now



“Working with the bowling green, and why I got hooked on it, is that anything you do makes a difference. It might be negative, it might be positive, or something as simple as brushing or dragmatting before a cut makes,” Dan explains.

“We used to topdress at the end of the season like everyone else. But what I found was I'd put all the material down - soil and seed - and then, by the time the start of the season comes around, we've got worms, moss and fusarium - so we're raking out moss or repairing bits, and we've got no material. So what I started doing was scarifying it all out at the end of the season, putting down a bit of fertiliser, seeding some places if it needed it and I started using the topdressing at the start of the season.”

“So, when all that moss, fusarium and worm damage is there, I'll scarify it all out again and then topdress it. Because we've got the water system it's not like we're at the mercy of the weather, I know it can be cold or warm, but at the start of the season, it would be like repairing it again. I've been

doing it that way for four or five years, and it's since then that we've had the quarters and semi-finals and a lot of them say it's one of the best greens in the county. The final is always in the same place, so we will never get the final, so the semi-final is the best we can get; it's definitely worked out well.”

“Our budget is the main issue really because our hands are tied. Our verti-drain recently broke down again. Last time, we had it welded up. It's the oldest thing you'll ever see, but now there's no scope to get another one, so it's one thing we don't have now. I don't know how many other places do it, but we slit every week, so the soil is pretty good and it drains pretty well. Ideally, we want to verti-drain, but there's not a lot I can do about it.”

“We made a brush for the wormcasts on the football pitches, and we started making a little push dimple seeder as well to get a better strike rate with the seed on the green and cricket squares. I just enjoy things like that. I think that's the sort of thing you enjoy when you don't have much to work with, so

you can still produce something really good.”

“Because of the budget and machinery we have, I have to think outside the box. I love it. We've got a GreenTek Double-Quick, so it has the slits on the bottom and, on the top, it has a hollow coring reel. With the kids pitches and topdressing, we normally use one hundred tonnes of soil maximum, but if someone gave me three or four hundred I'd use all of it!”

“What I did was hollow core and, instead of clearing up all the cores, I got the seeder, put a dragmat on the back of it and went over the cores and crushed them all, so it's like free topdressing. That's worked well, but I don't want to do it this year. I'm not sure if this happens or not, but I imagine holes forming if I do it too often, so I'm going to leave it this season. I've done it for the past two or three, and that seems to work well, and it's good for aeration and soil exchange.”

Dan's maintenance approach has included building a rapport with the bowls,



What I did was hollow core and, instead of clearing up all the cores, I got the seeder, put a dragmat on the back of it and went over the cores and crushed them all, so it's like free topdressing





cricket and football teams, using their feedback, good or bad, to improve the playing surfaces to ensure they feel listened to and are always happy with the end result. Using this approach, he has not only had great work satisfaction but, through common interests, has been able to build lasting friendships, making his working day all the more enjoyable and increasing the reputation of the club in the process.

Addressing issues with practical solutions has been part of improving other turf areas

at the club as well. The left side of the field was prone to holding water and caused issues throughout the winter, heavily compromising the quality of the pitches. To combat this, four years ago Dan decided to start the season with the pitches to the extreme left and move them to the extreme right in the winter to the drier area of the site. Doing this has made a massive difference and has been especially helpful through what has been a very difficult time for most with record amounts of rainfall.

“I think the pitches have done alright this year and we’ve played in conditions where we would normally have called games off. Normally, if you’ve had a season where you’re not calling many weekends off, you can occasionally say ‘it’s going to ruin the pitch today, so we’re calling it off’. A couple of weekends ago, I let a game go ahead, which I’d never have allowed in conditions like that, but you’ve just got to do it. People want to play”

“You can see that the pitches don’t look



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There isn't much we can do about that during the season, apart from the 'keep off the pitch' signs and the cricket square having a fence around it, because the goalmouths back up to it

too bad and, when you're on the pitch, it isn't too worn. The goalmouths always used to open up, but that doesn't happen anymore. So I feel the work we have done has made a difference and, when we seed after hollow coring, the seed sits quite far down, but what you see when the seed starts to come through is the actual plant base is below so it can't be kicked out, and I think that helps as well. I definitely think we're better all-round than we were six or seven years ago."

Progress is what Dan is after and it continues into cricket. As we sit talking in mid-March, the cricket season isn't too far away and a plan for recovering the outfield from the ELE League and the damage caused by parents is ready to be executed, but will have to be done at the same time as seven pitch renovations and bowls maintenance.

"The biggest square out there is fourteen strips across, and the outfield is surrounded by the junior pitches, so it's awful at the moment," Dan began. "The first thing I'll have to do is get that going because it's a lovely cricket square, but there's no point



having a beautiful cricket strip when the outfield is a bomb site. We've got to get onto it as soon as possible, get some seed sown and get things levelled because of the traffic and the goalmouths and where the parents walk through the middle of the pitches - it's like they dig holes, I don't know what they're wearing on their feet!"

"But there isn't much we can do about that during the season, apart from the 'keep off the pitch' signs and the cricket square having a fence around it, because the goalmouths back up to it. If you've got a football constantly going on there, with the kids running on to get it, and all you've got is a rope, what can you do? And the parents just moved it out the way and walked across it."

"After you've just renovated it with the loam being a bit sticky, you don't want kids walking through it. I've even seen someone setting up cones on there for the kids to train. So we've now put up a Heras fence which has definitely kept them off because it's set-up as a dog-leg, so no balls are going on there. The downside is it's a fence with concrete feet, so there are dead spots

where they are. But once we take it down, I scarify it a couple of times and seed it, and then irrigate those areas, so we normally get those bits back pretty quickly."

"Dave does really good work on the cricket squares and I renovate the surrounding areas and pitches. It's literally non-stop. I'll still be renovating things when the season comes around again if certain areas don't come back or whatever."

"The winter months are generally pretty chilled; it's been difficult with the weather, but it's the summer that is hectic. For example, even if I'm supposed to be finishing at 1.00pm, I'll stay until 6.00pm to get something finished; sometimes I just have to do it. Especially if I look at the forecast and there's rain coming. Then I'll want to get as much done as possible, so it all gets washed in. So, a typical week like this one, I'll be here until 6.00pm on a Monday and Tuesday, at 1.30pm on a Thursday and then 6.00pm on a Friday. Sometimes, I'll stay until six every day just to get as much done as possible. It all depends on what's going on and what the weather is doing. I just try to be as flexible as I can and



After you've just renovated it with the loam being a bit sticky, you don't want kids walking through it. I've even seen someone setting up cones on there for the kids to train





do as much as I can.”

The attitude Dan has is reflected in his results. By rights, there shouldn't be much more than seven sparsely grassed pitches outside because of the amount they are used and the weather. Instead, hard work has kept sport on for hundreds of players and, importantly, kept the income flowing for the club.

Whilst learning on the job and using his own thought process has worked well for

Dan, getting a job as a member of Tottenham Hotspur's matchday ground staff pushed his thinking further. The idea to apply was given to him by his dad, and the role has greatly increased his communication with other groundsmen and also ignited a desire to progress within the industry.

“I've been working at Tottenham since the new stadium opened and I've learned a lot,” he explained. “I feel like we've always been

sort of secluded; my dad knew people in the industry, but I didn't know anyone and, since I've been speaking to other groundsmen, I've learnt a lot more. The floodlit pitch was good before I started working at Tottenham, but it wasn't as good as it is now. Obviously, we can't spend as much money as they do, but, as soon as I saw the levels of detail they go to and their methods, I took what I could and applied what I can here. I divot the pitch after every game and use the brush we

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I've got three kids, so being at home can be stressful at times. I couldn't imagine having stress at work as well. I love being at home with my girlfriend and the kids, but it can be a hyper environment



made to stand the grass up before I cut. I've used double, maybe even triple, the amount of seed and the pitch has worn so much better. Usually, around this time of year, the goalmouths and the middles are all open, but now they are not."

"I've got three kids, so being at home can be stressful at times. I couldn't imagine having stress at work as well. I love being at home with my girlfriend and the kids, but it can be a hyper environment. When I come here, I reset; I listen to audiobooks and podcasts all day and I'm chilled out. When I'm here it's so relaxed and I enjoy pretty much every day. I think that has been such a good balance in my life"

Dan's relaxed, yet highly efficient and creative approach comes across in the way he talks and the ideas he has. Our quick tour around what he refers to as 'the museum' reveals the dimple seeder project, which is

being constructed like Frankenstein's monster, with a handle from an old piece of equipment, wheels from another etc.

We also speak about proposed cutbacks that he faces and the ways in which he'll have to deal with it, but his enthusiasm never drops, prompting the question if it ever has.

"You can get disheartened," he stated. "For example, at the start of the season when Romford first team were training here, I hadn't marked the floodlit pitch out yet, the grass looked incredible, and I was so impressed with it. They were training on a pitch further down the field, but came back onto the main pitch and did a load of shuttle runs; they thought they were off the pitch. In moments like that, you think you've done all that work over the summer for nothing, even though it was only the corner of the pitch. With things like that you can be

discouraged, but I still look forward to getting to work every day."

"Some days I wake up and can't wait to get here, I got here at 6.00am this morning, and I don't have to start until 8.00am, but I want to do as much as I can, and I enjoy that challenge. Some weeks they'll say you've got three cricket games this weekend, and this football starting and that football starting and I've got to mark out a whole football pitch from scratch and do a cricket strip, but I love having full days, and I look back and see what I've achieved that week, and that's probably the biggest satisfaction; when you've got a whole week's work to do and you get it done to a high standard. Working with grass, if you put the work in then you get the results, it's as simple as that."





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Westgate-on-Sea Cricket Club

The umpire strikes back!

Volunteer grounds professionals can tread a hard road, but a team of two can share the load, as Greg Rhodes discovered when he talked to Westgate-on-Sea Cricket Club's groundsman and umpire **Rafe Kelly** and his sidekick **Gary Sandwell**

Rafe Kelly



When Rafe Kelly takes the field at Westgate-on-Sea Cricket Club on 2 May, he'll preside over the first fixture of the season.

One of the wettest and windiest winters on record will be behind him, enough to challenge the hardiest of salaried grounds professionals, let alone a volunteer one such as Rafe.

Westgate's 'dynamic duo' grounds team of Rafe and Gary Sandwell have their work cut out at the best of times, without the trauma of turbulent weather.

As a qualified umpire, however, Rafe can peer down at all the good work the two of them have put into creating a cricket square that'll stand up to a packed fixtures calendar.

"I'm excited about the 2020 season," declares Rafe. "The club is welcoming a fresh influx of players, all under thirty years old, and that bodes well for our future."

Westgate-on-Sea is run wholly by volunteers - a fact of life for much of the grassroots game. "To run a cricket club is not cheap," says Rafe, "and to take up the sport sets you back a fair bit - £150 for a decent bat, £50 for pads and gloves and the same for a helmet."

Competing in the Kent Regional Cricket League, Westgate-on-Sea enjoyed a successful 2019 season - its first XI finishing third. Now as the renamed Premier (East) division (after winter restructuring by the KRCL) starts the 2020 programme, Westgate is confident knowing it commands the playing strength and numbers to thrive in the sometimes sorry state of grassroots cricket.

"Most people think doing the ground is easy, but I can tell you hand on heart that it's far from it," states Rafe, who points the finger at the game itself for making his task tricky.

"The biggest problem with cricket is the sheer amount of it nowadays. On Saturdays we start at 1.30pm usually, rarely finishing before 7.00pm. Then there are the T20 fixtures as they really carve up the wicket - too much in my view."

Sundays will see Rafe and Gary repairing the strip played on the previous day - one of nine on the square - then leaving it to recover for at least a month.

"If you add together the nine first XI and nine second XI home games, we have to prepare each strip at least twice for a fixture, and that's not easy," Rafe continues.

"We'll spend up to an hour and three-

quarters repairing a single strip, mainly the holes and run-up through wear and tear created by the batsmen and bowlers."

"After raking up the loose turf, we sweep it up and vacuum off, before sowing new seed, with fresh loam. Next day, we use our 1.5 tonne Powerroll, leave the strip for one to two days then water, water and water, hosing it from the pipe at the edge of the square."

Rafe breaks off for a moment to recall the old days. "Westgate used to tour the region for a week, taking in Bexhill, Bournemouth, Brighton and Eastbourne. The team consisted mainly of the older players, with fewer family commitments, but we stopped it two years ago as numbers had fallen away."

Formerly in the Kent League, with its 50-over fixtures, Westgate is "keeping its head above water" says Rafe. "We're ranked among the top three clubs in the area, behind Sandwich and Broadstairs."

"I was never much of a player," he adds. "I bowled, but made up the numbers really and gave up the game at thirty-two as I wanted to be an umpire." He gained his ECB ACO qualification thirty years ago and now, at sixty-eight, is still enjoying his passion.

In that time he must have had one or two



Juniors rising through the ranks

Lee Martin runs the thriving juniors section: "Bringing forward young talent is vital to a club like ours," he says, "as, over the years, the participation in cricket has dropped dramatically. In our locality alone, which covers Thanet, including Margate and Broadstairs, only four clubs now run juniors sections, compared with nine, years ago. The trick is to find volunteers willing to give up their time to commit to coaching. It's difficult."

To address the issue of declining membership, the committee decided that it was time to reverse the terminal trend and invest in youth.

"I came on board as Youth Development Officer/Coach in May 2016," Lee continues, "was trained up and started in the post in May 2016, in charge of ten children."

"We gained the appropriate safeguarding certificates to allow the club to coach juniors and I took an eight-week coaching course to gain my Level 2 certificate with the ECB at Kent County Cricket."

"The project has grown since then and, last season, we ran the programme with more than fifty junior members attending some Sunday morning sessions, which we run from 9.30 to 11.00am, late April to early September. The U9s are the biggest group. The parents are great too and love to get involved. They field a team against the coaches on August Bank Holiday afternoon, following a juniors match in the morning."

"There are added benefits," says Lee. "Often, the club signs up a parent, who suddenly wants to resume playing, and that's all good for our future."

"The biggest hit for me is seeing the kids faces when they are learning something new and are getting off their computers and playing outdoors."

The success of the coaching programme demands more than a single coach and Westgate is welcoming Natalie O'Connell, another Level 2 coach, this season. "That makes three Level 2 coaches in total," Lee reports. "Our first XI

captain, Scott Tift, has been a Level 2 qualified coach for a number of years."

Westgate runs most if its coaching programme on the outfield and in the practice nets, occasionally using the square.

"The school fits in really well with our coaching and fixtures and bring the contractor in if we request the outfield to be cut."

This close working relationship has been fostered despite major upheavals for both parties. "Kent Council built the present school in the late 1990s, and we had to move off the square for three seasons on to council pitches. Rafe and Gary do a great job for us and, for the last three years, we've run ECB All-Star Cricket for 5 to 8 year-olds."

Although Lee cannot play at the moment - he awaits a knee reconstruction operation after snapping his anterior cruciate and medial ligaments - he vows to keep up his coaching commitment.

"You can't let the kids, or the parents, down and, as long as they keep coming to the club to learn the game, we have to deliver for them - having juniors coming though the ranks is vital to the game we all love."

The pull-through from junior cricket to the main game is healthy. "Six of our youth squad have moved up to the adult level."

Westgate-on-Sea CC's future is looking brighter than some of its neighbouring clubs, which have either merged or disappeared. "We can field a first and second XI on Saturdays," says Lee, "plus a Sunday team, with juniors fixtures planned to be introduced this season."

Clearly, the club runs to a highly community-based model, with players devoting time to running the club as well as turning out for the team. Club Secretary James Hogg began his cricketing career here fifteen years ago, at the age of eleven. Lee himself started at just nine, developing into Westgate's opening bowler. He celebrated his 40th birthday playing alongside his 10-year-old son Lewis, who's also on the coaching programme.

memorable moments. "Yes, one in particular," he laughs. "I was positioned at square leg. The batsman hit the ball in my direction and I caught it one handed without thinking. Every fielder and both batsmen looked at me in astonishment. I dropped the ball like a hot brick and shouted 'dead ball'. Did I feel an idiot? I wished the ground could have swallowed me up."

Back to the present, he applauds all the good work his colleagues put in to raise much-needed funds. "The fathers versus coaches and kiddies game is a highpoint for me," he states. "Last year, Lee [Martin, more about him later] who runs the junior coaching, wrote to clubs and shops and organised a raffle and auction, raising £2,500. The event attracts parents, juniors and other local people."

Back to the square. Whether players are young or old, Rafe leaves them in no doubt about his views on them trespassing on his hallowed turf, after spending so much of his time preparing it.

"Cricket is supposed to be a gentleman's game, but these days the wickets take a right pounding. It's not wilful damage I'm sure, but as an umpire - and a groundsmen - I feel obliged to tell them to keep off the pitch. I'm just being practical I suppose, but I have to say it."

Rafe took over as head groundsmen from Gary Sandwell (61), who had undertaken the task for many years. "You don't receive many offers of help preparing the square and I decided to ask Gary if I could assist him. He nearly bit my hand off. Without Gary, I'd be lost. He's shown me everything from day one and has a 'Bible' going back to the year dot, which points the way on maintaining the square."

Perhaps the two were destined to work together as, in past lives, they had pursued careers in similar sectors. "I worked as a print finisher for twenty-five years at Sericol in Broadstairs, the largest inking company in the world," says Rafe. "Gary worked at a printers in Margate."

Former player Andy Seal mucks in too, marking out the strips by hand on a Friday evening. "It just makes my task a little bit easier," Rafe remarks.

The operational arrangement at Westgate is complicated but works well. Kent County Council owns the land on which St Saviour's School stands. Westgate hire the square from the school and maintain it for both club and school to use. Maintaining the outfield is St Saviour's responsibility, and they bring in their own contractor to mow it.

"The outfield could do with a 5 tonne roll," Rafe says. "It was fertilised several years ago, but the school has to prioritise funds and the field takes a bit of a back seat. That said, we have a really good working relationship with the head and deputy who organise a cutting if we request it. Football, rounders and athletics are all played on it, plus the sports day events."

Rafe and Gary start work on the square as early as December, cutting it with one of the pedestrian mowers and checking for any disease patches, which they treat with



Another of the helpers, Andy Winch (left), with Gary Sandwell



Gary Sandwell with 'extremely handy' ECB covers

fungicide whilst continuing to brush regularly.

"Gary cut the square again in February and it's beginning to look good. Fortunately, we stand on chalky ground so the square and outfield drain quickly, so we may not have suffered as much as many other clubs have with the excessively wet winter."

March is the month when Rafe hopes the weather has been fine enough for them to begin pre-season preparation. "We cut the square again, scarifying both ways, then cut again, picking up all the debris that scarifying has brought out."

"Avoiding too heavy a scarification is important as we are still in the early stages of preparation so need to take care not to overdo the operation."

In April, after ensuring the square has been set out correctly, rolling is a key task and needs to be done both ways, Rafe explains.

"A spring fertiliser is sprayed on the square this month and we are cutting, scarifying and rolling full on now until our first fixture in early May."

"Andy marks out the strip we are going to use for the first fixture, then we cut, scarify

cut again and roll." Westgate bought their roll-on covers from the ECB, when the Board was running a special offer. "We paid around £1,500 for them and they come in extremely handy," says Rafe.

"Gary and I begin preparing for the Saturday fixture on Thursday. If rain is forecast, on go the covers. They make the strip sweat though, so we take them off if there has been no rain. After cutting the square on the Friday, we roll them on ready for the game, removing them at least forty minutes before the start, then run the mower over the strip."

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“This is what I love about the job. You never can really tell how a strip’s going to perform. It’s a brilliant feeling. Our wickets are a batsman’s paradise. If a team fail to score over 200, they won’t win.”

The day after the game, Westgate volunteers “club together” to repair the strip that was in play on the Saturday. “If we need to use it again during the season, we know it’s in good shape to bring into play again,” Rafe reports.

“Not all clubs do this, but we find it saves time and hopefully money at the end of the season.”

Sunday’s duties include running the mower over the square to pick up loose grass, then hand-raking to make grooves ready for applying seed and loam before watering. “On the Monday, when the repairs have hopefully compacted, I’ll roll lightly and carry on watering. Germination usually occurs after two or three days.” Fertiliser goes down when school’s out, adds Rafe - at Easter and in the autumn at the end of half-term.

“After the last fixture, we mow the whole square with the strip mower, seed the areas that need it and lay Binder Ongar loam.”

Although the practice nets are well used, the synthetic strip was dug out of the square ten years ago, “because it was dangerous” recalls Rafe. “I was club chairman at the time and made sure we replaced it with a new natural grass pitch.”

Have times changed at Westgate since

then? “As a small club, money is always tight. We use eighty bags of loam a year so the cost mounts up, what with fertiliser, plant protection products and grass seed as the main outlays.”

Rafe’s umpiring duties will have to end when he turns seventy. “Those are the rules, but I’ll carry on with the groundcare as long I can. It’s a big commitment, at least fourteen hours a week in summer for me alone, and at least three hours on a Friday afternoon in season - rolling’s the biggest job.”



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Club history

The club began life as a church side in 1927, when there were two clubs in the village - one Westgate, the other the St Saviour’s Club.

Westgate disbanded in 1937, with St Saviour’s renaming themselves Westgate-on-Sea Cricket Club at their AGM that March.

“Our annual subscription was just 5 shillings and 6 pence (27.5p in new money)” states former club chairman and current treasurer Martin Arnold.

In 1951, the club obtained exclusive use of Hawtreys Field in Westgate, renting the ground from Kent County Council.

In 1954, Westgate set an example to other clubs by making their own efforts to secure better playing pitches and improved facilities. “It reached a milestone by opening its pavilion, costing the club £200,” Martin notes.

“This and pitch improvements made Hawtreys Field a far more attractive playing proposition than it had been a few

seasons’ earlier.”

“We’ve played at the site ever since, gradually improving the facilities until, in 2003, we built a new pavilion, including changing room, showers, community area and bar.”

Catastrophe descended on Westgate on 1st September 2012 when fire gutted the pavilion. “We had to rebuild it from the ground up,” recalls Martin, “but we recovered from the setback and continue to thrive.”



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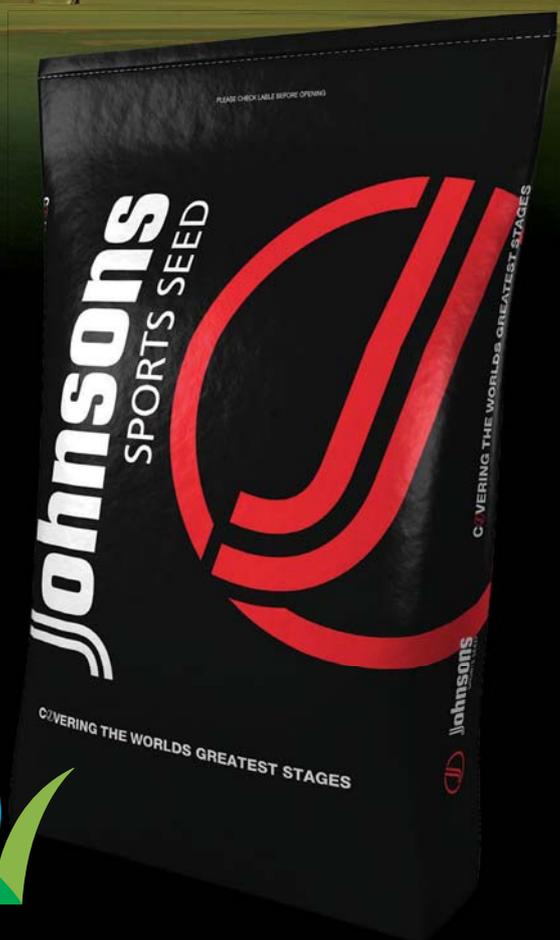


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Operation Pollinator

Winning at life on the course

Banchory Golf Club, on Deeside in Scotland, won the Syngenta Operation Pollinator Award at the Golf Environment Awards, presented at BTME 2020. Course Manager, **Richard Mullen**, was acclaimed for the course's success in establishing wildflower areas on rough and out of play areas that has seen biodiversity flourish by providing essential natural habitats alongside a well managed golf course

Banchory Golf Club has gone from strength to strength over the past year, vastly increasing the areas dedicated to wildflowers, enthused Golf Environment Awards' judge, Rowan Rumball.

"Naturally seeded areas, and also areas sown with species that are appropriate to the local region, are both present," he commented. "STRI ecologists saw a diverse range of invertebrate species that can only be explained by a course that has been managed appropriately."

Along with winning the Syngenta Operation Pollinator Award at BTME, Course Manager Richard Mullen was also a finalist in the Conservation Greenkeeper of the Year Award and picked up the BIGGA Excellence in Communication Outreach Award 2020.

Pitchcare caught up with Richard, Rowan and Syngenta Operation Pollinator Manager, Caroline Carroll, to find out more about the Banchory experiences, and to provide tips for other clubs to achieve more successful results from their environmental initiatives

Pitchcare: Which ecological features have you found easiest to establish and given the quickest gains?

Richard Mullen: Although some things have been easy to establish and create, our aim is for the gains to be long term. But, if we had to choose one, it would be the introduction of Red Squirrel feeding stations and dray boxes. Creating these was achievable by

help from the Saving Scotland's Red Squirrels project, and spare wood!

Richard Rowan: Understanding the local environment to a course is vital to creating ecological enhancements that are taken advantage of quickly. For example if there is an adjoining woodland, bird boxes can help the local population to spread and grow; while lowland courses surrounded by ponds may see more luck with reptile refuges or biodiversity ponds. Richard saw the potential for increasing the local red squirrel population and this has produced dividends!

Caroline Carroll: With over ten years' experience of Operation Pollinator on golf courses, it's recognised that success doesn't happen overnight, but Richard's experience at Banchory has shown that, with every positive action, there are clear gains for the environment from day one. Given commitment and time, habitats and their value to wildlife get better and better. By utilising out of play areas to create diverse habitat features he's demonstrated the huge value that golf courses can have as a national environmental resource.

PC: Conversely, which ecological features have been most difficult?

RM: Getting wildflowers established within existing rough areas has definitely been a challenge. Thinning out the rough without any chemical help is a challenge on its own, especially with low staff levels, but one we





Course Manager Richard Mullen
with restored heather areas



It would be the introduction of Red Squirrel feeding stations and dray boxes. Creating these was achievable by help from the Saving Scotland's Red Squirrels project, and spare wood!



Red squirrel on bird feeder

feel that, after four years, is starting to bear fruits. Next time it would be easier, just due to experiences and learning the capabilities of the grass, especially in early spring when you need to cut and remove again.

RR: Thinning out the rough to encourage wildflowers is all about persistence. By cutting and collecting through these areas you are removing nutrients that historically would have been removed by wild animals grazing. This helps reduce grass vigour and, along with scarification, opens up areas of the soil for new flowering species to take hold. The nutrients in these areas has built up like a bank, so it may be some years before you see results.

CC: The loss of Rescue, as a selective herbicide to remove competitive coarse grasses and leave fine fescues, was a serious blow for rough management and creating the space for wildflowers to flourish. But Operation Pollinator wildflower establishment trials at STRI have shown

Richard is doing everything right in cutting and removing vegetation and deep scarification before over seeding; having sufficient bare soil before sowing looks harsh, but is crucial to get seed established. With ongoing management, it's important to take care to avoid fertiliser spread or run off onto the wildflower rough areas. That will help suppress competitive grass growth, as well as ensure more efficient use of the nutrients where they are wanted and less environmental loss - which makes economic and sustainability sense.

PC: Which areas have personally given you the greatest satisfaction, and why?

RM: Increases in solitary bee, butterfly and hover flies are great to see and a real indication that we are doing the right things for habitat creation. Also, red squirrel numbers are a real delight for us as we get about our work, and for the players on the course. Both projects are equally satisfying, as we're feeling a real buzz around the

increases in biodiversity. We only have a small team, Paul McKay and Steven Shaw, along with myself, so it has been great for them to engage with the projects - it allows them to learn and enhance their own environments as well as the courses.

RR: The number of different invertebrate species is a real sign of good quality habitat. Invertebrates tend to have very specialised needs, so a wide variety of them suggests a diverse habitat. I always recommend to get local experts involved to perform species counts at the start and at regular intervals during a project. This can provide data to show off with at the next general meeting!

PC: Has the ecological work resulted in any surprising finds for you?

RM: For sure, we had no idea of the existence of slow worms on the course. And, because of changes to our course maintenance, we have been able to grow natural heather again - from seed banks within the soil profiles.



Rowan Rumball STRI



Barn owl box built in the course workshop



Red squirrel boxes being erected



Wildflower areas providing food and habitat for pollinators



It was common to hear that one species or another ‘definitely was not there’, but it turned out that often the site owner was just not looking in the right place!

RR: One of the most frustrating things about UK wildlife is how good it is at hiding! When I worked on housing developments, it was common to hear that one species or another ‘definitely was not there’, but it turned out that often the site owner was just not looking in the right place! Try placing reptile tins or wildlife cameras around the site, you may just be surprised by what you find!

CC: Throughout the Operation Pollinator project we’ve found that, if you put the habitat back, the wildlife will find it. Monitoring has found numerous examples of ‘lost’ or rare species that reoccur when habitats are restored. That demonstrates the incredible ecological value that golf courses can offer, as well as the publicity value for a club to highlight what it has achieved.

PC: What tips would you give another golf course manager considering starting out on enhancing their ecological areas?

RM: Speak to as many local groups as you can as there is willing expert help out there.

Certainly, The North East Scotland Biodiversity Partnership have been our rock locally; they advise and keep us right as well as try to develop our work within non golfing circles. Their connections with Scottish National Heritage, the RSPB and other organisations has effectively allowed us to have a foot in the door.

RR: I absolutely agree with Richard here. Wildlife and natural areas have been shown to provide numerous advantages to a golf course, from flood protection to pollination; so why not get a local group to help you develop these benefits, often for free!

PC: Where have you obtained the advice and knowledge to develop your ecological areas? What resources would you recommend others to look at?

RM: James Hutchison at BIGGA and the guys at STRI are absolutely amazing at giving advice and direction, they would be my first port of call. The GEO OnCourse programme gives you the record keeping

aspect and ticks that box, but more than that, everyone at the GEO are amazing help and will always help us out here at Banchory. And I can’t not mention Carolyn Hedley at Scottish Golf, who is always willing to listen, help and advise at the drop of a hat. I’m grateful to have the backing of all.

RR: There are also thousands of free resources online to give you ideas on what can be developed or improved on the course. From reptile hibernacula construction to anaerobic digesters, my best advice is to investigate online and look to how it may apply to the site.

CC: I’d also add that there’s nothing better than talking to other greenkeepers and course managers. Whilst each club’s situation is different, they have the shared experience of what can be achieved practically, and in the unique golf industry where there are specific economic and physical constraints. We have always found the 200 clubs involved with Operation



Living wall from fallen logs



Wildflower areas threshed with a stick to knock out seed before cutting



Caroline Carroll, Syngenta Operation Pollinator Manager



We are starting to attract funding from the Ladies section of the club, and more interested parties coming forward, but we always could do with a little more!



Accurate spray application targets inputs where they are fully utilised and avoids environmental losses

Pollinator have been incredibly willing to share ideas and best practices.

PC: What benefits do you consider ecological features have for the design and playability of your course?

RM: I want everyone to enjoy their golf at Banchory but, if they don't, they can effectively "smell the flowers" and look at their surroundings and endangered species as they make their way around the course.

Playability has not changed and we work on habitats in out of play areas; the ecology work does not really change our targets on surfaces. We're a sustainable course, but mainly due to reductions in inputs and better targeting to have a genuine balance of integrated approach to turf and pest management.

RR: A common saying for myself and my colleague Bob Taylor is that "nature is possible on the golf course not despite of golf but BECAUSE of golf". A golf course has amazing potential for nature, all of which will go on to be appreciated by the membership and wider community alike.

PC: What proportion of your annual maintenance budget do you consider you typically spend on ecological management?

RM: We have no allocated budget for anything ecology wise and certainly haven't the staff to do it in the normal working day. We have to look at how investment to help the course can be undertaken in such a way to have the greatest environmental benefit too, at little or no extra cost. We also take advantage of rain or snow days to do environmental projects, and put in extra time after work. Other things, such as topping up squirrel feeders can be done as the guys do course checks anyway. The only thing we bought was a jigsaw for the wood cutting; Godsend that, as poor Paul was starting to blister from saw use! We are starting to attract funding from the Ladies section of the club, and more interested parties coming forward, but we always could do with a little more!

RR: There is no required amount of time to dedicate to improving the biodiversity but

any small amount makes a difference. Greenkeeping teams seem to get smaller and smaller by the year! It is worth mentioning that anything positive for nature should be appreciated. Just because you cannot dedicate 90% of the working week to improving the rough areas doesn't mean that the birds don't appreciate the boxes you put up in five minutes!

PC: Have you had a good level of support from your members and the community for the environmental initiatives?

RM: There's been a very positive response from the members. We conduct regular members' evenings to communicate what we are doing, as well as showing them how to do it at home. Local schoolchildren are painting animals and insects that will go on a new course wildlife information sign. Local schools and nurseries also come in to spread wildflower seeds, and come back later to see the fruits of their labour. I've even had a little stint on local radio, explaining what we do on their local golf course. We feel that, as long as



Just because you cannot dedicate 90% of the working week to improving the rough areas doesn't mean that the birds don't appreciate the boxes you put up in five minutes!



Keeping membership up to date with Operation Pollinator initiatives and what is going on



New natural habitat creation including heather and wildflower seed tiles transported into sand scrape areas

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Local schoolchildren are painting animals and insects that will go on a new course wildlife information sign. Local schools and nurseries also come in to spread wildflower seeds

communications are strong, and the reasoning to do something is explained, the feedback is always positive... well, 99%!

RR: Communication is vital. Many ecological improvements are counter-intuitive and require explanation as to why they are being performed. Conversely, if you do not communicate what you are doing, then it will be missing an opportunity to get the benefits from the local community. Right now, environmentalism is on the rise and any increases in natural areas will be looked upon favourably.

PC: Do you consider that the initiatives will help the economic sustainability of the club, as well as the environmental sustainability?

RM: Without doubt, yes. Over the past four years there has been no increases in the budgets and, like many others, there has been cuts, but the feedback is that the course has got better.

RR: Involvement in the local community shares the benefits both ways and encourages an increase in membership.

There was a very interesting paper produced by the government that stated that, if everyone had equal access to green spaces, it would reduce the NHS mental health budget by 30%. If that is not good reason to support nature, I do not know what is.

CC: There is always the need to attract players to ensure the economic viability of the club. Where ecological initiatives can provide a more attractive environment in which to play, alongside good playing surfaces, it's a win, win for golf and the environment. Richard and Banchory Golf Club are ably demonstrating the balance can be successfully achieved and creating a sustainable business.

POSITIVE ACTION FOR POLLINATORS

Join this initiative that offers potential to restore numbers of bumblebees and other valuable pollinating insects on your course, as well as a great marketing opportunity for the club.

www.greencast.co.uk/operation-pollinator



Cut and collect to reduce fertility

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Where ecological initiatives can provide a more attractive environment in which to play, alongside good playing surfaces, it's a win, win for golf and the environment



Engaging with the community and local schools to promote ecology on the golf course



Three decades of turf management

A lasting legacy in sustainable soils

When **Martin Ward** launched Symbio with his brother David thirty years ago, it's fair to say that their natural approach to soil and turf management was met with scepticism from many turf professionals. Now, as he hands over the reins at Symbio, thousands of sports turf venues are committed to sustainable soil management as part of their wider environmental responsibility and the global momentum to tackle the effects of climate change continues to gather pace. He reflects on three decades of developments with Ellie Parry



Ellie Parry: You launched Symbio in 1990; how did you become part of the sports turf industry?

Martin Ward: Symbio began as a bioremediation company using microbiology to clean up contaminated soils, lakes and irrigation ponds used for golf course irrigation. Nitrate and phosphate run off feeds algal growth, so to us the obvious solution was to stop nutrient leaching by fixing the nitrate and phosphate in the rootzone, the same way as is done in sewage treatment plants. We trialled our technology at 10 or 11 sites with amazing results. Fertiliser inputs halved, thatch degraded to humus and less Poa seed heads were evident, while desirable grasses thrived. David was originally the driving force behind the technical development and I became the spokesperson.

By 1992, it became apparent that the largest potential markets for environmental biotechnology lay in the fields of agriculture, horticulture and amenity turf management, and Symbio switched to these markets. Back then the use of microbes to improve plant growth and soil quality was completely new. We launched Symbio Green Circle that year, the first biotech product for nutrient retention and recycling for sports turf, followed by Thatch Eater, the first biological thatch degrader, in 1993. When I first began speaking about their benefits, people thought I was completely mad. Turf managers and agronomists were sceptical; some saw our products as nothing more than 'hocus pocus'. We've continued to innovate and educate in tandem, and now our programmes have been adopted by thousands of venues around the world.

How has the industry changed since then?

In some ways a great deal, in other respects very little. Short-termism remains an issue. Masking symptoms instead of solving the underlying problems is still the accepted



Martin Ward

management practice for most turf managers. The industry is still dealing with the same issues - thatch formation, disease, excess fertiliser use, compaction and Poa annua, in much the same way as when the USGA specification was introduced nearly sixty years ago. Designed to leach nutrients and drain quickly, natural growth processes have been side-lined in favour of physical and chemical management. Biology, physics and chemistry must be used together for optimal results. Turf managers continue to battle with the health of their greens while there are no issues with the rough.

Anybody that has suffered a major disease outbreak knows how rapidly microbes can change conditions. To use beneficial microbes for rapid improvement to your advantage, turf managers need to understand how soil and plants interact for healthy, disease-free growth. Each soil system is unique. When you are dealing with thousands of microbes, there are lots



To have turf managers tell me they can relax and enjoy their job again because the stress of managing fine turf is removed when healthy rootzones are restored is my greatest achievement



© John Kelley



© John Kelley



The industry is still dealing with the same issues - thatch formation, disease, excess fertiliser use, compaction and Poa annua, in much the same way as when the USGA specification was introduced nearly sixty years ago

of variables; just because something isn't instantly replicable in a trial doesn't mean it isn't effective.

What needs to change? What do we need to...

...do more of? Training courses need to begin with modules teaching people how grass grows and what it needs. Students still learn very little biology, bar pathogens. We also need to train the trainers, so the latest information and techniques to manage healthy soil without reliance on pesticides is available to students."

...do less of? Invasive management. Yes, aerate, but use pencil tines rather than hollow core. To degrade thatch, don't rip it out, don't dilute it with sand. Degrade it biologically and convert it to humus - the building block of all healthy soil. You only need to use sand for a good playing surface.

..think about? Soil health. We need to consider what we are doing that upsets the work of nature. The constant inputs of inorganic fertilisers, which are mineral salts, pesticides and water, deplete the soil

microbiome, most notably the beneficial microbes that prevent disease, recycle nutrients, and determine if you grow perennial grasses or Poa annua. Another is our carbon footprint. The microbiology in healthy soil captures 3-4 tonnes of carbon per hectare, whereas the reduced microbiome in an intensively managed USGA green in the same space may capture as little as half a tonne. As far as carbon sequestration is concerned, there are huge gains to be made in farming, but turf can also play a significant part in addressing the effects of climate change.

What do you consider to be your greatest achievement?

To have turf managers tell me they can relax and enjoy their job again because the stress of managing fine turf is removed when healthy rootzones are restored. In the wider industry I hope I started to turn the tide. Now everybody is talking about soil biology. We have seen a massive reduction in inputs and costs. Where some turf managers I met were applying 250kg of Nitrogen a year on their greens with monthly fungicide applications, they're now applying 50-60kg with two or



Golf Club Sierre in Switzerland with Head Greenkeeper Jean Bernard Mattiz (left) and Symbio's Swiss distributor, Fenaco (right)



Martin during a seminar at BTME 2020 © BIGGA



Masking symptoms instead of solving the underlying problems is still the accepted management practice for most turf managers

three fungicides a year, if needed. The UK industry is leading the world in successfully reducing reliance on pesticides, and there has been a tremendous improvement in the quality of playing surfaces.

What's your hope for the industry in the future?

That it continues to learn. It's fascinating to think where science is heading and what opportunities future technologies

and education will bring in the decades to come. Evidence shows that adopting natural practices reduces stress, so I hope that turf managers will enjoy better quality of life from growing grass naturally.

What's next for Symbio?

It's now owned by the Origin group of companies. With its backing, the amenity turf division will continue to expand its UK and international markets, benefitting from

excellent research facilities to increase the pace of product development. The staff team has expanded with several key appointments, enabling a greater number of venues to access their knowledge and expertise.

Do you have a departing message for today's turf managers?

Grass grows best in healthy soil. You are its custodians, so it's over to you.



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Exhaust emissions

Stage V for cleaner air

For years, engine and machinery manufacturers across the outdoor power equipment industry have been working towards lower exhaust emissions and cleaner air. 2019 saw the biggest developments yet for non-road mobile machinery with the introduction of Stage V emissions regulations in the European Union.

In this question and answer session **Chris Cooper**, senior product marketing manager at The Toro Company, explains what this legislation means for turfcare customers in the UK

Could you recap what Stage V compliance is?

Stage V refers to exhaust emissions standards introduced by the EU for non-road mobile machinery using spark ignited and compression ignition engines.

For diesel engines in particular, Stage V will limit the amount of particulate matter produced in an effort to reduce air pollution. As governed in the regulation, production of new machinery fitted with an engine and destined for the European market will, if produced after 30th June 2020, need to comply with the Stage V standards. Specific to diesel engines with power rating between 19kW and 560kW, this will require the addition of a Diesel Particulate Filter (DPF) in order to comply.

Machinery produced before this date, providing they have been placed on the market, i.e. in dealer or distributor inventory,





Toro's Stage V compliant ProLine H800 direct collect outfront rotary mower puts productivity at an all-time high and makes clippings clear-up easy



The Groundsmaster 3200 and 3300 (shown with flail attachment here) lead the first wave of new Stage V emissions compliant machines

avoid any restriction on when they can be retailed to an end-user.

Stage V closely follows the Tier IV standard that was introduced in North America several years ago. Whilst there are similarities, Tier IV and Stage V are two different standards.

What is the difference between Stage V and previous EU emissions standards?

It's an evolution of previous standards and requires controls to be applied to new non-road mobile machinery. It will ensure limitations of carbon monoxide, nitrogen oxides and hydrocarbons, as well as diesel soot emitted to the atmosphere.

The biggest change with Stage V from previous standards is that it captures all spark ignited (SI) and combustion ignition (CI) engines, where previous standards did not.

What impact do these regulations have for the customer?

The essence of the regulations are, of course, good - cleaner air is something we should all be supportive of and active in achieving, but the fact of the matter is these changes do have a significant effect on the product, particularly those with diesel engines rated above 19kW and fitted with DPF systems.

The engines are more complex and follow the type of engine management systems

that we associate more with the automotive sector. However, diesel engines in the sub-19 kW category and SI engines witness much less of an impact, which prompts manufacturers to look at whether a product can meet customers needs with less horsepower or migrate to alternative fuels.

We're expecting a period of uncertainty with customers as they assess the way they maintain their grounds/contracts, considering requirements, mowing options, budget, etc. It will become crucial to consider the 'real mowing' productivity of the machine, something tenders have already started to add into the process.

For example, is there a different way to compile a fleet or can different purchasing decisions be made that allow customers to remain profitable and productive? It might cost more to buy a specific machine, but if you only need to buy one machine to perform more than one function or a machine like the Toro LT-F3000 triple flail, which is so productive it can enable you to reduce the cutting frequency, those factors become more important than ever.

What has Toro been doing since it knew these changes were coming?

Toro benefitted from its experience with the roll-out of Tier IV products in North America. We learned how to design out inefficiencies in systems such as, but not limited to, hydraulics, engine cooling, etc. We've

focused on how we can deliver a range of efficient, capable solutions to our customers, so they can select the right machine for their requirements.

For example, we have reduced the horsepower of our CT2240 compact triple from 19kW to 18.7kW, a reduction of only 1.5 percent, but a reduction that allows us to avoid the added cost and complexity of a DPF filter. Despite the reduced power output compared to its bigger brother, the LT3340, the CT2240 offers many of the same features, the same width of cut and will also, [for 2021] be available with the larger 250mm (10ins) diameter cutter units, which were previously limited to the LT3340. We feel this offers the customer an interesting value proposition - will they be willing to accept a product that can achieve over 80-90 percent of what the LT3340 can, and benefit from the simplified power train and lower cost? Less horsepower could also result in lower fuel consumption and lower operating costs.

Stage V will certainly shake-up the market, so it'll be interesting to see how customer requirements and preferences adapt and change over the coming months and years.

In contrast, we've upped the power of the Toro LT3340 heavy-duty triple mower from 26kW to 27.5kW, giving customers the option to buy a machine that can now do more. If customers are having to pay more,



Toro's ProStripe pedestrian mower, with Stage V engine, delivers a perfect cut and striped finish

Should we assume the UK market will follow the EU laws moving forward?

At this point in time, there is a lot of uncertainty over what will happen in the future with regards to UK legislation and standards post-BREXIT. For now, however, the UK must follow the EU rules, at least until the end of 2020. Beyond that time, it would depend on the trade agreement with the EU. It is possible that additional administrative requirements may apply in the UK, but at this moment it is the intention of the UK government to continue to follow the EU requirements.

For further information on Stage V or any of the Toro machines mentioned in this article, visit UK distributor Reesink Turfcare reesinkturfcare.co.uk



Chris Cooper, senior product marketing manager at The Toro Company

we will always strive to provide them more features and benefits in return. The LT3340 is a classic example of that.

Some of our latest products, such as the Groundsmaster 3000 series, the ProLine H800 direct collect out-front rotary, and the ProStripe pedestrian mower are already Stage V compliant and already sought after in the UK.

The new Groundsmaster 3000 has been designed with the option of a flail attachment which means you can cut two ways with one machine. That is a design function similar to the LT-F3000 which has made that particular machine so popular. Basically, we're at the start of a process which will see very different customer behaviours by the end.

What happens to a machine with a non-Stage V engine?

That's a good question. Engine manufacturers are able to supply replacement non-Stage V engines for up to ten years from when the Stage V standard was implemented.

For machinery purchased before Stage V was enforced, they can continue to be used as normal - the regulations only affect new machinery that has been manufactured after 30th June 2020. Machinery fitted with a non-Stage V engine and not yet placed in the EU market would not be allowed, except when making use of a transition engine.

How can customers tell whether a product is Stage V compliant?

All compliant engines are labelled to reference the emissions certification to which they comply. For products such as the Toro LT-F3000 for example, we are issuing a new model number to distinguish the Stage V models from non-Stage V models, thereby increasing traceability.

What are the dates of which customers should be aware?

Production of machinery fitted with non-Stage V, transition engines will cease on or before 30th June 2020. From this date on, all new machinery production that is destined for the EU must comply with the Stage V regulations. Any remaining non-Stage V machinery must be placed on the EU market, i.e. with dealers, distributors, on or before the end of 2020 (31st December 2020) whereby it can be retailed to end-users without any limit on date.

Stage V engines must be used in new, non-road mobile machinery that are produced on or after 1 July 2020.

What is a transition engine and what is a transition machinery?

A transition engine is a non-Stage V engine built before 1st January 2019, which is installed in machinery before 1st July 2020. That machinery is, in turn, considered transition machinery and must be placed on the EU market before 1st January 2021.



Frank Newberry: Part 2

Putting Things Off

If you have already managed to read Part 1 of this article, you will probably know by now if you are 1) deadline-driven, 2) event-oriented, 3) a sensation-seeking procrastinator - or all three! In Part 2 of this article, Grounds Care Trainer and Conference Speaker **Frank Newberry** offers ten ways we can all reduce our tendency to procrastinate.

Ten Ways to Reduce Procrastination

You may be pleased to learn that many psychologists say procrastination is not about laziness. It is not about avoiding work. Rather, it is about avoiding feelings. Negative feelings brought about by things like anxiety, fear of failure or a lack of confidence.

Procrastination, therefore, has a helpful short-term function. Its purpose is mood regulation (by that I mean you regulating your mood). If you put off doing a task that is worrying you and you do something else instead (called a displacement activity) - voilà, your mood will change. Pressure gone! For the time being at least.

Regulate our mood regulator

What we perhaps need to do is regulate our mood regulator. We can do this by deliberately not giving difficult people or tricky tasks the power to alter our mood. The next time someone does something that upsets you or puts you in a mood - check whether you gave this undeserving person the power to change your mood.

Over the years, I have gradually managed to adjust a tendency I sometimes have - the tendency to feel victimised or persecuted by others, e.g. some bosses, some colleagues and certain customers. I have reduced the number of people I now give this power to, i.e. the power to hurt my confidence or my feelings. Now it is only the people I love that have this power and, in some cases, I am working on reducing their power even further! It is good to feel more in control of my reactions to challenging people and situations.

From a starting point of feeling good about your skills

So, from a starting point of feeling good about your skills and abilities and being in control of your mood, let us look at ten ways to reduce any tendency you might have to put things off.

Ten Ways to Reduce Procrastination

1. Schedule important and demanding tasks into your 'prime time'

Your prime time in the day being when you feel energised and resilient. You may be a 'morning' person or an 'afternoon' person, or even an 'all day' person! Schedule demanding tasks accordingly. Take control of your own 'quality' time.

2. Put boring and repetitive tasks into your 'down time' of the day

Your 'down time' in the day being when you feel slow or prone to distraction. A 'morning' person might feel slower after lunch, or later in the afternoon. An 'afternoon' person may have to build up their resources during the morning. So, schedule the less demanding and more mundane work tasks into your down time.

3. 'Salami' technique

Simply plan a big undertaking or job by slicing it into 'thinner', easier tasks. Place them into a sequence and start at the beginning. Commend yourself for completing each smaller task and then move on to the next one.

4. Five Minute Plan

Devote five minutes only to that task you are avoiding starting on. This technique can eliminate your inertia and get you going on the task.

5. Leading Task

One thing you could do in the first five minutes (in 4 above) is to identify and do the first part of the overwhelming task.

6. Balance Sheet

For those stubborn, resistant tasks that you perhaps put back all the time, why not list reasons for, and reasons against getting started? Look for any faulty thinking and make a step-by-step plan of attack on the task.

7. Journal Technique

For your own learning - keep a record of your progress (or lack of) with the tasks you tend to procrastinate.

8. Go Public

Do not shame yourself but tell everyone at work that you are now doing the tasks you have been putting off.

9. Worst First

Rank all the tasks that you are putting off - and do the worst first.

10. Written Reminders

Leave notes for yourself at home and at work - to keep you focused on starting and finishing those tricky tasks.

Finally, we do well to remember that procrastination - if not addressed - will have an



unnecessary negative impact on the quantity and the quality of the work we do. I wish you success with this - we do not want to put that off.

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EQUESTRIAN

When the floods subside

Ever wondered what happens when fish get stranded by floods and have to be rescued? Angling Times' John Cheyne found out for himself recently, as he joined Environment Agency staff on the River Severn to witness the important work they do, along with some surprising catches

It feels like we are lurching from one national emergency to the next at the moment but, while the majority of press attention is focusing on the spread of Coronavirus, there are dedicated professionals out there still coping with the aftermath of the recent floods.

I think it's really important that anglers especially understand exactly what work their fishing licence money funds, so I tagged along with the Environment Agency Fisheries team to see them in action protecting our fish stocks in a very direct way.

When floods subside

When rivers flood they naturally spread out on to the floodplain and, in an attempt to keep out of the increasing rates of flow, many fish species seek sanctuary in these less turbulent waters. On the whole, fish are pretty good at moving back into the main river as the flooding recedes but, in certain places, they seem to struggle to time their return correctly and find themselves marooned in standing water pools left on the floodplain. Without help, these fish will almost certainly perish. The water in the standing pools will slowly drain away leading to low oxygen levels as it gets shallower and shallower and, all the while, the fish are easy prey for predators.

Thankfully, Environment Agency Fisheries staff have an excellent knowledge of where these strandings are liable to happen. Worcester Racecourse next to the River Severn is just such a place and I was fortunate enough to be offered the chance to lend a hand to the team who were tasked with saving the fish who had become trapped.

Timing is everything

"The timing of when we move in and try to return the fish to the river is key," explained Jim Seymour, one of the Fisheries' technical officers from the local EA Team. "When the river first recedes at Worcester, it leaves a huge lake, which would take many days and many members of staff to effectively deal with. However, if we leave it too long, the fish will begin to get more and more vulnerable. So we have to time it just right."



Worcester Racecourse, which is flanked by the River Severn, is one of the places that fish can become trapped by receding flood waters

So, I waited for a call patiently hoping to hear when the rescue would take place. That call came early the next morning and within a short drive I was arriving at Worcester Racecourse to see that the EA team were already in action, pulling a seine net through the huge standing water pool.

As the net was pulled slowly into the side, I could see immediately that some good sized fish had been captured. The haul included three pike, a carp, a bream or two and a large quantity of roach, dace and bleak. While I helped hold the net, the EA team carefully transferred the fish captured to a large aerated tank, where they could be held safely prior to release back into the river.

River rescue

For the next few hours, I helped wherever I could (mostly by trying not to get in the way!) as the team professionally and efficiently made sweep after sweep with the seine net. Sometimes, very few fish would be caught from certain areas whilst, at other times, the numbers and sizes of the fish being rescued were staggering. The roach in particular were mostly of a lovely stamp, with not only stacks of fish between 5oz-8oz, but a good number that were much bigger and would certainly be pushing 2lb.

Almost all species that you would expect to find in the middle Severn were present including plenty of gudgeon, a few bream, perch, around a dozen pike and even a rather lost looking Crucian carp. The only coarse fish conspicuous by its absence were barbel, but then they are happy to get their heads down and stay in the main river as they are such strong swimmers. It was also good to see a few Salmon Parr in amongst all the coarse fish.

So many fish were caught that the big holding tank had to be emptied twice, to ensure that the fish were not overcrowded. The final journey from the holding tank to the river is a manual job, so I was finally able to properly lend a hand - skill required? ... carrying a bucket!

There were a number of carp, both commons and mirrors released, the biggest of which all went back quickly and without being stressed further by being held up for photographs.

In some ways it would have been nice to get the chance to take more pictures, there were some amazing specimens, but the team were keen that we kept the well-being of the fish as our priority. Having been trapped in receding water for days, netted, transferred to a holding tank and then decanted into large trugs for their final journey, these fish have had enough stress to last them a few months."

"All in all it was a fantastic experience getting to see Laura, Jim and Sam in action and feel I contributed a little bit to saving some beautiful fish from perishing. Rescues like this are carried out by other EA Fisheries teams all over the country."

What is the best course of action if you spot fish stranded by receding floods?

Be very, very careful before you head out onto a flood plain after a major flood, especially if there is large amounts of standing water. Often, the pools are deeper than they seem and can also hide gulleys and drains that are easy to fall in to. Your safety should always be your key concern.

If you do spot fish stranded away from the main river, the first thing to do is call the EA Hotline on 0800 807060. Make sure you can give them as accurate a location as possible and also give them a contact number to ring you back on.

Follow the advice you are given by the EA before attempting anything yourself. Fish rescues are best left to the professionals.

If you do attempt to move any fish, never do it alone and always work out where the safest place is to return them to the river before you do anything else. Post flood river banks are treacherous places and you don't want to end up in the river yourself. Put safety first!



Seine nets are like huge tennis nets with weights on the bottom and floats at the top



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MONKSHOOD

Death by flower!

With the UK currently on lockdown over Covid-19, the last thing you might want to hear is that danger lurks in your 'safe haven' - your garden, and especially your flower beds! From respiratory problems, nausea and diarrhoea to hallucinations and even death, there's some innocent looking plants hiding danger behind their good looks! Peter Britton rounds up the main culprits

With many taking an enforced break from work whilst the spring weather is being annoyingly 'pleasant', a good number of us will take refuge in our gardens. Indeed, this has been recommended by the government during 'lockdown' as a way to calm the soul. But beware, some plants have hidden danger.

Monkshood (*Aconitum variegatum*)

The most dangerous of garden plants is Monkshood - also known as Wolfsbane - which has resulted in death on one recent occasion.

It is one of the most toxic plants found in the UK. The toxins in Monkshood can cause a slowing of the heart rate to the extent that it could be fatal. Even eating a very small amount can lead to an upset stomach. Its poison can also act through contact with the skin, particularly through open wounds.

Be aware that small children and elderly people are most vulnerable. Contact with leaves, sap and flowers may cause blisters or burns, whilst a small number of species render the skin excessively sensitive to strong sunlight. Contact with the plant followed by exposure to sunlight results in very severe, localised sunburn with blistering and long-lasting skin discoloration.

Foxglove (*Digitalis purpurea*)

Don't let the pretty colours and striking appearance of the foxglove fool you - these bell-shaped blooms contain a compound used for treating heart failure.

Digitalis toxicity (also known as digitalis intoxication and digitalism) results from an overdose of digitalis and causes nausea, vomiting and diarrhoea, as well as resulting in



Monkshood

xanthopsia (jaundiced or yellow vision) and the appearance of blurred outlines (halos), drooling, abnormal heart rate, cardiac arrhythmias, weakness, collapse, dilated pupils, tremors, seizures and even death.

Lily of the valley (*Convallaria majalis*)

Also known as May bells, all parts of the plant are highly poisonous, including the red berries which may be particularly attractive to children. If ingested - even in small amounts - the plant can cause abdominal pain, vomiting, reduced heart rate, blurred vision, drowsiness, and red skin rashes.

Oleander (*Nerium oleander*)

Oleander has historically been considered a poisonous plant because some of its compounds may exhibit toxicity, especially to animals, when consumed in large amounts. Among these compounds are oleandrin and oleandrogenin, known as cardiac glycosides, which are known to have a narrow therapeutic index and can be toxic when ingested.

Ingestion of this plant can affect the gastrointestinal system, the heart, and the central nervous system. The gastrointestinal effects can consist of nausea and vomiting, excess salivation, abdominal pain, diarrhoea that may contain blood.

Delphinium or Larkspur (*Delphinium elatum*)

Immediately after ingesting any part of this enticing blue plant, nausea, burning in the mouth, vomiting, and slowing of the heartbeat set in. If this happens, seek medical treatment right away, because six hours is all it takes for this flower to become lethal. Death is through

cardiotoxic and neuromuscular blocking effects, and can occur within a few hours of ingestion.

Hydrangea (*Hydrangea macrophylla*)

These popular blossoms contain a toxin that we'll all be scarily familiar with: cyanide! It can cause shortness of breath, dizziness, fainting, and a rapid pulse, along with a drop in blood pressure. However, pets and humans would need to ingest quite a bit for the effects to be fatal.

Other plants to be wary of:

Other popular garden plants to be wary of are:

Poinsettia - May cause vomiting and diarrhoea in children and pets.

Mistletoe - Munching on a couple of leaves, berries, or shoot - or drinking mistletoe-flavoured tea - will cause abdominal pain and diarrhoea.

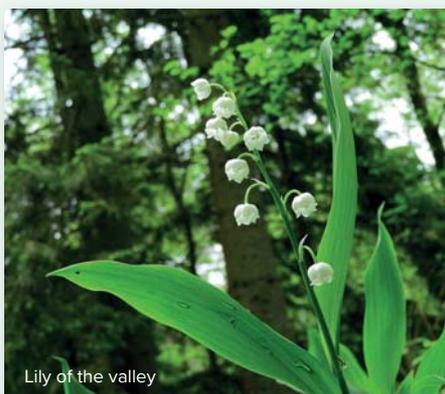
Water Hemlock - Some of the prettiest wildflowers around, but if you have curious pets, you should remove them. The toxin smells like carrot yet wastes no time in attacking the central nervous system, causing severe seizures and convulsions that turn deadly as a result of asphyxia and cardiovascular collapse.

Poisoning from plants is exceptionally rare as long as some basic hygiene rules are adhered to:

- Don't eat it if it isn't a food plant
- Use gloves when pruning or weeding and keep skin covered
- Check plant labels for toxicity warnings (sometimes stated on label)



Foxglove



Lily of the valley



Hydrangea

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MACHINERY

Ten years of blood, sweat and tears

Designed to relieve compaction, improve drainage and revitalise growth, the OxyShot was introduced into the Charterhouse Turf Machinery portfolio at BTME 2019. It was a long road to Harrogate though for the machine's creator, Peter Knight, who spent ten years converting the concept of the OxyShot into a reality...

Peter Knight is a well-known name in the field of sports turf maintenance and construction. He established his company Bury Turfcare in 1988 and, over the years, has kept abreast with the tools and techniques required to keep playing surfaces first-rate.

"When it came to the spot-treatment of heavily compacted soil, the go-to machine was always a Robin Dagger" says Peter. "I was regularly out contracting with the Robin Dagger, and it was a popular machine with groundsmen and greenkeepers across the industry."

"Whilst everyone who used it agreed it was a brilliant machine, it wasn't without its problems! The noise of it deafened you, the emissions from the petrol-driven engine nearly choked you and the vibration of the unit nearly killed you! It therefore wasn't a massive shock when it was removed from the market for Health and Safety reasons, however, a machine to conduct the same job never emerged into the market to fill the gap."

"I spoke to a number of people who agreed there was definitely a gap in the market for a new air-injection machine, so I used the concept of a product that worked but went back to the drawing board for a completely new design."

"One of the main elements was to run the OxyShot purely off a large compressor, eliminating the need for electrics to reduce the risk of failures. The very first version of the OxyShot was pieced together in my shed, from various parts and components from other machines. I took this from engineer to engineer before I found someone who could invest the time, taking it piece by piece, to create bespoke components which would go on to form the very first prototype. It was then that Charterhouse Turf Machinery, and their parent company Redexim, became involved and suggested modifications that my engineer could work with."

"It was all a massive learning curve, from understanding how to make the machine perform as I wanted, to sourcing all the necessary certification... ten years of blood, sweat, and at times, tears. But the combination of my hands-on experience as a contractor, Redexim's manufacturing know-how and the expertise of the engineer proved to be the perfect mix."

The end result is a unit that uses a single 25mm probe to inject air into the soil in four directions, at a pressure of up to 110psi and to a maximum depth of 500mm (20"). It can also be fitted with



Lister Wilder's two hire machines at work

an optional 14mm probe, to reduce the working depth to 250mm. It lifts, expands and decompacts the ground, without the need for chemical applications.

As well as dealing with compaction on sports pitches, the highly manoeuvrable unit can be easily transported for spot treatments in a variety of situations on a golf course - from high footfall areas such as walkways, to improving the drainage on greens and in bunkers. It can also be used for arboricultural operations, to deliver aeration to tree roots growing in compacted, air-starved soils.

Its multi-purpose nature has seen it become a staple on the hire fleets of dealers and contractors up and down the country. One of the first dealers to add the OxyShot to their hire offering was Lister Wilder. "We purchased our first unit back in August 2019," explains Hire Operations Manager, Steve Potter. "Charterhouse presented the machine to us and, because of its unique operation and the lack of similar machinery in the market, we were keen to be able to offer the machine into the hire market. It was a learning curve for all involved, but it wasn't long before we were able to demonstrate the machine's full potential when installing thanks to the support of both Charterhouse and Bury Turfcare."

Their predictions on the popularity and demand for the OxyShot came to fruition which saw Lister Wilder add a second unit to their hire fleet in January 2020 - just before the worst of the wet weather hit golf clubs and facilities up and down the country. "Roughly 90% of the demand we've seen is from golf courses, who will take the OxyShot on hire for a week to relieve compaction on greens and tees. Because there's no other machine at the moment that can work to the depths that the OxyShot can, and



OxyShot in action on a golf course

instantly removes any standing water, it's been hailed miraculous for those clubs that have exhausted all other avenues of dealing with deep compaction."

The OxyShot is distributed exclusively throughout the UK by Charterhouse Turf Machinery. Nick Darking concludes, "When Peter first presented us with the concept, I and the team knew he was on to something. Having been the last company to import the Robin Dagger, we were well aware of how important that type of trouble shooting, deep aeration was to customers across both golf and sports turf and how, since it was taken away from the market, no machine had been introduced to fill that void. Nearly eighteen months on from its launch, the OxyShot has proven itself to be a fantastic addition to our aeration portfolio and has clearly demonstrated its true potential throughout the wet winter of 2019/20."

www.charterhouse-tm.co.uk



OxyShots in action at Ipswich Town Football Club's training ground



The man behind the machine: Peter Knight (left), with Nick Darking of Charterhouse Turf Machinery

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Machinery and Supplies

Product Update

A round-up of the latest product news announced in recent weeks



SCH's new broadcast spreader (ref: GAM73) features a 73L hopper and is ideal for fertiliser, seed and salt.

As you tow the broadcaster, its wheels drive an all-metal gearbox, which in turn drives the spreading disc. The two wide-profile turf tyres give a high grip while being gentle on grass surfaces.

The spread width is 3-10 metres depending on the forward speed of your towing vehicle. An adjuster lever is within reach of the driver's seat, which meters the correct amount of product to broadcast.

This model is ideal for broadcasting fertilisers and seed on grass surfaces and can cover up to 0.5 hectares per hour. To spread salt on car parks and paths, a Salt Conversion Kit (ref: GAMSCK) featuring a stainless steel agitator and a galvanised steel deflection guard is available.

If you intend to spread salt predominantly, a galvanised version is available (ref: GAM73GALV). This broadcaster benefits from a galvanised hopper, stainless steel flow control and a fully stainless steel spreading disc for increased corrosion resistance.

www.schsupplies.co.uk

The Series 4 is the latest Pegasus model from Trimax Mowing Systems. It is the lowest maintenance version of this trailed mower along with being an extremely efficient machine with its wide cutting widths (4.9m and 6m), with mowing speeds of up to 10mph on flat terrain.

In addition, Trimax has now engineered a revolutionary new lift system, setting new standards of safety and functionality.

The new Drive Protect safety system is standard on all Pegasus S4 lift options. Fully electronic, it features built-in sensors to prevent the mowing decks from lifting in unsafe conditions, or until the blades have ceased spinning.

The sensors also prevent the decks from lifting if the PTO is still engaged. This prevents damage to the machine, prolongs overall life span and significantly reduces downtime.



To meet the increasing demand for conservation mixtures and environmental areas within both sports venues and amenity land, DLF have expanded their range of wildflower mixtures.

The Pro Flora collection, each designed to recreate a particular habitat or suit specific site and soil conditions, now contains 14 UK native mixtures thanks to the addition of Pro Flora 13 and Pro Flora 14 for 2020. The non-native Colour Boost wildflower range has also been extended, from three mixtures to six.

As demand for improved biodiversity on all major landscape projects grows, Pro Flora 13 species-rich lawn and landscape mixture has been developed to contain 20% native origin wildflowers with 80% fine-leaved, low-growing grasses. This mixture massively increases the species count and diversity per m² compared to a standard lawn mix. In addition, the flexibility of maintenance makes it suitable for more intensively managed areas, as well as conventionally managed grasslands that receive just one or two cuts a year. The greater amount of time between cuts sees a greater number of species flower, providing additional benefits to pollinating insects.

Also new for 2020, Pro Flora 14 - tall herb and tussock mix - uses species with varying heights and structures to create habitat for a wider range of insects, small mammals, amphibians and reptiles. Tall herb grassland provides a vital pollen and nectar source late into the year to sustain invertebrates, in turn providing a food source for birds and predators higher up the food chain. These taller growing species can help to visually blend more traditional parkland/meadow mixtures with woodland and natural scrub, and should be maintained in sections to retain the essential habitat that has been created.

Wildflower mixes are available from the Pitchcare shop



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STIGA has developed two new machines which are powered by the next-generation 500 Series System synchronised battery system.

This innovation ensures quiet, emission-free operation with minimal maintenance requirements, therefore offering the most neighbourhood and environmentally-friendly lawnmowers on the market! The high-performance batteries work in sync, balancing the different charges for greater independence and extended run-times.

COMBI 43 Q DAE

A 41 cm hand-propelled cordless lawnmower, powered by two synchronized Lithium-ion batteries. Four cutting methods available: collection; mulching; rear-discharge; side-discharge. It features a roomy 60-litre grass bag with filling indicator. Suitable for areas up to 550m².



COMBI 50 SQ DAE

A 48cm self-propelled cordless lawnmower, powered by two Lithium-ion batteries and offering four cutting-options: collection; mulching; rear-discharge; side-discharge. It features a capacious 70-litre grass bag with a handy 'collector full' indicator. Suitable for areas up to 650m².

STIGA has also launched two new brushcutters for 2020, the SBC 636 and the SBC 636 D, both are new premium models, meaning that they are compact, robust, reliable and clean running. The fuel consumption is reduced by a substantial 20%.

All STIGA petrol brushcutters are designed to meet the needs of both hardworking professional landscapers and domestic gardeners. They feature new 2-stroke engines with 60% fewer emissions and a 20% increase in fuel efficiency, soft-grip handles for enhanced user-comfort and a new digital display that provides useful user information (only on bike handle models).

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Machinery and Supplies

Product Update

A round-up of the latest product news announced in recent weeks



ISEKI UK & Ireland have been appointed as the exclusive distributor for Raymo products throughout the UK, Ireland and the Middle East.

The Raymo electric, zero-emission, remote controlled mower is a unique product that, with the ability to swap power packs, offers you a versatile multi-use mower. Whether you need to cut grass in noise sensitive areas, gain access under low objects such as solar panels or trees, or need to meet the needs of the customer with growing concerns of carbon emissions, this mower will exceed your expectations whilst tackling lush dense grass growth with ease.

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- Zero operator vibration level
- Safe operation up to 35 degree slopes
- 4 Wheel Drive and Zero Turn
- A light footprint that allows for mowing in really wet and soft conditions

www.raymoelectric.co.uk

John Deere's new premium XUV 865R Gator 23hp diesel-powered model combines the established high performance of the XUV 865M with a wide range of additional operator friendly features, including a luxurious cab environment.

Standard specification includes a continuously variable transmission with on-demand four-wheel drive, power steering, fully independent suspension and an attachment-ready electrical system. The quiet, fully equipped cab provides comfortable car-style seating for up to three people when driving off-road, as well as easy-opening door handles, a fully opening windscreen and a proven, extremely efficient heating, ventilation and air conditioning system.

In addition, the easy-to-use automotive-style controls are now conveniently located in the centre of the dash. The streamlined roof moves water to the outside edges, and both the high-level front and rear lights are set below the roof line for better protection.

The R trim specification also provides a wide range of extra standard features, including an adjustable 40/60 bench seat, tiltable steering wheel, sun visors, a windshield wiper and washer plus electrical wiring for attachments, as well as high- and low-beam LED headlights.

The XUV 865R Gator is powered by an 854cc three-cylinder, liquid-cooled OHV diesel engine producing 23hp at 3600rpm, with a top speed of 31mph (50kph) in high range. The true 4WD system has an auto-locking front differential and dash-mounted electronic rocker switch for easy operation.

To complement the robust frame, the vehicle is equipped with four-wheel independent suspension. This has been designed to provide a smooth ride and optimum load carrying ability over challenging terrain, without compromising ride quality or vehicle stability.

The versatile deluxe cargo box is made of a durable composite material that eliminates rust and dents and reduces noise. There is an automotive style tailgate handle and the rear lights are available with optional protectors. The cargo box can be easily converted to a flat-bed and has a load capacity of 454kg, while towing capacity is 900kg and total payload is 680kg.

For extra versatility it can be fitted with a wide range of attachments from snow blades to winches, and features a large 42-litre fuel tank for longer running between fill-ups.

www.deere.co.uk



Jacobsen has started a new era of end-user focused products with the launch of the AR530 rough mower.

The AR range has been redesigned from the ground up with the focus on re-establishing Jacobsen's commitment to engineering best in class mowers with their famous quality of cut.

Nothing has been taken for granted during the redesign, and that includes the quality of cut. The new AR models are available with five or seven floating 58cm articulated contour rotary decks, with the AR530 providing a cutting width of 2.3m and the AR730 - which is due to launch in September 2020 - 3.15m.

The new TrueDeck™ design uses smaller decks to follow tight undulations and provides the best power per width of cut ratio on the market. This eliminates clumping and produces a better after cut appearance while height of cut adjustments can be made quickly and easily.

To harness the cut quality, the traction system has been enhanced to a best in class standard using SureTrac II™ 4WD. This parallel-cross diversion hydraulically powered traction system, with momentary 4WD differential lock, provides superior traction when climbing difficult contours and slide slopes by transferring power from the wheel that slips to the one that grips.

The sound level of the machine has been lowered to make it quieter for the operator and to reduce passer-by noise. Vibration has also been looked at in detail to minimise operator fatigue.

The seat position and InCommand II control system have all been adjusted for maximum comfort and productivity while the new step design has been installed to make getting on and off the machine significantly easier.

All of these features have been combined into a Stage V compliant unit that has been assembled with a commitment to high-quality engineering and a promise of outstanding performance and service.

www.jacobsenbuilt.com

The SCH Supplies PS22 is a versatile sprayer for applying fertilisers to both large and small areas with ease. A 30L tank mounts on the robust tray chassis, which has two pneumatic leading wheels and a rear castor wheel which acts as a line marker.

The sprayer features a height-adjustable break back boom. Its four nozzles give a spray width of 2400mm (96"), and the two outer nozzles can turn off to give a narrow spray width if required. This also allows the sprayer to be easily transported in a van or a large boot.

The 12V diaphragm pump has a flow rate of 7

litres per minute, with higher flow rate pumps available. A high capacity 22Ah battery is fitted, which gives an average spray time of approximately 5 hours for continuous spraying. Expect a longer working duration with tank refilling and on/off time.

A brass hand trigger lance, complete with quick and simple twist connectors comes as standard with each sprayer. The lance is invaluable for spot spraying weeds and around trees and shrubs.

www.schsupplies.co.uk



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OFFSIDE

The not so serious side
of the industry

Authorities looking into big park sinkhole

A large hole has appeared in a road in Moss Bank Park, following a weekend of heavy raining.



Groundsman Stephen Murphy, who has been in the job for around six years, said he had never seen anything like it during his time there.

He said: "It is a bit of a new one this - we still don't know what has caused it yet. It is just one of those strange things. There are no other holes as far as I'm aware.

A sinkhole can range anywhere between a slight depression in the ground right up to an enormous hole reaching down half a kilometre.

We just couldn't resist this story - purely for the comedy title!

Frozen asset

A greenkeeper who kept a snowball in his freezer for ten years is selling it on eBay.

Lee Thackaberry, 43, popped the snowball in a freezer bag after a memorable drunken snowball fight, after he had seen a news report of a similar ten-year-old one selling on eBay for £15,000.

Lee, of East Grinstead, Sussex, said: "I can't believe how long it's survived. It's all intact. I remember when I froze it... I came back from the pub with neighbours and there had been a particularly heavy snowfall, so we decided to have a snowball fight. I thought as a laugh



we should keep one."

He added: "Ten years on and here we are. I want to sell it. I'm not expecting it to make £15,000 but you never know."

Hockey player blinded after gruesome injury

Sam Ward had scored twice and was hovering in hope of a hat-trick, when a team mate took a shot and the ball - travelling at about 50mph - hit him directly in his left eye.

The impact shattered the forward's eye socket, caused seven facial fractures and tore his retina, leaving him effectively blind in one eye.



Although he was floored by the blow, Ward was adamant he should return to the field. Team officials insisted his game was over and, after glancing in a window, he understood why.

"I couldn't see out of my left eye, it was swollen, bleeding and then I realised I had no real facial structure down that side of my face," he said.

Because of the extent of the injury and facial swelling, it was 10 days before extensive corrective surgery could begin.

"They basically took my face off," said Ward with a nervous smile.

As seen on social media ...

"-Dad, you need to come home"
"-Son I can't, I'm in hospital!"
"Mum is trying to sell your golf clubs for the price you told her they cost."



Given the recent toilet paper shortage, this seemed quite relevant at the time!



If you spot anything you think might give readers a chuckle send it to:
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