

PITCHCARE

The turfcare magazine from pitchcare.com

February/March 2020 Issue 89 | £5.95



DON'T MISS
The Real Horror Story
David Hedges-Gower's views on the artificial turf market and its impact on the environment

ALL BY MYSELF

Meridian Sports & Social Club lies just a stone's throw across the Thames from London City airport, the O2 in Greenwich and the Thames Barrier, and only ten miles from the centre of London. Head Groundsman, **Tony Provan**, has had his fair share of ups and downs in his career so far, much of it of his own making

All in the planning

An employed team of groundsmen and gardeners tend to one of the UK's premier racecourses. Jane Carley went to meet the team at Ascot to discover how Clerk of the Course **Chris Stickels** and his team prepare for a busy calendar of racing, including a very 'Royal' occasion

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WELCOME TO

PITCHCARE

An exciting future

This is my first foreword since the news of our sale to Agrovista UK became public.

It may seem strange to see two direct competitors now working as one, but the coming together of two 'like-minded' businesses made perfect sense in an ever-increasing competitive marketplace. Both Sheriff Amenity and Maxwell Amenity have strived to provide our respective customers first with good agronomic advice before 'making a sale'. Both companies have maintained a strong educational arm in the belief that a well-informed customer is a long-term customer.

As a groundsman myself, working at the sharp end of pitch maintenance in stadiums, the idea to start Pitchcare came to me one warm day in June 2000. Sitting up in the North Bank at Molineux, enjoying a break with half the pitch mown as we grew in the recently renovated surface; the opportunity to create a hub/forum to share ideas and working practices for free seemed like the right thing to do. Our industry is a people industry, yet most of us work in isolation. At the time, there was very little easily accessible information and advice available, certainly very little that was free to obtain.

The internet has evolved immensely since those earliest days, but there are a great many people who have learned much about how to achieve better surfaces, primarily from reading the articles and forums that Pitchcare has provided over the last two decades. It will continue to grow and provide what is already a huge library of good practice across all disciplines of grass maintenance. The world is fast becoming a small place with information technology, the answer is only ever a few clicks away for those who want to understand and learn.

I'm extremely proud of the way that the Pitchcare business grew over the years. The acquisition of ALS in 2009 allowed us to be in control of our stock and distribution, and we also inherited the Contracting division as well; something very close to my heart.

The momentum of a growing business meant an expanding team of specialists (in their defined areas), with the ability to look closely at new products and ensure the research, development and successful in-house marketing to our customer base.

The ability to launch these products, with robustly researched agronomic information using the internet platform and the Pitchcare magazine, as well as through our internal and external sales teams, backed by our technical team, has been second to none.

However, as legislation increases, more products require testing, not just the chemicals. In the future, I can see the cost of undertaking trials and then registering new fertilisers, biostimulants and seed becoming expensive and, therefore, prohibitive to smaller companies.

We have already seen a lot of consolidation in the amenity sector. In my opinion, the decision by Agrovista to acquire Maxwell Amenity and merge together with Sheriff Amenity, arguably the two most progressive supply businesses, in its new form of Agrovista Amenity, offers a real potential to become the market leader within our industry.

The business model of providing sound agronomic advice, education and shared knowledge, alongside a large portfolio of world class products that should now be even more competitive than before, can only be a win-win for the business and its customers.

Just as important, we have been given assurance from our new shareholders that Pitchcare will continue to be editorially independent.

Good luck as we head towards the spring.

**Cheers,
Dave Saltman**



SAY THAT AGAIN!

"I'm pedantic about getting everything right, I suppose in part because I'm so passionate about what I do"

Andy Brown, St Bede's School

"You can't just say 'we will throw £50,000 at course renovations over ten years' as you don't know if you will have the budget for that money"

David Roberts, Saddleworth Golf Club

"I feel like I'm at an age where I understand there's a process. They've done the game, we've prepared for it and this is what we've got, and now we need to repair and get ready for the next game"

Jim Buttar, RFU Twickenham

"As turf managers we manage the uncontrollable, the precisely undefinable. We manage within nature, and 'manage' is all we can be expected to achieve"

James Grundy, Agrovista Amenity

"There's nothing like the problem solving pressures you get from front line duty. I had to get back into it. I wanted so much to get back 'on to the tools' you could say"

Neil Dixon, King's Canterbury

"The general public are paying to be here! We have a system called 'Spirit of Place' guiding the work. In essence it is; how did the family want the place to look?"

Paul Dibb, Nostell

Meet the Pitchcare team



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Issue 89 February/March 2020

Tony Provan, Meridian Sports Club

COVER STORY: All by myself

Meridian Sports & Social Club lies just a stone's throw across the Thames from London City airport, the O2 in Greenwich and the Thames Barrier, and only ten miles from the centre of London. Head Groundsman, Tony Provan, has had his fair share of ups and downs in his career so far, much of it of his own making. **P82**

GOLF

Moor's the merrier!

Saddleworth Golf Club is an 18-hole, par 71, 6196 yards parkland/moorland course. Close to the Pennine Way, the course occupies the northern and eastern slopes of Wharnton Hill. Lee Williams went to meet 36-year old Head Greenkeeper David Roberts. **P14**

When two worlds collide

Pitchcare went back to Long Ashton Golf Club to catch up with Course Manager, James Braithwaite to discuss the club's latest project involving Bristol City Football Club and much more. **P26**

Fairley normal!

Scarborough North Cliff Golf Club sits atop the cliffs of the Yorkshire town's North Bay. The views from the coastal holes are splendid, with Scarborough Castle a feature. Lee Williams sat down with Course Manager Colin Fairley to discover more about this long-serving greenkeeper, his working practices and his current frustrations. **P34**

Crawford's a cracker!

Northern Ireland's Clandeboye Golf Club boasts two 18-hole courses situated in the idyllic surroundings of Lady Dufferin's Estate. Chris McCullough met with Course Manager Terry Crawford to find out more about life in this rather 'soggy' region of the UK. **P44**

SPECIAL FEATURE

The real horror story

Why cover children's sports fields in products that can harm their health? And why does the Government do nothing about it? David Hedges-Gower wants some answers. **P12**

WINTER SPORTS

Football to the Samba Beat

The recent FIFA Under-17 World Cup in Brazil was the eighteenth edition of the competition. For the restructured FIFA pitch team, led by their Pitch Management Manager, Alan Ferguson, this was the fourth tournament in just under a year and the first international competition to be held outside Europe. **P52**

Calling the Shots!

The Hampshire town of Aldershot is the 'Home of the British Army'. The garrison, plus a wider urban population of 243,000, ensures that the local football team regularly attracts crowds in excess of 4,000, one of the highest in the National League. Currently 'comfortably mid-table', the club's ambition to return to the EFL is aided by Head Groundsman James Smith. **P60**

Buttar earning his bread!

In September 2019, Jim Buttar stepped into Twickenham for the first time as the Rugby Football Union's Head Groundsman – the man in charge of the iconic Twickenham Stadium. Blair Ferguson went to meet him. **P68**

Their cup runneth over!

For Shrewsbury Town, an extended FA Cup run, which saw them host Liverpool at home, added to the problems for Dave Saltman and the grounds team. But with the likelihood of more money for the coffers, even the odd pitch invasion can be tolerated. **P68**

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SCHOOLS & COLLEGES

Oldest school ties

It is said that St Augustine first founded a school here in 597AD and it became the King's School in 1541 when it was re-founded by Royal Charter under Henry VIII. Before the start of the Lent term, Neville Johnson went to this historic seat of learning to meet Neil Dixon, the man who's just taken charge of its sports grounds and gardens. **P88**

A win-win college collaboration

St Bede's partnership with its grounds team stretches back forty years and is still going strong. Greg Rhodes reports from Chorlton-cum-Hardy. **P96**

EQUESTRIAN

All in the planning

An employed team of groundsmen and gardeners tend to one of the UK's premier racecourses. Jane Carley went to meet the team at Ascot to discover how Clerk of the Course Chris Stickels and his team prepare for a busy calendar of racing, including a very 'Royal' occasion. **P106**

PUBLIC PLACES

Spirit of place!

Knowing such a marvellous house, gardens and grounds, David Mears was pleased to visit the National Trust's Nostell recently, not as a regular visitor this time, but to meet Paul Dibb, Garden and Park Manager. **P114**

Jim Buttar, Head Groundsman, RFU Twickenham

TECHNICAL

Award winning application

Paul Gater, First Assistant and spraying specialist at Caldy Golf Club, has won the prestigious title of Amenity Sprayer Operator of the Year, presented at the glittering BTME Awards ceremony in January. **P124**

Spray into spring

Knapsack and handheld sprayers both have maintenance demands to keep them operating sweetly. The knapsack sprayer is overlooked as a tool despite its importance in groundcare and it should be part and parcel of any maintenance programme. Allan Wainwright, National Account Manager, Cooper Pegler and Berthoud sprayers explains how we prepare for the new season. **P128**

Technology and turfcare

The world of smart technology is evolving exponentially, and it is thought by 2020 that over 200 billion devices will be talking to each other and sending data on the web. From buying a cup of coffee to controlling our thermostats, smart devices are continually putting more convenience and control at our fingertips. **P132**

TRAINING

Tomorrow's World today

Growing up as a wide-eyed boy avidly watching the BBC's magazine programme Tomorrow's World each week, which aimed to predict future scientific advancements, here we are; the future, here, now, today! So, what does the reality of 2020 and beyond have in store for us as turf management professionals? **P136**

Putting Things Off

Are you deadline-driven? Event-oriented? A sensation-seeking procrastinator? In Part 1 of this two-part article, Trainer and Conference Speaker Frank Newberry shares his thoughts on what drives him and others to delay important tasks sometimes - and the price we all pay for putting things off. **P140**



James Smith, Aldershot Town FC



James Braithwaite, Long Ashton Golf Club



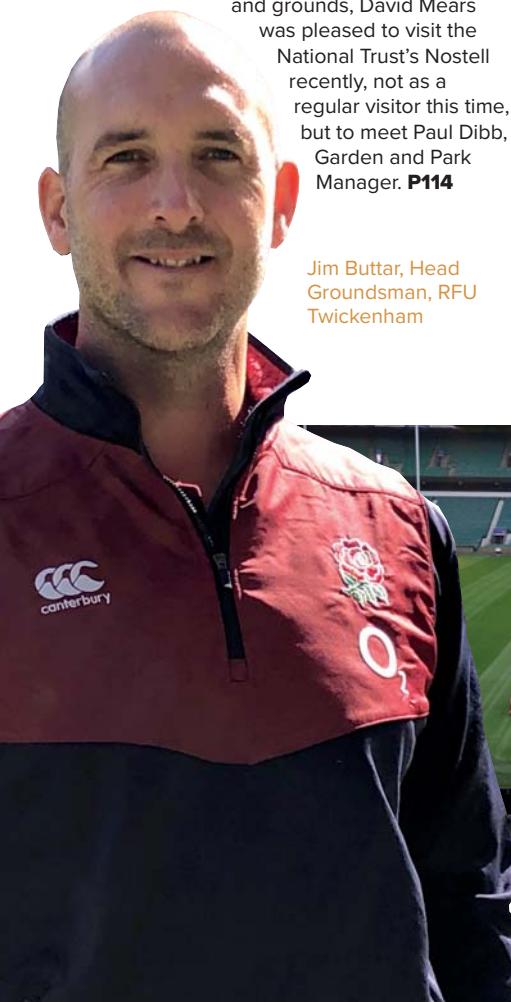
Neil Dixon, King's School, Canterbury



Paul Dibb, Nostell

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RFU Twickenham

Agrovista Amenity launched at BTME

Maxwell Amenity and Sheriff Amenity, the professional turf and landscape division of Agrovista, have joined forces to herald the start of an exciting new era

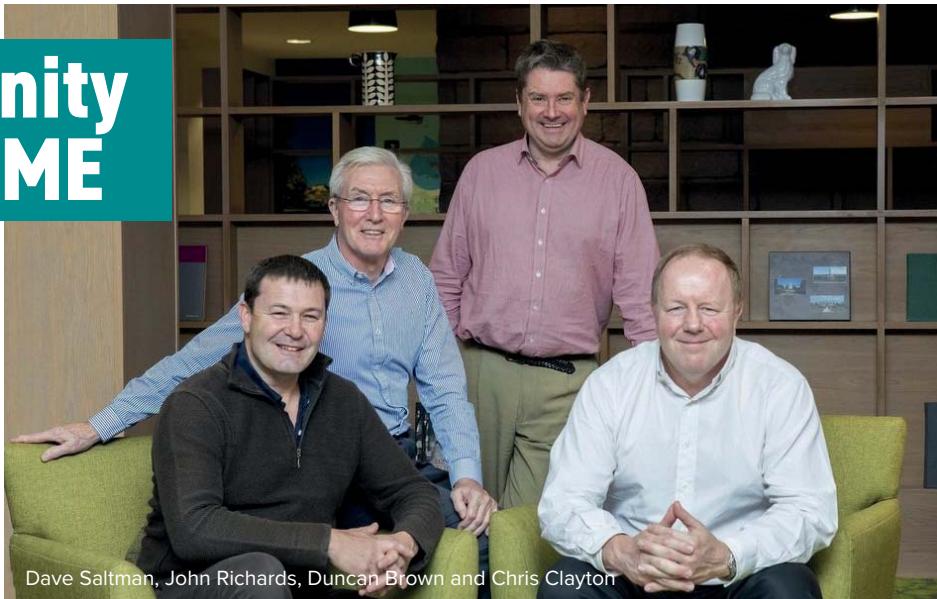
Agrovista Amenity, launched at BTME in January, brings together two of the most experienced and progressive teams in the amenity turf market and is the result of a long-term strategy for growth and evolution.

The new company represents a shared vision - an emphatic passion for this much-loved industry, a desire to create and implement new innovations, to deliver real results for customers and suppliers, to provide technical and service excellence and to empower and inspire staff to help them flourish and prosper.

Agrovista Amenity is just the latest step in delivering these values to the market.

Spearheaded by an experienced senior management team, customers will now benefit from a wider breadth of innovative products and specialist technical expertise. Furthermore, Agrovista Amenity is committed to offering improved customer interaction across on and offline platforms, through a modern, technical approach to amenity care.

It is the perfect addition to the Agrovista family - a company established more than 60 years ago, that takes pride in its traditional values of professionalism, cutting edge technology and customer service.



Already servicing the sector through established brand Sheriff Amenity, Agrovista now extends a warm welcome to Maxwell Amenity.

Maxwell Amenity trades in the amenity, landscaping and horticultural sectors, offering product supply, media, sports turf contracting and grounds training.

The consolidated expertise will enable Agrovista Amenity to thrive in the industry it knows best, operating across a wide range of turf sectors including greenkeeping, sports turf, the public sector and landscaping.

This future-proof, customer-centric business model will benefit all, according to John Marland, Head of Amenity:

"Agrovista Amenity has been built upon a commitment to innovation and the highest standards of customer service. There is a clear fit between our two businesses, as our services

are highly complementary, so it creates exciting potential."

"As one, Agrovista Amenity will be well-equipped to pursue new opportunities for growth, to the benefit of our customers, suppliers and employees."

Managing Director of Maxwell Amenity, Dave Saltman, added, "We are very excited about this new era; both our teams have highly-qualified and knowledgeable staff. Together with the greater research and product development support available, the new business will be a leading force in the professional turf sector, providing all customers with an even greater level of service."



Yorkshire's finest

University of Leeds to host Rugby League World Cup training hub

The University of Leeds is set to host one of the training hubs for the 2021 Rugby League World Cup.

The England women's team will be one of the squads to be based at the university during the competition, along with other nations to be identified.

The players will have access to facilities including a floodlit World 22 specification 3G rubber crumb pitch and grass pitches, strength and conditioning facilities, an eight-lane 25m swimming pool and accommodation.

The university is also hoping to collaborate with partners to ensure the event has a lasting impact by encouraging staff and students to get involved in sports volunteering or through the development of coaching skills.

Suzanne Glavin, head of sport and physical activity, said: "The university is proud to be



associated with the tournament. It will showcase the very best of world Rugby League and the decision that we will host one of the training hubs is a fitting endorsement of the world-class facilities we have at the University."

Leeds will host more games than any other city, including a men's semi-final at Elland Road, three matches at Headingley, and two women's Rugby League World Cup semi-final double headers.

Hull's KCOM Stadium will host two men's games, including a quarter-final tie, while the

John Smith's Stadium in Huddersfield has also been awarded a quarter-final clash.

Bramall Lane in Sheffield will host an England men's group game, while both semi-finals of the wheelchair competition will be held at the English Institute of Sport. Doncaster's Keepmoat Stadium will also host three men's group games.

The new Community Stadium in York will be the venue for a women's group game and both women's semi-finals.

Golf Environment Awards 2020

The winners of this year's 2020 Golf Environment Awards were announced at Harrogate

Environmental Golf Course of the Year 2020 - Warrington Golf Club

If you are looking for a golf course that has consistently shown innovative and direct solutions to reducing damaging environmental practices, then Warrington is the cream of the crop. From developing a team of experts Warrington has shown that a course can be sustainable in relation to inputs, environmental impacts and water usage, whilst also being ecologically diverse.

Conservation Greenkeeper of the Year 2020 - Neil Sherman, Ipswich, Purdis Heath

Neil Sherman has been a fundamental part of Ipswich Golf Club, Purdis Heath and that can be seen through its ecologically diverse and fantastically beautiful rough areas. Neil has performed positive and interesting work in renewing the heathland characteristics of the course and it is rare to meet a greenkeeper with quite as much ecological knowledge as him.

Outstanding Environmental Project of the Year 2020 - Dundonald Links

Amanda Dorans and the team at Dundonald Links have done something truly rare, they



have created a partnership between not just multiple golf courses but multiple industries to create protected sites across Scotland. Not only that, they have achieved amazing results in boosting numbers of the small blue butterfly.

Operation Pollinator 2020 - Banchory GC

Banchory Golf Club has gone from strength to strength during 2019 vastly increasing the areas dedicated to wildflowers. Naturally seeded areas and also areas sown with species that are appropriate to the local region are both present. STRI ecologists saw a diverse range of invertebrate species that can only be explained by a course that has been managed appropriately.

Home Unions National Award 2020 - Market Harborough Golf Club

Market Harborough GC are the inaugural winners of the Home Unions National Award.

The club management and greenkeeping staff have driven environmental and ecological conservation as a combined force. This has manifested itself through the sustainability group which has created policies, action plans and projects that have importantly started to create direct improvements on the course.

Entries for the 2021 Golf Environment Awards are now open. For more information contact: Bob Taylor or Rowan Rumball in STRI's ecology department, on +44 (0)1274 565131 or email info@strigroup.com



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ASOY winners announced

Paul Gater awarded Amenity Sprayer Operator of the Year

Presented for the second time at BTME Harrogate, the Amenity Sprayer Operator of the Year Awards (ASOY) are organised by the Amenity Forum, and generously sponsored by ICL and Syngenta, and supported by BASIS.

As well as being the overall top operator, Paul Gater was the winner of the Sports Turf Using Tractor Mounted & Hand Held Equipment Category.

The other category winner recognised by the Awards was Ian Millward of Millward Forestry who won the Landscape and Industrial Using Hand Held & Tractor Mounted Equipment Category.

Commenting on Paul's success from a record entry in the fifth annual ASOY Awards, Professor John Moverley OBE, Chairman of the Amenity Forum, said: "Our congratulations go to all those who were shortlisted, the category winners and especially our overall winner this year - an excellent ambassador for the sector. Thanks also to our sponsors who make all this possible."

ICL Business Development Manager, Mark Pyrah, added: "ICL remains committed to supporting the Amenity Forum and both sponsoring and championing the 'Amenity Sprayer Operator of the Year' award. We would like to acknowledge all those candidates that put themselves forward and for recognising the fact that accurate application remains key to good product performance."

"ICL UK, along with Syngenta UK, looks forward to continuing to support the awards going forward and would encourage any individual responsible for spray application to consider putting themselves forward in 2020 and championing good practice in the art of application."

Syngenta Technical Manager and application specialist, Glenn Kirby, highlighted the skills and experience of sprayer operators is paramount in achieving the best results possible from every application.



"All of the Awards entrants have demonstrated the essential techniques for safe and responsible spray application. Sharing their ideas and advice can help all operators to become more efficient and effective."

All entrants to the Amenity Sprayer Operator of the Year Awards will be entered into the chance to win a place at the new Syngenta Application Academy.

Stephen Jacob, BASIS CEO commented: "The Awards highlight the exceptional skills, knowledge and experience of the operators and provide a demonstration of best practice for effective results and, above all, that pesticides are used in a safe and sustainable manner in amenity situations."

OVERALL WINNER - SPRAYER OPERATOR OF THE YEAR 2019

Paul Gater, Caldy Golf Club

CATEGORY WINNERS AND RUNNERS UP SPRAYER OPERATOR OF THE YEAR 2019:

LANDSCAPE AND INDUSTRIAL USING HAND HELD & TRACTOR MOUNTED EQUIPMENT

Winner: Ian Millward, Millward Forestry

Runner Up: Daniel Lewis, Manchester City

SPORTS TURF USING TRACTOR MOUNTED & HAND HELD EQUIPMENT

Winner: Paul Gater, Caldy Golf Club

Runner Up: Jason Garlick, JMG Amenity

Amenity Forum Update Events for 2020

2020 is set to be a year of much challenge and change for all operating across the important and diverse amenity sector. This is especially true for all aspects of amenity management and especially in terms of weeds, pests and disease.

The Government are conducting a full review of the National Action Plan which sets requirements and targets for the sector in terms of achieving best practice. There is also set to be a full review of pesticide policy and increased pressures for a planned integrated approach. Government plans set challenging targets for the environment and climate change.

The Amenity Forum is once again hosting a series of free half day Updating events across the UK aimed at all those involved in or with an interest in amenity management. Full details and locations can be obtained by emailing admin@amenityforum.net. Pre-registration is requested for catering and administrative purposes.

Once again, a representative from the Chemicals Regulations Division of HSE will update delegates on policy issues and this will be followed by a presentation from the Forum Chairman on current initiatives in the sector and how we should best respond to policy and related changes. There will also be a networking opportunity focusing on how the sector might best communicate to the public and key stakeholders on the nature and importance of its work.

At each event a guest speaker will then provide his or her views to the title of 'Integrated Management in practice'. The event will conclude with a presentation from the host organisation.

Professor John Moverley OBE, Independent Chairman of the Forum, said: "As I often say, what happens in amenity management impacts upon every UK citizen every day seeking to provide safe and healthy spaces fit for purpose. Our Updating event is always popular but this year is set to be more than ever. There is much change around and how we address this will be vital."



Pete Dye - one of the most influential course designers of his generation, who brought us venues like TPC Sawgrass and Whistling Straits - has died, aged 94.

Dye designed numerous golf courses during a career that began in 1959 alongside his wife, Alice, who died last February at age 91 (they had been married for 68 years).

The Dye portfolio, which spanned over six decades and featured more than 100 courses, included several major and PGA Tour venues, including the TPC Sawgrass Stadium Course, Kiawah's Ocean Course, Harbour Town and this year's Ryder Cup venue, Whistling Straits, as well as other highly-ranked designs such as The Honors Course and Pete Dye Golf Club.

Alan Prickett joins ISEKI UK



ISEKI UK & Ireland have announced that Alan Prickett has joined the growing team in the role of Business Development Manager, responsible for dealers in the central band of the UK, along with key and national account sales.

Alan is a very well-known figure in the industry having previously worked for many years at Ransomes Jacobsen Ltd. Prior to his leaving there in July of 2019 he held a number of positions ranging from Regional Sales Manager to Managing Director.

In Alan's early career he studied agricultural engineering in Oxfordshire, before commencing a career in the professional turf industry from 1981, initially working for professional machinery dealerships in the Midlands, rising to the level of sales management and key accounts.

Commenting on the appointment David Withers adds; "Alan will be a great asset to the team at ISEKI, he will be looking to further drive market share gains in the compact tractor and collecting mower categories where ISEKI excel."

Toro acquire Ventrac

Agreement is subject to regulatory approvals and closing conditions

The Toro Company has entered into an agreement to acquire privately-held Venture Products, Inc, the manufacturer of Ventrac-branded products.

The transaction is subject to regulatory approvals and other customary closing conditions, and is currently anticipated to close before the end of The Toro Company's fiscal 2020 second quarter.

Based in Orrville, Ohio, Ventrac is a leading manufacturer of articulating turf, landscape, and snow and ice management equipment for the grounds, landscape contractor, golf, municipal and rural acreage markets.

For calendar year 2019, Ventrac generated net sales of approximately US\$100 million.

"Ventrac is well recognised in the industry for its market-leading innovation and commitment to meeting the diverse needs of customers," said Richard M. Olson, Chairman and Chief Executive Officer, The Toro Company, an Executive Member of the Asian Golf Industry Federation."

"This acquisition supports our growth strategy in the professional market with the addition of a strong brand and expanded product offering to



customers in the turf, landscape, and snow and ice maintenance categories. We have long respected and admired the Ventrac team, and we look forward to helping them grow on the successful foundation they have built in Orrville, Ohio," added Olson.

"We are excited to become a part of The Toro Company and its family of leading brands," said Dallas Steiner, Chief Executive Officer of Venture Products, Inc. "The Toro Company is committed to a culture that aligns with our employee values, has a rich history of success in the marketplace, and a proven track record of growing their brands. By joining with The Toro Company, it allows us to continue to serve our customers with authentic experiences and trusted products."

The Toro Company will purchase Venture Products, Inc for US\$167.5 million in cash, subject to certain adjustments. The Toro Company expects to finance the transaction by borrowing under its existing revolving credit facility.

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R&A and RSPB partnership



The R&A has agreed a new partnership with the RSPB to address wildlife conservation and the management of natural habitats at golf courses throughout the United Kingdom.

A new position, which has been funded by The R&A, has been created within the UK's largest nature conservation charity to advise golf clubs on the management of wildlife species and promote best practice to a wide network of golf courses to support their conservation aims.

Marie Athorn, who has a PhD from the University of Nottingham on habitat creation and is an experienced consultant ecologist, joined the RSPB on 13th January to undertake the new role. She will be tasked with:

- Providing direct support to 35 golf courses on conservation management of priority species and habitats
- Creating a golf conservation network to connect golf course managers with ecological specialists
- Delivering a training programme and suite of education resources in order to foster the use of best practice in wildlife conservation by golf course managers
- Promoting and communicating the work undertaken by golf courses with industry stakeholders

Educational resources

Steve Isaac, Director - Sustainability at The R&A, said, "We are working closely with the RSPB to offer valuable support and advice to golf clubs and their course managers for the protection and management of wildlife species and their habitats."

"Golf courses can provide significant

opportunities for the conservation of rare and protected species and this new role will help to create educational resources and develop best practice that can be widely shared throughout a network of clubs. We look forward to working with Marie and seeing the progress that can be made in this area."

Exciting partnership

Beccy Speight, Chief Executive of the RSPB said, "This is a really exciting partnership that will deliver good things for nature at a time when everyone is looking at what they can do to help."

"Golf is a sport that combines a rich heritage and tradition with cutting edge technology and innovation and I expect to see our partnership embrace this as we look at how golf courses can provide desperately needed sanctuaries for the UK's wildlife."

"Working together we can ensure that we give ground staff the skills they need to make this a real and lasting success and I hope our partnership is something that other landowners can learn from."

Passion for golf

Marie Athorn, the RSPB's conservation advisor to The R&A said, "This is an amazing opportunity to bring together my passion for golf and my love for the environment. It is impossible not to notice the threats facing our wildlife and golf courses can play an important part in protecting and saving species here in the UK."

"We have some fantastic green spaces that are cared for by dedicated grounds staff for the benefit of the millions of people who play golf. Through this partnership we will be exploring how we can all work together to ensure the game we love is also benefitting local wildlife."



BASIS and STRI step up environmental offering

BASIS and the STRI have joined forces to provide a new modular training course that will help greenkeepers, groundsmen and amenity contractors to protect the environments in which they work.

At a time when climate change is high on the agenda, the Managing Ecological and Environmental Landscapes (MEE) qualification is designed for professionals involved in enhancing the ecological and environmental features of the landscape from a golf or amenity perspective.

Speaking at the launch at BTME, Stephen Jacob, BASIS CEO, said the new qualification will provide a core module, followed by a choice of specialisms, one for greenkeepers, and the other for professionals managing municipal landscapes.

"The golf specialism will focus on an integrated approach to habitat management, regeneration and creation, all which the sports turf sector already recognises as vital to achieving environmental sustainability while continuing to maximise the enjoyment of golf," he said.

"The amenity specialism is geared towards professionals involved in creating management plans for enhancing environmental features of the landscape such as woodlands, wetlands and hedgerows."

"We're delighted to provide candidates with the opportunity to further increase knowledge and understanding of their specific role, to provide the highest quality landscapes, while playing a key part in protecting the environment," Stephen added.

The course has been developed with the STRI over the last two years, taking industry feedback into account to ensure each module is tailored to the particular needs of greenkeepers or groundsmen and amenity contractors.

Commenting on the training structure, Dr Christian Spring, STRI research and operations manager, said that, over four days, the course will be delivered by a team of experts at the STRI, and will combine classroom and practical learning sessions.

"This new qualification is a fantastic opportunity for those working in the amenity industry to take the next step in their career, and we look forward to the first intake later this year," concluded Christian.

The first course is set to commence in autumn 2020, with further dates to follow.

For information on dates and timings please visit <https://www.basis-reg.co.uk/training>

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".

Subscribers can now obtain a further two valuable CPD points for their Professional

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

Anyone wishing to claim their points should email their full name, BASIS membership number, date of birth and postcode to editor@pitchcare.com.



*BASIS is an independent standards setting and auditing organisation for the pesticide, fertiliser and allied industries.



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Dave Harrison retires

Campey Turf Care Systems export sales manager, Dave Harrison, announced his retirement after ten years and left the company at the end of 2019.

Dave joined Campey in 2009 from Dennis Sisis with a wealth of experience and global industry knowledge. His remit was to develop further growth in sales throughout the European and world markets as well as introducing the Campey range of products into the Middle East and Asia.

Speaking about his time in the industry, Dave said: "Forty-three years seems to have flown by, and I've loved my time in this industry. I'm really looking forward to spending time at home with the family and catching up on all the things I've missed out on in recent years, like getting on my bike again! We'll be having another grandchild soon, so that is something that will occupy some time for us all."

"Working for Campey has been brilliant and I've been fortunate to meet some fantastic people from all over the world."

Campey chairman, Richard Campey said: "Dave joined us in 2009 and was given clear objectives, and over ten years he accomplished a great deal. During his time with us, he has contributed greatly to the expansion of the company in Asia and the Middle East and the work he has done will be remembered for a long time to come."

Standing ovation for Michael



Hazel Grove Course Manager Michael Davie alongside Jacobsen's Will Carr

Hazel Grove course manager receives standing ovation

Michael Davie, the course manager at Hazel Grove Golf Club in Stockport, has tirelessly supported many BIGGA members and other greenkeepers. Having overcome periods of depression in his own life, Michael (59) established the "Greenkeepers mental health support group" on Facebook, where turfcare professionals from all over the country can come together to support each other.

In addition to this, Michael also hosts a regular meet-up in Manchester, where greenkeepers come together to discuss issues and provide a helping hand.

In recognition of the incredible effort he has put in to supporting his fellow greenkeepers, Michael was awarded with the Outstanding Contribution of the Year Award sponsored by

Jacobsen at this year's BTME Welcome Celebration sponsored by Campey Turf Care Systems and hosted by the BBC's Naga Munchetty.

The award is one of three BIGGA Awards given out to members during the event.

Reacting to the news that he had won a BIGGA Award, Michael Davie said: "I'm exceptionally humbled to receive this, it's totally unexpected and really amazing."

"I'm retiring from greenkeeping in a few months and I hope the extra time that gives me will allow me to develop the mental health side of things, I'm looking into how I can try and help as many people as possible, so this is just the start!"

Syngenta's new Application Academy

The pioneering world-first Syngenta Application Academy will delve into the world of precision application

The pioneering world-first Syngenta Application Academy will give turf managers and sprayer operators the chance to delve into the world of precision application.

Launching the Application Academy at BTME, Syngenta Technical Manager and application specialist, Glenn Kirby, highlighted it will give a select group the chance to become an industry leader in accurate application - and get the very best from every turf treatment.

"The Syngenta Turf Application Academy gives

an opportunity to really learn about the science behind the skills involved. Attending the Academy will take spray application to a new level," said Mr Kirby.

Focusing on scientific research and practical advice, the three day Application Academy will be held in June, at the dedicated Application Laboratory of Syngenta Jealott's Hill International Research Station in Berkshire.

The Application Academy syllabus modules include:

- Understanding spray dynamics
- Nozzle design and development
- Microscopy of droplet movement
- Digital Innovations Laboratory
- Setting-up testing and operating your sprayer

The course will be led by Syngenta specialists and independent experts in spray research and accurate application. Successful candidates will achieve Academy test certification.

"The Application Academy is open to all golf course or sports facility managers or dedicated sprayer operators," added Mr Kirby. "All applicants will get to join the Syngenta Application Club, providing advice and sharing best practice throughout the season."

A selected short list of candidate applications will be invited to undertake a Skype interview. Costs of the course, accommodation, subsistence and tuition is provided by Syngenta.





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Artificial Turf

The real horror story

Why would anyone replace a key sustainable component of our living environment with a coal and oil-derived product, one of only limited life span and almost impossible to recycle? When the entire planet is waging war on unnecessary plastics and the climate emergency, what is it that persuades consumers to make this terrible choice? And why cover children's sports fields in products that can harm their health? Why on earth does anyone choose artificial grass? And why does the Government do nothing about it?

David Hedges-Gower wants some answers

The reason is threefold: 1) skilful marketing, 2) the absence of product and consumer information, and 3) the lack of industry and product regulation. It doesn't matter where your priorities lie, from saving the planet to saving your pennies; seen from any angle this is clearly a scandal. So, before it is too late, we must dig deeper and expose the murky truths behind this phenomenon - and help stem a slowly emerging environmental disaster. Let's address the three areas of blame, in turn, starting with marketing, a brilliant lesson in consumer exploitation - and an opportunity to debunk some untruths.

How do you market an unsustainable product and promote the destruction of the living environment? You do it by being economic with your information. People want convenience, and so that's how the industry sells it. "Why not replace the chore of turf care with a maintenance-free alternative?" they ask. People want to be responsible too, so they also ask: "And why not help save the planet by getting rid of your petrol mower?"

But translate this into straight-talking and you get: "Why not replace nature's lungs with a petro-chemical product that damages rather than helps the environment, a product that does indeed require maintenance and will need replacing every ten years or so?"

And remember, there's only one recycling centre that, in theory, can deal with this stuff - and it's in Denmark and is not currently operable!

Of course, if it was called by the accurate name, plastic grass, sales would plummet. And, if buyers saw the growing mountains of worn-out plastic turf accumulating in landfill around the world, they would certainly hesitate. So, these topics are carefully avoided. And you cannot miss the irony of their "environmental" message; just like petrol, plastic grass is an end product of the coal and oil industry, using plastics such as polyethylene, polypropylene and nylon. So, whether selling plastic grass or a tank of petrol, it's all good business for the industries profiting from fossil fuels.

Promoters of plastic grass even say that it is 'maintenance-free'. This is simply not true, unless you are happy to have a growing build-up of detritus, not to mention self-seeding grasses and weeds. And your plastic grass will certainly need cleaning, and as you hose it down (using more water than is necessary to keep real turf alive), think of the chemical cocktail leaching into the ground. And get this; you may also need to treat your artificial turf against moss! So much for maintenance-free.

Consumer information: Consumers today want information - but, paradoxically, this can make them more ready to believe what they

are told, whatever the source. And sadly only a few relevant facts ever appear in marketing or even horticultural texts. To address the lack of consumer information, here are just a few quickfire facts about plastic vs real grass:

- Real grass captures CO₂. Plastic grass generates colossal CO₂ in its manufacture
- Real grass cools the surrounding areas. Plastic grass heats up in hot weather to intolerable temperatures, especially for small children and pets
- Real grass can survive even a summer drought without watering. Plastic grass requires regular hosing down
- Real grass lawns last for many decades! Plastic grass wears out after a few years
- Real grass sustains biodiversity. Plastic grass creates no-go zones for wildlife

Complete information is not just essential, but a consumer right. However, the statement below is from a typical UK plastic grass supplier's website and the only environment-related comment: "Plus, there's no watering or feeding required, so it's kinder to the environment." Incomplete and misleading, it shows how far the industry falls below this standard:

There is an even more serious topic that is carefully avoided in marketing or related information about plastic grass - the risk it poses to our health.

How plastic grass damages your health

Alongside rising temperatures, the next most serious crisis we battle is air quality. A living grass lawn absorbs pollutants and CO₂ from the air and, like any plant, exudes breathable oxygen. Replacing it with plastic grass simply removes this natural - and essential - contributor to our health.

What about humidity? Given the choice, would you rather spend a few summer hours with some natural moisture rising from your feet or baking from the dry heat reflected and generated by the plastics? Your lungs will tell you soon enough if you're not sure.

Worst of all is a very sinister danger that still does not receive a fraction of the attention it deserves - the use of crumb rubber to dress

artificial sports turf (the same toxic material that all our children are playing on at schools). The idea is that it helps keep the fake grass upright and cushions the blows when you fall. But there are stories of children suffering major health issues from the effects of inhaling this noxious substance made from old car tyres. Yet unsuspecting parents, trusting their local authorities, schools or sports clubs, allow their children to play on this, unaware that the grains caught in clothing and inhaled during play can be extremely dangerous.

All in all, there is very little to condone the use of plastic grass. It was one of those 'great ideas' when still at the drawing board, a very profitable convenience solution for our modern times. But now you can see why it should never have left the drawing board. Yet it has, and people are buying it in growing numbers. So what is to be done about it?

We need a remedy based on two parallel lines - conversation and education. The big question is how that conversation and education can be safeguarded from further untruths and manipulations. I have some suggestions.

Industry regulation: It's obvious. Whenever an industry is found to be falling short of good practice in one way or another, or to be promoting something known to be a threat to health and well-being, some form of regulation is introduced. It might be led from within or imposed eternally; what matters is that we, the consumers, can trust what we are told and make properly-informed choices.

Horticultural/Amenity sector: One huge puzzle is why gardeners have not rallied against this. Responsible gardeners and land managers would no more replace living trees (another vital eco-lung) with plastic imitations than we would replace our herbaceous borders with plastic ones. So why grass? Why is the sector so quiet on this topic?

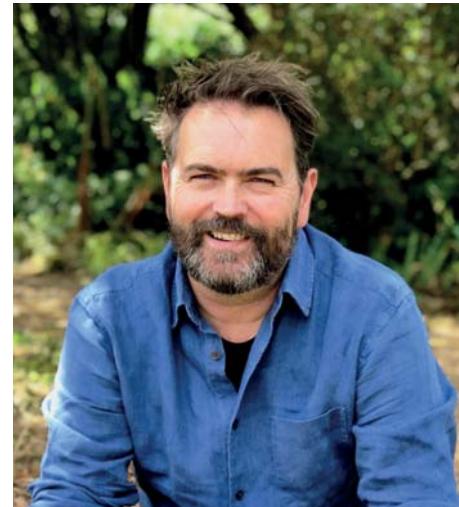
The scientific community: Research is already underway to evaluate plastic grass for environmental and health risks. But we also need the flip side concerning living

grass, the scientifically-robust facts and figures about its environmental benefits or the net carbon footprint - grass as a carbon sink versus the carbon cost of proper turf care.

And what about the Government doing nothing? To be fair, they've been busy with other things, but that can no longer be an excuse. And, if we look back with regret in twenty years' time, it will be we who share the blame.

This is a huge problem that has crept up and will only get worse unless a real and urgent change takes place. So it must go to the top of Government and its agenda for health, sustainability and the environment. To date, a few thousand of those in the know have added their signatures to my petition - but we need hundreds of, not tens of, thousands to sign - and that's still only a fraction of the Nation of Garden Lovers we claim to be.

We need the full story to get out there, and we need it fast. Without this, we cannot blame the consumer for choosing something that actually destroys the very ecosystem that helps provide a natural solution to the climate emergency.



David Hedges-Gower is the UK's leading lawn expert. He has dedicated his life to his love of lawns and his recognition and expertise have put him at the top of the industry today.

David left his job as golf course superintendent at the prestigious Oxfordshire Golf Club in 2003 and started his own lawn company, Lawn Solutions.

Professional groundspeople, landscape specialists, commercial property developers and leisure gardeners - all have benefitted from David's enthusiasm and knowledge.

By putting lawn care right at the centre of his own career, David has taken the topic to a new level and created unprecedented access to much-needed expertise.

A regular on BBC Radio and a favourite on the national horticultural lecture circuit.

www.davidhedges-gower.com





Saddleworth Golf Club

Moor's the merrier!

On the edge of the northern extremes of the Peak District, Saddleworth Golf Club in Lancashire is an 18-hole, par 71, 6196 yards parkland/moorland course. Close to the Pennine Way, the course occupies the northern and eastern slopes of Wharmton Hill and, from its vantage point 1000 feet above sea level, overlooks the villages of Saddleworth, Dobcross, Greenfield and Uppermill. Lee Williams went to meet 36-year old Head Greenkeeper **David Roberts**



Hidden away in the moorland hills of Saddleworth, the golf course offers breathtaking views, no matter what time of the year. But, with the views, comes challenging conditions for Head Greenkeeper David Roberts, who is used to the ever-changing weather conditions associated with being, in places, 1,000 feet above sea level, with the surrounding hills reaching as high as 1700 feet.

David didn't start his career in sports turf straight from school; he stumbled into it at the age of twenty-three. "When I was eighteen, I joined the army, and I was in the engineers, which took me to Afghanistan and Canada, to name a couple. After four years' service, it started to get a bit boring so, when I left the army, I thought I would get trained up in air conditioning and earn an absolute fortune. Then we hit the financial crisis and there was no one taking on apprentices."

That meant I had to have a rethink. Luckily, my mate told me there was a job going at Saddleworth Golf Club as he was leaving to join Royton & Crompton GC. I thought that would be a great opportunity until I could get back into air conditioning. I started here as an assistant greenkeeper as I had some transferable skills from the army. Plus, I used to look after the ground at Uppermill Cricket Club, so I could use a mower at least. I was able to take my NVQ level 2 in Sports Turf, but I then had a bit of a gap; we had a new greens chairman come in who changed everything around and made it not a nice place to work."

"So, I decided to go over to Australia to play cricket for two summers with all my expenses paid for. After those two years, I thought it was time to knuckle down and carve out a career for myself. I was fortunate to start back at Saddleworth as my position had been left open. And I was happy to be

back as the atmosphere was a lot more relaxed and enjoyable. I was never really 'in love' with greenkeeping until I came back and got on with gaining my NVQ Level 3."

"Daryl Smethurst, the Head Greenkeeper at that time, who was here for twenty-five years, told me he was going to retire when he was fifty. This gave me four years to put myself in the best position so that, when he left, the club wouldn't look elsewhere to replace him. So, I started my foundation degree in sports turf management, joined the R&A scholars and worked at Wentworth with the STRI agronomy teams in 2017; and I also worked at The Open at Royal Birkdale. I did my best to make myself into the only option they would look at and, thankfully, they gave me the job two years ago."

In January, David headed out to the Orange County Convention Centre in Orlando for the Golf Industry Show, as part of the BIGGA Delegation supported



With the killers going off the market, and with what remaining active ingredient was in the soil wearing off over the last few years, worms have been rife

by Bernhard & Company. "We firstly had to apply through BIGGA and answer some essay questions about the industry, where we thought it was heading and our opinion on different matters within the industry. From the eighty that applied, twenty were selected for interview and ten were selected from there for the trip." David was lucky enough to be selected and headed off to Orlando towards the end of January.

Whilst there, he enjoyed two full days of educational seminars, manned both the BIGGA and Bernhard stands at the show and visited some of the top golf and sporting facilities in the area to see how

they are run. "It was a once in a lifetime experience," he said.

David is grateful for the help and guidance that Daryl Smethurst gave him in their fifteen years working together at the club. "He taught me a lot over the years and, in the last few years when he knew he was leaving, he kind of put me in charge as Head Greenkeeper. He looked over my shoulder for eighteen months to make sure I was doing everything right, and that I wasn't going to blow the place up or break anything. This gave me the chance to manage the lads at the same time as gaining the experience I needed before I took over."

David is responsible for his budgets, but he is trying to input a new way of looking at how the club spends their money. "I will put a rolling figure for supplies, renovations and maintenance to the greens chairman who will then present that to the main committee. Then the finance officer will give me the verdict on whether they can afford it or not. I'm looking at a different way of doing things. It's ridiculous that golf clubs are run based on 'I think we will get this many members and we'll bring this much in for next year',



Head Greenkeeper David Roberts





We give them an intensive training programme to work to. In those two years, we would give them all the skills they need to be a greenkeeper, at the same time gaining a qualification

but it just doesn't work."

"My idea is that, if we have a barren year, we do the basic minimum of construction work. Then, whatever was earned in that year is what is spent the following year. That way, we always know we are spending what we have got rather than taking the club down. It takes away the guessing game. You can't just say 'we will throw £50,000 at course renovations over ten years' as you don't know if you will have the budget

for that money. Luckily, I have an excellent committee who are starting to understand the benefits some of my ideas will bring to the club."

The golf course is a mix of moorland and parkland. "The top of the course is more of a moorland character, whilst the lower reaches are more parkland, but we don't get parkland growth. We don't get much growth until around June and it stops around September, so we get a very short growing

period up here compared to a lot of other courses. This can have a lot of negatives, but quite a few positives as well; the biggest one being the cost savings in diesel as we are not cutting all the time. It is a nice steady growth up here."

The course is next to some sandstone quarries, so it is no surprise when David tells me the course is on a lot of sandstone. "We do have quite a big peat level left over from the last ice age. Under the peat layer,

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Getting Personal

David Roberts - I challenge you not to smile at the daftest question!

Who are you? David Roberts. Head Greenkeeper at Saddleworth Golf Club.

Family status. Long term relationship with my girlfriend Jacqui and we live with her two girls and our puppy Ted.

Who's your hero and why? A guy called Cec Wright who I play cricket with. He is still playing the game and bowling at age eighty and is the nicest bloke you will ever meet.

What's been the highlight of your grounds career so far? Gaining my FdSc in Sportsturf last year was amazing. Also, working the Open in 2017 and PGA at Wentworth the same year with STRI on the agronomy team.

If your younger self saw you now, what would he think? I would think he would be pretty happy at seeing all I have done since he was a spotty teenager. I've been in the Army, seen the world, played cricket in Australia for two winters and gained a good career.

Which famous people wind you up? Any footballer who complains about the amount of football they have to play, whilst getting paid £150,000 a week.

What was the most embarrassing moment in your life? I used to work a milk round when I was in secondary school and had to get up really early each day. One day at school, I was so tired and fell asleep in class. I woke up to everyone with standing round me watching me snore. That's the cleanest story I have anyway.

Brexit or Remain? I didn't vote and don't vote so for me it doesn't matter.

What is your favourite film? Shawshank Redemption is just a class movie. I can watch it over and over again.

What scares you? Spiders. No matter how long I stayed in Australia, I still checked the toilet every time before sitting on it.

What would your autobiography be called... and who would play you in the film? It would be called 'Always falling on your feet' as I seem to do as I go through life. He would have to come back from the dead, but people used to say I looked like Christopher Reeve.

What is your favourite sport? Cricket. It's taken me across the world, I've made some great mates and I actually used to be pretty good at it.

What would you cast into Room 101?



Pitchmarks on greens. Makes my blood boil when they are not repaired.

Do you have a lifetime ambition? I have already done a few. The next one is to be a course manager of a top 100 golf course in the world, maybe not in the UK though, the weather is getting terrible.

Which three people, living or dead, would you invite to a dinner party? Loving history, it would be amazing to get two people together who lead armies - so you could get both sides of the argument. So, let's go for Bonaparte and Wellington. Probably need some light relief after all that, so a comedian like Robin Williams.

What's your favourite piece of trivia? In his first year at Harrow, Winston Churchill was bottom academically of the whole school. Just goes to show what can be achieved after a bad start.

What's the daftest work-related question you have ever been asked? When we were having problems reducing the height of cut on a machine, the apprentice asked if we could just let air out of the tyres and that would get it to cut shorter.

What's your favourite piece of kit? The Verti-Drain. It gets a lot of use in the North West of England and does an amazing job.

What three words would you use to describe yourself? Lucky, intelligent and moody.

What is the single most useful thing you could tell a 16-year-old groundsperson/greenkeeper? Start your education early and look for any opportunities to gain knowledge and pick up new skills.

What talent would you like to have? I would love to have had more talent at cricket and do that full time.

What law/legislation would you like to see introduced? If politicians don't start to put into law what they claim in their manifestos within two years, they get chucked out.



Perhaps what we are being told about global warming means it's going to get milder but wetter in the winter





//

I know, through experience, what I need to add in the early season to get my NPK levels up. I believe it's more about the feel and the look of the grass

it is free draining, so it's a matter of getting through that peat layer which sometimes works and other times not so much. This year, we have had so much rain yet it's been the driest the course has been in those kind of conditions for years. I have not done anything to the course to make it that way. I think, with the dry period we had the year before, it's just dried the profile right through enabling the rain to drain through a bit quicker."

"The amazing thing about this place is that it was a working farm. The owner spent the equivalent of hundreds of thousands of pounds trying to turn it into a grass farm to produce grass, and he couldn't do it. Then

the land was bought to build a golf course on, so that gives you an idea of the position we are in."

The club used to own all the hills surrounding it, but over time the land has been sold off, so they are now right on their boundaries which doesn't give David much to play with. "We have no space to move a tee back and create extra yardage or make a little nine-hole course. This is a good thing in a way as it means we are not spending money on trying to make it longer, to try and get competitions in or attract golfers who like a long course. This enables us to get on with looking after what we have to the best of our ability, making little tweaks here and there."

Helping maintain the course to David's high standards are Pete Buckley, Deputy Head Greenkeeper, 34 years old who has served the club for sixteen years. He has an NVQ Level 3 in Sports Turf, chainsaw qualifications and tractor and knapsack spraying qualifications. Chris Hyde (30),

First Assistant, who has been with the club for fourteen years. He holds NVQ level 3 in Sports Turf and tractor spraying qualification. Jake Standen (28), Assistant Greenkeeper, nine years' service. He holds NVQ level 3 in Sports Turf, plus knapsack spraying qualification. Chris Nicholls (21), three years' service and holds NVQ level 2 in Sports Turf and is working towards level 3 now with Oldham College. He also has knapsack spraying qualification. The club also has an army of volunteers who help out on the course and run the clubhouse day to day.

In addition to David's current staff, he would like to set up an initiative with Oldham College in the near future. This would see him take on two apprentices every two years. "We would give them an intensive training programme to work to. In those two years, we would give them all the skills they need to be a greenkeeper, at the same time gaining a qualification. The advantage for me is the chance to start hand cutting greens in



Left to right: David Roberts, Jake Standen, Pete Buckley, Chris Nicholls and Chris Hyde

Team talk

CHRIS HYDE - FIRST ASSISTANT

Chris has worked at the club for fifteen years and is a fantastic asset to the course. He has a lot of experience on machinery and runs his own section on the course. In the last couple of years, he has taken the mantle of mechanic; servicing and maintaining the machinery to keep the greenkeeping team going through the season.

How did you first make the decision to start a career in the sports turf industry? The previous head greenkeeper is a family friend. So, as a student looking for some extra money, I worked here during the summer in 2004 and 2005. I then joined the team full time in 2006.

What are the biggest challenges you face? The most obvious challenge would be poor weather. Sometimes keeping firm playable greens can feel like a losing battle. The higher altitude and cooler temperatures can mean shorter growing seasons than most of the surrounding courses. Also, there are the personal challenges of juggling family life and trying to make the right decisions to progress my career.

Are you currently working towards a qualification or taking out any extra training? I am currently on the search for the next qualification to take. I'm trying to choose something that will most benefit both my growth and my usefulness to the club.

What do you enjoy most about the job? I enjoy working in the sun on a dry summer's day. Seeing the vistas on a clear day in the early morning, when the sun casts shadows on the undulations of the course. I enjoy the time and responsibility given to me in regards working my own section; the freedom of being my own boss gives me the chance to show the pride I take in my work and, in return, receive direct praise and acknowledgement for my hard work.

What do you find the most difficult part of the job? The changing of the seasons brings the dark mornings, and with it the struggles of getting out of bed when it's still dark. Also, the



monotony of some of the daily tasks, especially at the end of the summer months.

How could the industry as a whole help support and help further your career? If there was some kind of graduate programme at the end, of which there was a guarantee of a deputy or head greenkeeper job.

Are you a member of any industry bodies? Yes BIGGA.

Do you read Pitchcare magazine or visit our website? There is always the latest copy in the greenkeeper shed available. Plus, the head greenkeeper will highlight important or interesting articles.

Where do you see yourself in the future? I see myself hopefully as a head greenkeeper. But, I have also thought about becoming a teacher to share my experience and knowledge with budding greenkeepers.

Is there anyone person in the industry who has inspired you so far? I can't think of anyone in particular, but I take time to read Pitchcare magazine and try to utilise other sources. This helps learn about ideas other greenkeepers are having and methods and operations they're using, as well the problems they're coming up against and solutions they have found. Also, our head greenkeeper spends time to push and support us. He attends courses and always shares the content to try and inspire us to be better than we are. He encourages us to strive for perfection - or as close as we can get to it.

summer and take the golf course up a notch. There would be no guaranteed position here, but if someone were to leave, we would have a perfect replacement."

The greens are old clay bowl push-ups with native soils. "We are trying to change the top thirty centimetres with continuous topdressing. This has been going on for years; we now have a nice sandy loam coming together. We had drains installed on all the greens twelve years ago which work pretty well. One or two may need redoing, but we will look at a different kind of drainage, I may look at passive capillary drainage, so I'm going to see a few courses to see how it performs."

Not that David has had much use for his irrigation system of late, especially with the amount of rainfall

we had last year. A borehole feeds the automatic irrigation system and has Hunter pop-ups around the greens.

Being so high up, the course can suffer from differing natural occurrences throughout the year. "We get a lot of high winds up here, the beast from the east was a good example of that. We have a lot of pines which are all shallow rooting so, if we do get any strong winds, we will get a few come down. I believe we have far too many trees for a moorland course, so it's not a bad thing when a few come down!"

"When it snows it really snows up here, and it can be horrendous. I have had days on end when I have been clearing and chipping ice off the road up to the clubhouse just so that we can accommodate a christening or such like. That





said, for quite a few years now we haven't had much snow. Perhaps what we are being told about global warming means it's going to get milder but wetter in the winter and I think that is what we are starting to see. It doesn't just rain anymore, it batters it down, rather than the constant rain. It helps having the slopes; the water just runs straight off rather than sitting on the surface."

"We also get quite a few frosts and the club's policy is to use temporary greens.

We have been doing a trial on the putting green by letting the golfers on it in frost. We have seen bits of damage, which tells me enough that we wouldn't want it on the rest of the greens. I know a lot of other clubs are starting to let golfers on the main greens in frost, which may work for them. But, for now, we are happy to continue using temporaries."

David talks me through his monthly maintenance regime on the greens. "In

What's in the shed

- Ford 2120 tractor
- John Deere 3520 tractor
- John Deere 1026R tractor
- John Deere 2653B surrounds mower
- John Deere 2500E hybrid greens mower x 2
- Toro 3100-D Sidewinder surrounds mower
- Toro Workman MDX-D utility vehicles x 2
- John Deere Pro Gator 2030A utility vehicle
- John Deere X950R
- John Deere 8700 Precision-cut fairway mower
- Baroness LM56GC x 2
- SISIS Litamina sweeper
- Pro Pass 180 top dresser
- Landquip 200 litre tractor-mounted sprayer
- Redexim Verti-Drain 7316
- SISIS Rotorake TM1000 scarifier
- Toro HoverPro 550 x 3

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Team talk

CHRIS NICHOLLS - ASSISTANT GREENKEEPER

Chris Nicholls, Assistant Greenkeeper. Started with the club as an apprentice and has become a key member of the team in a short space of time which is down to his attitude to learn and work. He has also taken the responsibility of looking after his own section on the golf course amazingly. He has just started his NVQ level three only seven months after finishing his Level two.

How did you first make the decision to start a career in the sports turf industry? Looking back to sixth form education I never fancied going to university from the start. I've always been interested in horticulture and gardening, so when I saw an advert for an apprentice Greenkeeper at Saddleworth Golf Course, it looked a great opportunity. University is fantastic for some people, but I really wanted to get on the employment ladder and start a career. I'm glad I made that decision.

What are the biggest challenges you face? During the first year as being a greenkeeper, it was quite tough for me. I didn't drive so had to cycle in. The summer days seemed long and arduous, and I felt the biggest challenge was keeping positive when a lot of the time I was working by myself. Now, my mind has been changed, and I think it's a fantastic career and job opportunity where I can develop and broaden my horizons. I have even been volunteering as a groundsman at Oldham Athletic A.F.C, which has taught me other lessons about turfcare. Overall, I have found that when challenges have been overcome, there are fantastic opportunities that can be found.

Are you currently working towards a qualification or taking out any extra training? I am currently working towards my Level 3 NVQ qualification with Oldham College. The golf club has always supported me with training and education, and I thank them for that. I have also just completed my PA1/PA6 spraying courses and look forward to doing a chainsaw course in the near future.

What do you enjoy most about the job? There is an immense sense of pride and also a responsibility that I take and feel for the job. There is nothing better than looking back on a completed task however big or small that is. Cutting greens by hand for the first time or the football pitch and then looking back and thinking, wow, I did that.

What do you find the most difficult part of the job? The most challenging thing I find about the job is dealing with what the weather and resulting



ground conditions throw at us. We can have four different seasons in a day, and that can put a strain on getting the job done to the correct standards in a decent time frame.

How could the industry as a whole help support and help further your career? I already believe that the greenkeeping industry helps support its members more than many other jobs, in my opinion. If there were one thing, however, it would be more opportunities to go and work at the big golf courses or sporting venues. To work at St Andrews or The Etihad stadium and just get a taste of the very top of the industry would be incredible.

Do you attend industry shows or educational days? BTME in Harrogate is always great to attend for education, new releases, and networking with old and new friends.

Are you a member of any industry bodies? Member of BIGGA.

Do you read Pitchcare magazine or visit our website? Yes, I often read the magazine and look online to see what's new and pick up tips and advice.

Where do you see yourself in the future? Hopefully at the very top of the ladder. I would not pigeon hole myself to just golf course either as a venture into cricket or football stadium work would also interest me in the future.

Is there anyone person in the industry who has inspired you so far? Dave, the Head Greenkeeper at Saddleworth because he is continually trying to push his career and the golf course forward. Whether it is education or trialling differing methods and networking, which I think a Head Greenkeeper should be doing. Also, Paul Flynn the Head groundsman at Oldham Athletic as he has worked and done great things with the pitch on such a small budget and manpower. In my opinion, he is creating one of the best pitches in league 2.

winter, we hand mow using the Baroness LM56GC at a cutting height of 6mm. Combined with plenty of aeration - either by slitting or with the Redexim Verti-Drain 7316 using 19mm tines down to 12 inches. The Vert-Drain was the first machine I bought. It's been fantastic and vital piece of kit."

"In summer, we cut everyday with the John Deere 2500E Hybrid greens mowers at a height of 3.5mm. I tend to keep this height all the way through summer, I don't like setting up differently for a big competition. I believe golfers should get the same standards on a Monday as they do at the weekend. Every two weeks we will open up the surface with sorrel rollers which we have on an old greens mower. Then we will try and apply around two tonnes of Chelford 28 sand which works well with our sandy loam. Once a month, we will verti-drain with varying sizes of tines at different depths, so we don't create a pan."

"I have been overseeding with bents over the last few years to try and create a better sward as the greens are predominantly Poa dominated - around seventy percent. I have tried various seed mixes so far, but I find





You can't just say 'we will throw £50,000 at course renovations over ten years' as you don't know if you will have the budget for that money

highland bents take a lot better up here. I know the STRI ratings aren't the best, but it works for us."

David has soil samples taken once a year but believes that only gives him a snapshot of the time it was taken. "Unless I did it every month, it's not going to tell me everything. I know, through experience, what I need to add in the early season to get my NPK levels up. I believe it's more about the feel and the look of the grass to

see if it's nice and healthy."

"To get away from the peaks and troughs you tend to get using granular fertilisers, I have moved towards a foliar regime which gives me more control. Using a stabilised nitrogen complex helps thicken the sward and gives a lighter growth. We have used a lot of penetrant wetting agents to help keep the surface dry, and calcium to help flocculate the soil particles in the greens, get the water moving through the profile a bit

quicker and firm them up. We use a granular after we have done any heavy maintenance work as this helps aid recovery quicker than a foliar feed. This will generally be a conventional 4:0:4 with a good percentage of iron."

To cut down on the use of fungicides, David has been using a turf defence product which helps boost the immune system of the turf. This works alongside the penetrant wetting agents they have been



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Club history

Saddleworth Golf Club was formed in May 1904 when a group of prominent local men and women met at the Mechanics Institute (now Civic Hall) in Uppermill and resolved to establish the club.

They moved incredibly quickly and, within a week, had accepted an offer to rent some rooms at Mountain Ash Farm and the adjacent parkland for 40 Guineas per year (plus a further £10 for fires and lights in the clubrooms). By the end of June, a 'committee of enquiry' consisting of three doctors, three mill owners, a bank manager and a solicitor had agreed a lease on the land and appointed George Lowe (ex-Carnoustie, St Andrews, Royal Liverpool and Royal Lytham & St Anne's) to determine a layout for a course for the sum of 1 Guinea.

After a few years, it was felt necessary to consider extending the course to 18 holes, and a report was prepared by the famous golf course architect Dr Alister Mackenzie and W J Leaver. Dr Mackenzie was responsible for the design of Royal Melbourne, Augusta National, Cypress Point and Pebble Beach amongst many others. Their scheme was adopted on 25th October 1913. Work commenced immediately and was almost complete when the First World War broke out in 1914. Delay was inevitable, and the 18-hole course was not finally completed until 1922.

The Second World War and its aftermath caused a considerable slowing in the development of the club and the course for financial reasons. Still, by the 1960s, the club had a new lease of life as male membership soared to 300 and on to 400 by the early 2000s and many new additions and improvements to the course, the clubhouse, the lounge and dining room, car park, practice and changing facilities have been incorporated during this time.



using to help keep the top surface as dry as possible. "Fortunately, we have stayed cleared of much disease, and we haven't used a preventative fungicide for the last few months. We have historically used around six or seven applications of preventative a year, but I would like to get this down to two or three. You have to keep your eye on the weather, and there are plenty of resources now available to let you know when the high disease pressure is going to be. I also have a weather station which helps give me some indication, coupled with my own experience."

David and the club will look at what makes more financial sense when purchasing machinery. "We bought the Redexim Verti-Drain on finance due to the cost and our Toro Workman MDX-D's outright as we didn't see the need to put them on tick. We do have a leasing plan with John Deere, which has about a year left to run. With the price of machinery going up, I will have to take a look at what suits the course whilst working within the club's budget."

All servicing of machinery is carried out in-house except for cylinder regrinds. Chris Hyde is doing a lot of the work and is picking up some new skills along the way. David would like to send him on a machinery maintenance course, but there are no night or day release courses available.

With most treatments for the control of worms coming off the market in recent years, David is now starting to see a significant increase in the amount of worm casts around the course. "With the killers going off the market, and with what remaining active ingredient was in the soil wearing off over

the last few years, plus the dry period, they have been rife. We are now spending days blowing and switching the greens, tees and fairways. The increase in the worm population has attracted the moles which we didn't used to suffer much with. We are also getting chafers and I have tried a few different products to try and keep them at bay, but I think we are always going to get them as most of the stuff is off the market for controlling them."

The club and David do what they can to help improve the wildlife already thriving around the course. "There is a nature walk right next to us; we get a lot of roe deer and birds of prey here. It would be nice to bring the course back more towards a moorland course as, in the past, the club planted a lot of trees which took it more towards a parkland course. Moorland is its natural setting. We have been linking up habitat throughout the course, leaving rough longer for the birds. We have put up bird boxes, bee hotels and made insect hotels where we have been cutting down and pruning trees."



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Long Ashton Golf Club

When two worlds collide

It's been a few years since Pitchcare first visited Long Ashton Golf Club, following their extensive greens rebuild programme. So, we went back to catch up with Course Manager, **James Braithwaite**, to discuss the club's latest project involving Bristol City Football Club and much more

The golf course at Long Ashton started its life in 1893 as a nine-hole course. However, this was all to change by 1905 when a further addition of land provided the stepping stone to link the second nine holes. Set in 220 acres of mature wooded parkland and situated just ten minutes from Bristol's city centre, Long Ashton is one of the area's premier golf clubs and home of European Tour Pro, Chris Wood.

There are many changes and developments facing the club, including bunker renovations and a ten-year long-term plan, but the main issue lies on the twelfth hole. Currently, Bristol City Football Club are trying to get a category one status academy and have acquired land owned by Bristol Grammar School (situated at the top of the driving range), which then runs down the side of the twelfth. Because of how close the training pitch is to the twelfth fairway it has presented a health and safety risk, and James has been tasked with

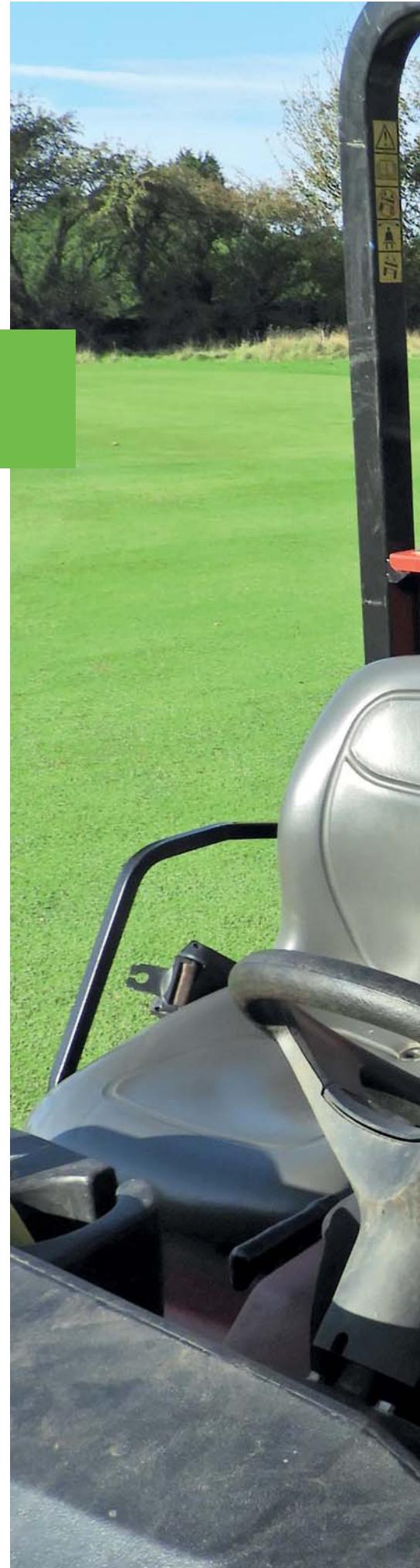
solving the problem.

"We did a survey to see how many golf balls were going over the boundary. In fairness, there weren't many, but even one is enough. So, in a bid to make it safe when their training academy is built, we raised the issue with Bristol City who were very supportive of everything we suggested. We wanted to avoid putting a net all the way down our boundary, as it would be an exceptionally high net. So, we had a look at a few different options and, with a small sub-committee involved, the decision was made to turn the twelfth from a straight hole to a dogleg. This involved shortening the hole slightly, turning the tee and turning the fairway into a dogleg shape. This means there will be a buffer zone at the shortest point of fifty-four metres from the centre of the fairway to the turning point, providing seventy-five metres of protection - giving us enough room to play the hole without balls going over into the football facility."

"Then, we will make the right-hand side an



I also work for the Golf Club Managers Association (GCMA) lecturing to up and coming general managers. This involves educating people about basic greenkeeping communications and promoting what we do within the industry







**In our industry the respect
just isn't there, nor
is recognition of the
profession and friends
have left the industry
because of this**

absolute no go zone by putting in bunkers and bringing the out of bounds right in. By planting gorse all the way up the far side behind the new bunkering, it will make it very visual; we have raised both tees so you can see the full length of the fairway and all the hazards that are in play and, hopefully, the golfers won't dream of taking on the corner. We have tried to make it as safe as we possibly can, and I would like to think the risk now will be extremely low."

All the changes on the twelfth have meant James has had to take out the thirteenth tee, which ironically, was put in when Bristol City built the first part of the academy on the other side when, in 2008, the club had to move the thirteenth hole. "We have had to take the back tee out to accommodate the

fairway and also change the teeing surfaces. Two new tees have gone in and, to guard those, we have put in bunkers to the left-hand side of the fourteenth."

"Needless to say, it's quite a big project and our contractors MJ Abbott have worked brilliantly; we have a great working relationship and I can't fault their work. We have carried out a few projects together and, when I see them in Harrogate, they call me 'the Long Ashton Chinese burn'. The running joke is how much I can get the price down."

Alongside all this work, James and his team are also continuing the ongoing bunker regeneration project. "We have completed twelve bunkers so far which involves reshaping, installing the Durabunker artificial face and putting down a rubber crumb liner all in-house. Completing the work is a slow process, but it has proven very cost-effective; it's costing us £2200 per bunker. We are probably saving about £18 a square metre on rubber crumb doing it in-house, including labour. I have had quotes from contractors anywhere between £22-30 a square metre, and it's pretty easy to do."





When it comes to the redevelopment of the course, it doesn't stop there ... they are currently undergoing a ten-year plan for the whole of the course. "We have asked all members to come forward with their ideas and, along with ours, we will collate all of the information to devise a new short, medium and long-term plan."

I asked James what the club and its members will be looking at as a priority. "Continuing the changes and improvement

of the bunkering will be high on the list, as we have been getting good feedback for the ones we have completed so far."

James didn't get into greenkeeping until he was in his twenties, starting his career working on the shop floor at BSA Foundry in Darlington where his dad was the manager. "I eventually worked my way up the ladder and moved to the region, so ended up travelling home every weekend to play cricket in the Derbyshire Central League,

staying at my grandparent's house."

"In 1992, the foundry closed and I was looking for employment. Luckily, I wasn't out of work for long as a friend of mine, who owned a butchers, offered me some part-time work butchering and delivering. I would deliver to the Hall Garth Hotel just outside of Darlington and, at that time, it was starting to build a nine-hole golf course. I went down and spoke to John Forbes who owned it, I got an interview and asked if he would train

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Left to right: Ray Holmes, Peter Baynton, John Bachelor, Simon Lang, Allan Smith, Matt Broughton and James Braithwaite



So, in a bid to make it safe when their training academy is built, we raised the issue with Bristol City who were very supportive of everything we suggested

me up as a greenkeeper ... the rest, as they say, is history."

"My first task was golf course construction, literally from the ground up, including the addition of drainage and all the gravel carpets by hand; just two of us with a wheelbarrow and shovels moving around 120 tonnes per green. Next, we added the blinding layer, moving 70 tonnes of sharp sand with barrows, shovels and rakes. With depth gauges that we made ourselves, we got levels of 190 tonnes of material on nine greens. When it came time to put 240 tonnes of rootzone on a green it just became too much, so we hired a digger and driver and completed it that way."

"Whilst all this was going on, I was still working for my friend part-time and evenings/weekends at the hotel as a silver service waiter. The club sent me to do my

Club history

Following various re-designs, the famous partnership of Hawtrey and Taylor were commissioned in 1937 to advise and plan the course which, in the main, is still played today.

However, it was not until 1957 that the Club eventually purchased the land, which in its earlier years had formed part of the Ashton Court estate.

Further additions in 1966 included a 12-acre site, which is now regarded as one of the best practice facilities in this part of the country.

The Club has staged several major golf tournaments, notably The Martini International Tournament in 1966, won jointly by Peter Allis and Bill Large, and the Coca-Cola Young Professionals in 1972, won by Peter Oosterhuis. In the last decade, the English Boys' and British Ladies' tournaments have also taken place.



NVQ Level 2 (on block release) at Askham Bryan College which was a two year course and, in that time, I was put forward for Toro Greenkeeper of the Year award which I was fortunate enough to win in 1995/96. I worked my way up to deputy head before eventually applying for the position of head greenkeeper, but they decided to bring a consultant in instead and I realised there was no further progression. Then, whilst holidaying near Bristol, my wife said it would be nice to live down here and, luckily, a job came up at Long Ashton."

That was twenty-three years ago, and James has gained many further qualifications along the way; NVQ Levels 2 & 3 in Sportsturf, Winter Turf Managers qualification (Umass), D32/33, L12 and G3, full first aider, Chainsaw CS30/31 & 36, PA1, PA2 and PA6, Abrasive Wheel, Pest Control, Basic H&S. As well as all this, James does a lot of public speaking and also worked part-time for a while as an assessor for Bridgewater College, which has now led to him lecturing for GCMA.

Helping James maintain the course day to day is John Bachelor - Deputy Course Manager (18 years' service); NVQ Levels

2 & 3, PA1, PA2 and PA6, Chainsaw CS 30/31, 360 digger licence, public speaking course. Allan Smith - First Assistant (14 years); NVQ levels 2 & 3, PA1, PA2 and PA6, Chainsaw CS30/31 and worked one Open Championship on the support team. Peter Baynton - Assistant Greenkeeper/part-time mechanic (30 years); NVQ Level 2 Sportsturf Maintenance, various Toro mechanic courses, machinery maintenance and grinding competent. Matt Broughton - Assistant Greenkeeper (2 months); NVQ Level 2 Sportsturf Maintenance, NVQ RHS level 2 and Chainsaw CS30/31. Simon Lang - Assistant Greenkeeper (2 months); no formal greenkeeping qualifications but over thirty years' experience in grounds and greenkeeping, PA1 and PA6, Chainsaw CS30/31. And, last but not least, Ray Holmes - Gardener/Handyman (7 years).

James varies his renovation methods on the greens, as the course has two different types of construction; the new ones which were built in 2014, and three that are built to the same spec as the ones James helped construct at Darlington. "We double hollow cored all the greens at the end of the season but, it was quite late in the year so I





“

I go through at least eighteen daily tasks of a greenkeeper and, by the end of it, they have a completely different opinion of the job

used 6mm micro cores. On the new greens, I only went to a depth of 35mm into the original turf layer, as the sand underneath is fine. On the older greens, I went full depth at 130mm and dressed them all with Mansfield kiln dried sand. This was brushed in with the Double A Sweep N Fill brush - and what a piece of kit that is! I would go as far to say, it is one of the best pieces of kit that has been invented since I started greenkeeping; it fills ninety-nine percent of the holes, compared

to other methods. We then overseeded with DLF Pro Master 60 Green Shade seed mix, as we have seven greens that are in the shade and struggle at this time of year. We are predominantly meadow grass/bent, but this mix will add fescue and ten percent Sebrena 1, which is a rough stalked meadow grass; it spreads by stolons, gives good colour in the winter, it's shade tolerant and reasonably wear and disease tolerant. With this in mind, we have now lifted the Toro

Triflex 3420 greens mowers to a height of cut of 4.5mm and will lower this in summer to 3mm. I would like to add that, with the great help of our members, we managed to get all this work done in two days.”

Over James' years at the club, they have varied the ways in which they purchase or lease their machinery depending on the committee at the time. “In the past, we have had a rolling plan, in 2006 we went to a big fleet buy for five years and, in 2010 some

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Toro GM1000 hand mower x 2
 Toro 3250-D greens mower with verti-cut units
 Toro Triflex 3420 greens mower x 2
 Toro Groundsmaster 3500 with sidewinder
 Toro Reelmaster 3100 Sidewinder
 Toro Groundsmaster 3280 out front rotary
 Toro Groundsmaster 4500 semi-rough mower x 2
 Toro Groundsmaster 3400 Tees mower x 2
 Toro Reelmaster 5610-D 4WD fairway mower x 2
 Toro Sandpro 3020 bunker rake
 Toro Workman HDX-D truckster x 2
 Toro Workman 4300-D truckster
 Kawasaki Mule (range ball collector)
 New Holland TN60 tractor
 Iseki TH4335 (33HP) compact tractor
 Massey Ferguson 1547 tractor with loader
 Toro ProCore 648
 Sisis Vari-seeder
 Sisis Greens Slitter
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 Tomlin 3T high lift trailer
 Marstons tipping trailer
 Fleming 4T trailer
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 STIHL HS86 hedgecutter
 STIHL FS85 brushcutter
 STIHL FS87 brushcutter
 Lawnflite Pro 55HWS pedestrian rotary mower
 Toro pedestrian mower x 2
 EGO backpack blowers x 2
 Toro hover mower
 Cooper Peglar knapsack sprayer
 Everris Accupro 2000 cyclone fertiliser spreader x 2



of the stuff didn't need replacing. Then, we looked at doing another big fleet buy in 2015 but, with the greens plan coming along, it made sense to stretch the machines' life for another two years. So, in the next two years, this will mean we have around a £50,000 buffer per year to put towards the greens etc. A few pieces of machinery are on an operating lease, which I don't believe is the best way around it. When you go down this route you have to stick with it every five years and you don't get a buffer zone. I have to say, I'm blessed here when it comes to machinery as the club are very good to me; I have gradually managed to build a very good fleet over the years."

It's very apparent that James really enjoys working for the club; like all places, they have their ups and downs, but he is well respected. At times though, James feels it can be a very lonely place for a course manager. "In our industry, the respect just isn't there, nor is

recognition of the profession and friends have left the industry because of this. I recently lost one member of staff purely because he felt we are just classed as grass cutters. I'm now trying to help fight our corner. I also work for the Golf Club Managers Association (GCMA) lecturing to up and coming general managers. This involves educating people about basic greenkeeping communications and promoting what we do within the industry. I recently did two, two-hour talks on the basics of aeration, communication, frost policies and course policy documents. One thing I ask when I first address them is 'what they think a greenkeeper is' - and

the majority will always say a grasscutter. Next, I go through at least eighteen daily tasks of a greenkeeper and, by the end of it, they have a completely different opinion of the job. This is my way of trying to put back into the industry and hopefully help raise our profile a little."



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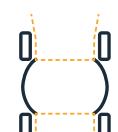
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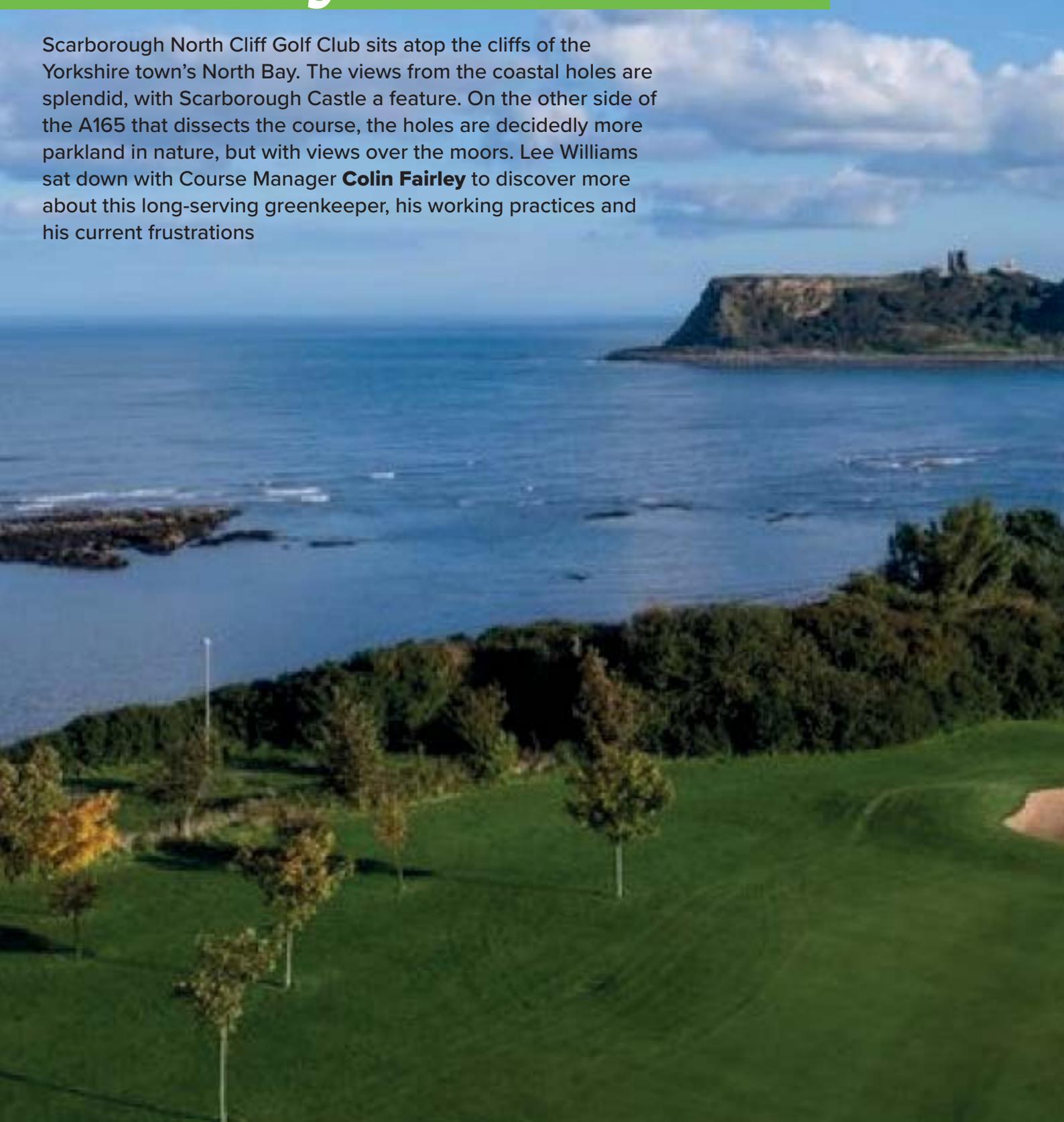
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Scarborough North Cliff Golf Club

Fairley normal!

Scarborough North Cliff Golf Club sits atop the cliffs of the Yorkshire town's North Bay. The views from the coastal holes are splendid, with Scarborough Castle a feature. On the other side of the A165 that dissects the course, the holes are decidedly more parkland in nature, but with views over the moors. Lee Williams sat down with Course Manager **Colin Fairley** to discover more about this long-serving greenkeeper, his working practices and his current frustrations



Two miles north of the town centre, Scarborough North Cliff Golf Club has a real seaside feel to it. The course starts on the cliff top. It then moves inland, threading its way between trees and spinneys, with lovely views of the North Yorkshire Moors, before returning to the cliff top for the final three holes. Although the club dates back to 1909, the present course was designed by James Braid and first opened its doors to golfers in 1928. It spans 6,425 yards with a par of 70. The course is sufficiently undulating to be interesting without being excessively hilly. It is a tough but fair test for golfers of all abilities.

On the opposite side of the road to the clubhouse - which has excellent views of the Yorkshire coastline - is the greenkeepers' sheds which, unfortunately, do not share the same vistas. This is where, on a pleasant afternoon, I sat down with Colin, who has served the club for the past eighteen years,

to talk about his varied career, including his time working in Holland.

Colin grew up in Scotland and found himself 'accidentally' getting into the sports turf industry whilst at school. He had no interest in golf whatsoever and admitted he didn't know a lot about the game. "One of the schoolteachers indicated that there was an apprentice greenkeeper position available at a local golf club. I always intended to go into engineering and follow my dad's career, but there was nothing available at the time, and I had to do something. With the Harburn Golf Club being only two miles from where I lived, I went for it and got the job."

"I worked my way up to first assistant then, after eight years, moved to Uphall Golf Club to become head greenkeeper. I was still pretty young. Six years later, I was offered a job at a new course in Holland - Golf Club Almeerderhout - where I spent ten years, firstly as head greenkeeper and

then course manager. I came back to the UK in 2006 and joined the Northwood Golf Club in northwest London where I spent six years. I didn't take to living down south, so I decided to move back up north and applied for several jobs before I got the position here at Scarborough. I have been here ever since and will probably see my time out here as I can retire in around five years' time."

Even though the course is on the coast, it is a parkland layout sitting predominantly on clay but with a reasonable covering of topsoil. It has drainage problems much like all the clubs he has worked for, except Almeerderhout. "That club is built on reclaimed land in the Polder, so it was about six metres below sea level, which provided different kinds of problems. The soil we worked with had no stones in it; it was bizarre. It was almost like a silt soil and was incredibly fertile. I have never seen trees grow so fast in my life."

Almeerderhout was built just before

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I remember a lecturer telling me that it's a marvellous industry I have come into. 'It's a boom industry,' he said. 'Everybody is going to be playing golf in years to come, and it is perfect for people when they retire as the retirement age will get lower. It will go from strength to strength.' Sadly, the opposite is true



In forty-five years in the industry, I have seen considerable changes in the way committees work

Colin's arrival. This included the initial eighteen holes, a par 3 course and a driving range. "The scale of the layout was that of a championship course, and we went on to expand this to twenty-seven holes which I project managed. To be honest, although the Dutch are living below sea level, I was disappointed with the standards of the drainage within the construction of the original course. The company that built the original course was De Ridder, the same people who developed the verti-drain. It was their first major course build. With some of the advice they received, plus their inexperience in construction, they didn't

really build the greens as well as I would have liked. In the second phase, which I oversaw, one thing I made sure of was that the greens were built to USGA specification. I involved the STRI, which helped make an impression when they turned out right. To watch the grass establish so quickly after construction, thanks to the silty soil, was unbelievable. I just wish I could get it to work here the same."

The North Cliff course is split into two separate areas by the main road, with five holes - the 1st, 2nd, 16th, 17th and 18th - a small practice hole, putting green and pitching green on the coastal side. Across the road are holes 3 to 15. All are very different in terms of playability. It is much more difficult to get trees to establish on the coastal side of the course, although we have been planting trees over the years with some success. Certain trees, like sycamore, cherry and rowan, have taken quite well; people said to me when I first came here that I wouldn't get trees to grow here because of the salty environment. I said there are big pine trees out there that are huge and fully grown; we must have some sort of fighting





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I always intended to go into engineering and follow my dad's career, but there was nothing available at the time, and I had to do something

chance. I think the previous regimes didn't really take too well to planting new trees, but I took a lot of pride in getting the planting right. They have taken some time, but trees that were the thickness of my finger when planted are now a good twelve inches in circumference."

The club had used consultants in the past but, with the tightening of funds, and the fact they felt much of what the consultants were saying was very similar to what

Colin was putting in his reports, they were dispensed with. "They realised, why pay him when you are telling us that anyway? The one hard fact I have learned and, in some ways, taken full circle from the first club I worked at budgetary wise, is that there was never any detail on budgets. It was sort of hand to mouth, so I never knew what I was getting. I usually had to keep going back to the club treasurer."

"Still, in forty-five years in the industry,

I have seen considerable changes in the way committees work. The club treasurer at the time was the man who signed all the cheques and you would ask for fertilisers and such like and he would authorise it. Whereas, when I went to Holland, it was all very professional. I had to become computer literate, I had my own office and the resource side of things was on another level. We had a million pounds worth of equipment, and what I didn't have we didn't need in that



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Getting Personal

Colin Fairley - The Flying Scotsman

Who are you?

Colin Fairley -
Course Manager at
Scarborough North
Cliff Golf Club.



Family status. Married.

Who's your hero and why? My mother, because she stuck by me no matter what.

What's been the highlight of your grounds career so far? Working in the Netherlands.

If your younger self saw you now, what would they think? WHY are you doing this?

Which famous people wind you up? Jeremy Corbyn.

What job would you love, other than your own? A pilot.

What was the most embarrassing moment in your life? There's been too many!

Brexit or Remain? Brexit.

What is your favourite film? Gladiator.

What scares you? Deep water.

What would your autobiography be called... and who would play you in the film? The Flying Scotsman played by Liam Neeson.

What is your favourite sport? Rallying.

What would you cast into Room 101? Cricket and Elvis Presley.

Which three people, living or dead, would you invite to a dinner party? Churchill, Liz Hurley and Boris Johnson.

What's the best advice you have ever been given? Do the best you can.

What's your favourite smell? A good curry.

Which three albums would you take to a desert island? None - I would want total silence.

What's the daftest work-related question you have ever been asked? If we had more money could we achieve more?

What three words would you use to describe yourself? Grumpy, impatient and loyal.

What is the single most useful thing you could tell a 16-year-old groundskeeper/greenkeeper? Believe in yourself and hang on in there - it always comes to he who waits.

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



respect; the money was there, and it was at a time when golf was booming in the '90s. The budget was very comfortable."

"Northwood, again, was a club that owned the land, was financially very stable and was able to provide a comfortable budget. Coming here was a bit of shock to the system. The budget was half of what I had at Northwood ... and it's never really changed in eighteen years! So, as you can imagine, it has been difficult; it's been a matter of tightening things up. In particular, it has been a struggle in the last ten years with the austerity cuts, because money has been even tighter, and prices have skyrocketed. Going back several years to when I first came here, you could get a reasonable bag of fertiliser for eight to ten pounds a bag. The cost has doubled and even trebled in some instances. Red diesel fuel was 0.38p a litre. It's now around 0.90p. You try and explain this and, for the most part, whilst they understand, there simply isn't the money. All these factors inevitably have a bearing on our budget, so we have to say we can only do X, Y and

not Z. Beneficial to the club, however, is that I'm very much hands-on. All of the construction work is done in-house, thereby reducing the costs so we can undertake projects we may otherwise not be able to afford to carry out."

Colin's experiences over his forty-five years have enabled him to further stretch out his budgets by doing nearly all his machinery repairs in house. "Whilst I was an apprentice greenkeeper, I also worked part-time at a local garage, as I wanted to keep my options open of going into engineering. Working on cars and pulling engines apart has always been a bit of a hobby of mine. For a short period, I served in the territorial army, where I pursued my interest in mechanics further through training with the mechanical engineers. I had to give that up when I moved to Holland, but the experience helped me to carry out most of the machinery repairs, with only the cylinder grinding being outsourced. We utilise a local mobile grinding company to come in as and when required, thereby saving the club money. In Holland, it was the opposite. I was





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I don't think the industry is doing badly, other than the economic factors that are affecting membership and this, inevitably, has a knock-on effect

fortunate to have a fully trained mechanic, and we invested in all the necessary equipment required for all machinery maintenance to be carried out in-house."

The original greens at North Cliff are the old push-up style which have been top-dressed many times over the years using traditional topdressings and now sand. "You can see it in the profile; it's an ongoing project."

Colin believes his greens maintenance will be similar to most other greenkeepers

around the country. "We cut the greens with the triple, and occasionally with the hand mowers, at 3.5mm through the summer months. In the past few years, we have tried to sustain that as our normal cutting height. I'm not totally for it myself but, with the usual pressures from members asking if they can be made faster, we have managed to sustain them at 3.5mm and, overall, they perform pretty well. Obviously, some years are worse than others depending on the weather. In the 2018 drought, they suffered a

bit and it was a struggle as it was scorching and very dry. In the winter, normally around November time, I will lift the height of cut to around 6mm. These old push-up greens are predominantly poa, although I have been trying to reduce that by incorporating more bent grasses as I find I'm just fighting a losing battle with fescues with the heights of cut not being suitable for it."

"I overseed in spring and autumn when and where necessary. I spike reasonably regularly with needle tines once a month

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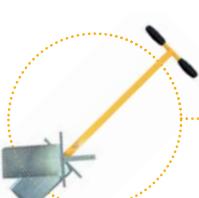
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where possible! I want to hollow-core more often than the powers that be will allow, but when I talk about hollow-coring I tend to get screeches of horror. They want us to only core late season, which isn't ideal."

Whilst in mid-conversation, I asked Colin if he has a problem with thatch in the greens? "I wouldn't say we have a major problem with it now because there are many ways to aerate, be that needle tines or scarifying, which we carry out on average every six weeks. It's a matter of whether the grass is tolerant to it; and what the greens will take as much as anything. We hit them in the spring with a major scarify. We also have a maintenance week in mid-July, which is something I managed to get introduced many years ago, which is often questioned by the committee and members. I think this is partly because committees often change and, just as you manage to educate them and get them on board, some resign, and new faces come along and you have to explain it all over again!"

In July, we will needle tine, scarify, overseed and top-dress. Annually, I try to get at least four or five reasonably heavy

topdressings of pure sand on. We have now gone to pure sand due to the cost of buying an 80/20 compost. It is ludicrous what the suppliers charge for a bit of soil!"

Colin's feeding regime on the greens has not changed much over the years as soil samples have not varied that much, and the cost factor of fertiliser itself also comes into play. He also looks back at the various chemicals he was spreading forty-five years ago. "We don't use granular often, other than at the beginning and maybe the end of the season. I'm very much a trickle feed man as I have favoured this over the years. I spray little and often mainly with natural organic fertilisers."

"Some years ago, I introduced the compost tea programme. The one thing that shocks me, thinking back to 1974 when I started my career, is that I was using Mercil fungicide, and mercerised lawn sand which both had an element of mercury within! When I think back to then and what I know about it now, it's frightening. At sixteen years old you don't know about these things. The first job I ever did - on a wet Monday morning in July - was to help the head

greenkeeper spread lime on the greens. And there were other products, such as Cydane, for worm control. Again, lethal stuff, and it's quite scary when I think back to the controls we had then and the health and safety we didn't have or wasn't made aware of. I should be glowing in the dark by now!"

"Going back to Mercil, it definitely did what it said on the tin. It controlled disease for months on end, controlled moss, weeds and worms, but what was it doing to the environment? It was basically sterilising the soil. As Rovral Green was being introduced in the UK, I was moving over to Holland. I was told, from the beginning, that there are no fungicides over here; they are banned. This was a bit of a shock to the system, having always had something to rely on. So, I had to change my whole way of thinking almost immediately. All I had was iron sulphate as a turf hardener to try and stem off disease."

"When we built the new course with the USGA greens, the establishment was fantastic, and we had beautiful fescue/bent greens sward. Then, about nine months in, we got Take-All and, within the space of



I have been incorporating more bent grasses as I find I'm just fighting a losing battle with fescues with the heights of cut not being suitable for it





“

The one thing that shocks me, thinking back to 1974 when I started my career, is that I was using Mercil fungicide, and mercerised lawn sand which both had an element of mercury within!

twenty-four hours, we had massive patches where we still had a lovely fescue sward, but the bents just got wiped out. At that time, there was a lot of research going on with various mushroom composts. A company from Belgium contacted me and told me they might have a solution using a product that is used in the tomato industry that is made up of a mushroom compound. We trialled it and had some success, so we carried on with that over the years.”

“With the experiences I gained whilst in Holland, I decided to give compost tea a go here. I don't believe any one product really makes a difference on its own: it's an accumulation of things. You can throw compost tea at it, but if you are not aerating and doing all the other beneficial processes then it's not going to work. If you are not taking the right precautions with the bacterial life you are putting back into the soil, there's no point. Putting compost tea

on one day and the next spraying it with a wetting agent is madness. You have to be careful and plan these things out and, touch wood, I'm not going to say it's the be-all and end-all, but certainly since the introduction of compost tea here at North Cliff some five or six years ago, the disease that we have suffered from has been significantly reduced. Now and again, I still must rely on a fungicide, especially in the last couple of years with the onset of anthracnose

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being brought on by the last two dry summers we have experienced."

The club tends to buy their machinery when funds will allow, and Colin is not loyal to any one brand, having a mixture of John Deere and Toro machinery. "Financially, it's been difficult. We have run into the buffers this last couple of years, and we should have replaced several our machines recently. But we are begging, stealing and borrowing at the minute. Golf is really struggling, with clubs haemorrhaging members every year. We do tend to claw a few back here and there over the year, but we have quite an elderly membership, so we have a lot of retired people and, inevitably, some pass away or get so old they can no longer play. The increase in mobility scooters seen out on the course in the last few years has been phenomenal. From a couple of members having permission to use them, we have now gone up to around thirty, plus the professional shop has four golf buggies for rent. It's something I fought ardently against for many a year, but it's often like Wacky Races out there sometimes!"

With Colin's many years of experience in the industry, I thought it would be good to get his view of where it is and where it is heading. "The golf industry is under stress now. The economic factors are affecting membership and this, inevitably, has a knock-on effect."

"It's funny, when I first came into greenkeeping, I was attending College. I remember a lecturer telling me that it's a marvellous industry I have come into. 'It's a boom industry,' he said. 'Everybody is going to be playing golf in years to come, and it is perfect for people when they retire as the retirement age will get lower. It will go from strength to strength.' Sadly, the opposite is true."

"Like everything else in life, when money is tight the first thing to go is your luxuries. Unfortunately, that will include golf membership which can be expensive. Hopefully, in time, it will pick up, but I don't think golf gets the exposure it used to get on TV when it was live on the BBC ... and you didn't have to pay an extra twenty pounds a month to watch it!"



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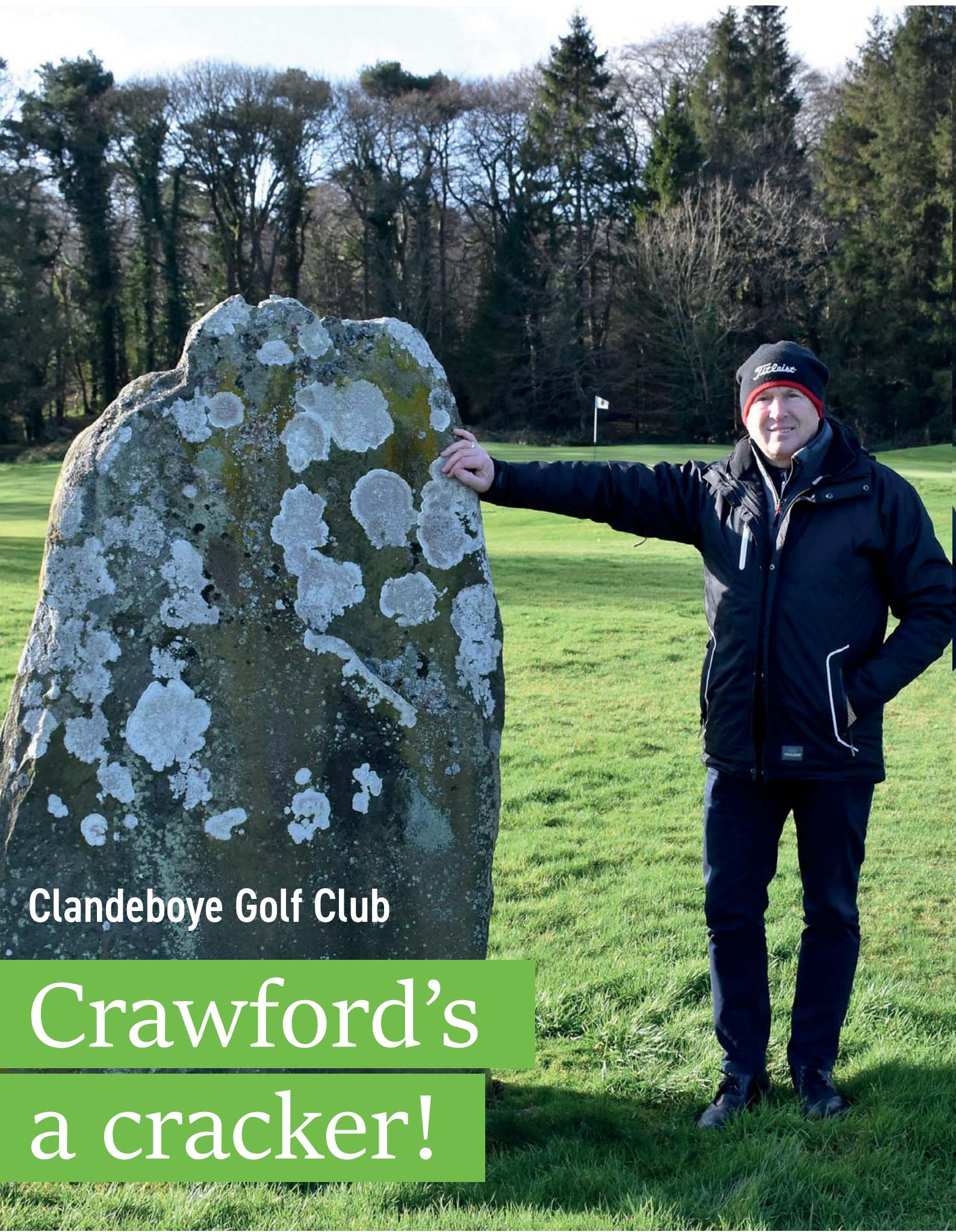
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TM



Clandeboye Golf Club

Crawford's
a cracker!



Just a few miles down the road from Belfast, Clandeboye Golf Club boasts two 18-hole courses situated in the idyllic surroundings of Lady Dufferin's Estate. Chris McCullough met with Course Manager **Terry Crawford** to find out more about life in this rather 'soggy' region of the UK

Back in 1930, the first course was created by William Renwick Robinson, a local linen merchant with a love of golf and a flair for landscaping. Three years later, Clandeboye Golf Club was formed and is now home to the Dufferin Course, one of the highest rated championship courses in Ireland, and the shorter Ava Course.

William's hard work, combined with a sound personal knowledge of the technical problems involved moving mountains of soil, boulders, bracken and gorse, laid the foundations of what has now become one of the most challenging golfing tracts in Ireland.

Historically speaking, the name Clandeboye is anglicised from the Gaelic. In the year 559, the monks of St Comgall's Bangor monastery grazed their flocks on what is now the Dufferin course.

The original Clandeboye course played host to all the major Irish championships until the early 1970s when, after very fierce arguments among club members, Robinson's original layout was changed.

The present Dufferin Course emerged from a design by German architect Baron Von Limburger in association with former Ryder Cup stars Dave Thomas and Peter Allis.

In keeping with the original vision of

Robinson, Clandeboye has continued to develop and improve its facilities. Set in 350 acres of land, this development has consolidated Clandeboye's reputation as one of the finest golfing experiences of its kind in Ireland.

This is well borne out by the number of major golf events held over the years, including European Mens' and Ladies' tournaments, the European Challenge Tour and numerous top Golfing Union of Ireland amateur events.

And the latest news from Clandeboye Golf Club is that it is hosting the GolfCatcher PGA EuroPro Tour event this summer which the club hopes is the first step on the road to luring the Irish Open to the Ards Peninsula.

The club's inaugural EuroPro tournament will be played from 19th to 21st August, with a high profile Pro-Am to be followed by a three-day professional competition.

With so many games on the go and more to come, Golf Course Manager Terry Crawford is a really busy man and, together with his team, always strives to have both courses at Clandeboye Golf Club looking their best.

Terry, who also doubles up as the club's facility manager, has worked there for almost thirty years and still enjoys the job every single day.

"I worked at a number of golf clubs prior



The total years of experience that our greenkeepers have extends to 194 years, which is a real testament to the hard work they all put in



to coming to Clandeboye, including six years at Newtownstewart Golf Club, four years at Armagh Golf Club, then to here for almost thirty years," said Terry.

Terry attended Elmwood College in Scotland for training and cites the late Walter Wood, a former course manager at St Andrews Golf Club, for inspiring him to move forward in the greenkeeping industry.

As the club's facility manager, Terry sets the annual budgets and has it agreed by the greens and full committee. As mentioned, there are two eighteen hole courses at Clandeboye that Terry manages, each with their own characteristics.

"The Ava course is eighty percent heathland and the Dufferin course is one hundred percent parkland. Both are eighteen hole courses and are spread over 350 acres, so there is plenty of room."

"In terms of length, the Ava course is 5,742 yards and 70 par, whilst the larger Dufferin course is 6,559 with a par of 71. The Dufferin course is set on 200 acres and the Ava course on 150 acres," he said.

A strong team of dedicated employees work alongside Terry to ensure the greens and course is kept as pristine as it can be.

Six full time greens staff with two assistants and one mechanic work with Terry on a daily basis and a further three part time staff are employed in the summer period.

"The total years of experience that our greenkeepers have extends to 194 years, which is a real testament to the hard work they all put in," Terry said. "Having a workshop technician is also vital to the smooth running on a large golf complex. We try to maintain and service all our machinery in-house to keep costs down."

"The workshop is also fitted out with our own grinders and high lift ramp to make all servicing safer. If my mechanic has a rush of breakdowns then one of my other staff helps out."

Terry calls in outside help for some specialist jobs on the courses. "We use three summer helpers from April to September. I don't have a consultant, but I would use the STRI Group at times to carry out thatch level



It used to be mid-September, but now we do all greens work in mid-August for much quicker recovery times and less chance of disease attack





organic material guidance. We would also use contractors at the main maintenance times to help clear cores and carry out verti-draining to fairways."

"The soil profiles here consist of heavy soil in general, which get wet easily, but dry out fast and become firm afterwards. There are thirty-four push up soil greens and two sand base greens."

"I carry out the same aeration and feeding programme to all greens, but the two sand greens do get additional wetting agents and a little more nutrients. We apply one granular feed early April and then work off a liquid Primo and nutrient feeds every fourteen days to maintain consistency and growth levels."

"Should we need any extra equipment during the course of

our work, then we would hire in diggers and other equipment and operate them ourselves," he said.

The weather in Northern Ireland can be very unpredictable at the best of times and the country does get its fair share of rain, which can be a nightmare for the greenkeepers in terms of flooding.

"We just have too much rain in Northern Ireland," said Terry. "If the conditions get too wet, then I try to reduce all cutting if not required and we rope off the areas around the greens early to ensure no damage is done to the most important areas. Roping these areas early is really the key here to avoid damage."

"We also have shade problems on our Ava Course on



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Out of all the equipment, I would say the Air2G2 and the Toro ProCore 648 aerator, along with my tractor mounted grader, are very useful machines



several competition tee boxes which are surrounded by large trees, but we have introduced synthetic tee mats and the members are happy with these."

"If there are any frosty conditions, or when we are carrying out maintenance, we use temporary greens. On both courses, there are also short game areas with two practice bunkers and an area where you can hit shots up to a three iron only," he said.

Terry and his team follow a fairly stringent maintenance regime to keep the courses looking their best. With the amount of rainfall, Northern Ireland can certainly grow grass, therefore the greenkeepers have to be very proactive, particularly during the summer time.

"Our maintenance programme kicks off in the spring time with vertidraining using 12mm tines to a depth of eight inches, followed up with Air2G2 and then lightly verticut and heavily sanded."

"A granular fertiliser would be applied early April when soil temperatures are around eight to ten degrees Centigrade. Fairways and tees are scarified and fertiliser applied at low rates to encourage growth and help seed germination as we would be carrying out an all course divot programme."

"On the greens, after six weeks, we would start applying Primo and nutrients at low

amounts every twelve or fourteen days, weather permitting. This ensures steady uniform growth which I can control using light sand topdressing and verticutting."

"Using these techniques, we can create constant green speeds around 9 to 10.5 on the stimp which my membership are very happy with. Around mid-August I carry out vertidraining again and grading to a depth of 20mm."

"We then lightly sand, mat in and then apply grass seed using a droplet spreader, mat in again and then apply more sand to ensure all grade lines are filled to finish."

"We roll greens with our speed roller. Prior to our maintenance, we always spray a disease preventative three days before which ensures some protection against fusarium," he said.

All of Terry's staff are trained for a variety of jobs with some specialising in operations that require advanced education.

"I have three spray operators to carry out the greens maintenance operations, but all men are trained on all equipment and we switch regularly."

"Switching the jobs around keeps the operators fresh and then they don't get bored and start losing interest. When we carry out autumn greens maintenance, all staff work together to complete the job quickly."

"Presentation is a big factor here at Clandeboye Golf Club on both courses. Our membership expects this as we are surrounded with lots of well manicured golf clubs fighting for the same pound, so we must always produce consistent surfaces which play well and look good to the eye," he said.

As mentioned, the weather plays an important role on the maintenance of golf courses, but climate change is also affecting programmes, especially where seasonal work is concerned.

"We carry out all greens maintenance a lot earlier now," Terry said. "It used to be mid-September, but now we do all greens work in mid-August for much quicker recovery times and less chance of disease attack."

"Regular soil samples are taken every two seasons to see what the ph readings are and if there is anything that is showing as deficient that require me to either increase or decrease applications."

"Members are always kept well informed about what work we are carrying out on the courses via regular newsletters, on the notice boards and with course walks. It is the only way that we, as course managers, become more professional and educate the golfer in what goes on behind the scenes," he added."



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Latest projects

Terry and his team have just completed a full length buggy path around the Ava Course which allows buggy access all year round.

This new path has helped provide disabled golfers the opportunity to play all year round and not just during the summer months.

Terry said: "We have a fleet of buggies which now bring revenue in for us all year round, which pays for the path system."

"During the past few years, we have added a lake onto our Dufferin course and, more recently, added a new plastic liner into it."

"We also installed a sleeper face all around the sides, which has turned out great. And we have started to install synthetic tees on heavily played tee boxes for winter play."

"Other than maintaining the courses, we also keep an eye on the surrounding woodland, removing any downed branches to enhance the safety for

members and guests."

"We try and carry out any work ourselves but, at times, we bring in tree climbers as my staff are not trained to climb," he added.

Terry ensures all his team are fully trained with current legislations in health and safety, with all staff qualified to level three.

"My two assistants are fully trained to administer first aid and all staff have been trained to use the defibrillator at work," he said.

Machinery use

The machinery replacement policy has changed over the years, just like it has at many similar venues as budgets tighten.

Terry explains: "We used to work to a five year replacement plan for machinery but, as the purse strings became a little tighter, we now purchase as required and have increased our mechanic maintenance budget."

"Normally, machinery and equipment are purchased from



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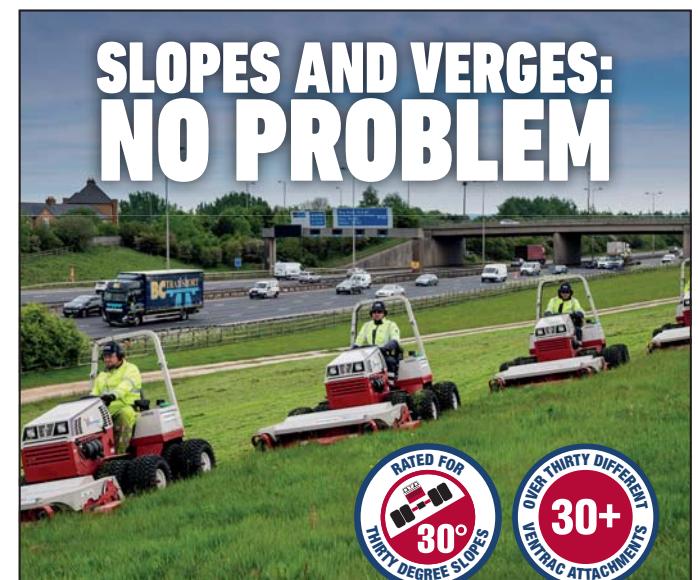
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Getting Personal

Terry Crawford - is it bedtime yet?

Who are you? Terry Crawford, Golf Course Manager at Clandeboye Golf Club.

Family status? Married with two children; one boy, one girl.

Who's your hero and why? No real hero, but I must say Tiger Woods coming back is great for the golf game.

What would you change about yourself? I would like to improve my short game.

What's your guilty pleasure? Black Bush whiskey.

What's been the highlight of your career so far? Holding down a high profile job for thirty years in the same club and still wanting to come into work.

Which three people, living or dead, would you invite to a dinner party? Elvis, Tina Turner and Micky Flanagan.

If you could be anyone for a day, who would it be and why? Boris Johnson, so I could sort out Brexit.

Do you have any bad habits? Yes, not going to bed early enough.

Do you go to bed worrying about the next day's workload? Yes, I do, and I would be surprised if other course managers didn't do the same. I think it has become the norm in our industry.

What are you reading at the moment? Don't read that much, only related greens material.

What are your pet peeves? People who don't respect rules and are lazy.

If you could go anywhere right now, where would it be? Playing golf in America and enjoying the great weather.

What's the best part of your job? When talking to a new member and he says he should have become a member sooner.

... and the worst? Talking to an older member and he says "I've seen the course better."

Do you have a lifetime ambition? Yes, to retire at sixty with a good pension; well, definitely retire.



Favourite record, and why?

Surrounded, Fight My Battles, as this song gives me strength.

Who would you choose to spend a romantic evening with?

The wife, and if she can't make it, the girl friend then.

If you won the lottery, what is the first thing you would do?

Get shot of the wife.

If you were to describe yourself as a musical instrument, what would you be and why?

People say I would be a set of bagpipes as they say I have plenty of wind.

What's the best advice you have ever been given?

Work hard and the money will come.

What's your favourite smell?

Black Bush whiskey.

What do you do in your spare time?

Walk my two dogs and play golf.

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

"Do you think the course will be open on Saturday?" when it is only Wednesday and we are closed due to heavy rain!

What's your favourite piece of kit?

Air 2G2 and the Toro Pro Core 648 aerator.

What three words would you use to describe yourself?

Loyal, friendly and dedicated.

What talent would you like to have?

I would love to play the guitar.

What law/legislation would you like to see introduced?

That all golfers could remove their ball from a divot on the fairway.



our local dealers. I have a multi-colour, multi-brand filled workshop. I buy the best machine, regardless of its colour.

"Out of all the equipment, I would say the Air2G2 and the Toro ProCore 648 aerator, along with my tractor mounted grader, are very useful machines."

"Sometimes, we do hire in machines to carry out fairway vertidraining, clearing up cores and sanding fairways, if required."

"There is also a large washdown area and pit that we constructed, which gets cleaned out three times a year," he said.

Most outdoor sporting venues have some kinds of problems with various diseases and pests. Clandeboye Golf Club is situated near woodland which can add to the problem.

"When it comes to diseases, it's mainly fusarium that affects us," Terry said. "In terms of pests, we have had badgers digging up areas during the spring for a few years now."

"Conservation and wildlife, when controlled, are very valuable to a golf course. With that in mind, I try and leave areas all around both courses that have any type of flower and colour that enhances the landscape."

"We put up fifteen bird boxes last season and have also sown out some areas with wild annual flowers near tee boxes," said Terry.

The greenkeeping industry has endured its fair share of highs and lows over the years and Terry has certainly noticed some changes in his long career.



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FIFA Update

Football to the Samba Beat



The recent FIFA Under-17 World Cup in Brazil was the eighteenth edition of the competition. For the restructured FIFA pitch team, led by their Pitch Management Manager, **Alan Ferguson**, this was the fourth tournament in just under a year and the first international competition to be held outside Europe. Blair Ferguson reports

The FIFA Under-17 World Cup is contested between 24 teams from the six FIFA confederations and is held once every two years. Until this year six stadia have been used to host the 52 game programme, but the decision was made that the 2019 event would be played in just four.

These games took place between October and November 2019 and were initially scheduled to be hosted in Peru, but following a series of inspections, it was decided the country was not quite ready and will instead host the 19th edition in 2021. Keen to keep the competition in South America, Brazil was picked as the new host.

Brazil is one of the most famous footballing countries on the planet, and they

have the World Cups and tournament hosting experience to match. The Confederation of Brazilian Football (CBF) has hosted the 2014 FIFA World Cup, the 2016 Olympic Football tournament and last year the 2019 Copa America. With a certain amount of infrastructure already in place, the move from Peru to the spiritual home of football seemed to be the obvious one for several reasons, but pitch quality didn't rank highly on that list.

The first proper inspection visit to Brazil did not take place until April, leaving just six months in which to go to contract with the stadia and training sites as well as all the hotels, flights and other logistical elements. The tournament was scheduled to be played from the 23rd October to the 17th





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Hosting fifty-two games in twenty-three days is a tall order for any pitch in any stadium. To make things a bit more difficult, the majority of games were scheduled to be played as doubleheaders, which made providing high-quality surfaces crucial

November 2019, but as the Brazilian season was in full swing, it was decided that the tournament would be played at smaller stadia more commonly used to host second and third tier games.

The four stadia were selected in the three cities of Brasilia, Goiania (two stadia) and Vitoria. Each host city also had a number of training sites appointed. During the first inspection, Alan, supported by Andy Cole from iTurf, inspected the four match pitches and fourteen training pitches.

"Hosting fifty-two games in twenty-three days is a tall order for any pitch in any stadium," Alan began. "To make things a bit more difficult, the majority of games were scheduled to be played as doubleheaders, which made providing high-quality surfaces crucial."

"The pitches in the Estadio Bezerrão in Brasilia and the Estadio Kleber Andrade in Vitoria were to host eighteen games in twenty-three days and sixteen games in twenty-three days respectively. As all the pitches selected were natural, it was

decided that these two would have hybrid fibre installed. A tender was carried out by iTurf on FIFA's behalf, and SIS Pitches were awarded the contract. Everyone connected with the pitch project knew that the stability needed to have a chance of delivering such an intense schedule would be there with the fibre, but what we didn't anticipate was how well the two pitches would handle hosting thirty-four games between them in that time."

"We documented the condition of them throughout the tournament, and we've been able to leave pitches that are at a much higher level than we inherited. One of our key objectives is to leave a strong legacy, and I'm very happy that we've been able to do that at both venues."

Upgrading these pitches was only a small part of the programme that had to take place in Brazil. A majority of the surfaces were 100% Bermuda and needed to be renovated to raise the standard. The logistics of installing the hybrid systems had to be considered, as did training for the



Estadio Kleber Andrade just after renovation



A Dennis Premier on the Estadio Bezerrão pitch



Pre-match at the Estadio Bezerrão

groundsmen who would be maintaining them before and after the tournament.

Another pressing matter was irrigation. During November, the average high temperature in Brazil is 27.4°C with the low being 21.4°C. To facilitate the number of training sessions and matches, a considerable budget was required to service and repair the existing irrigation systems, as Alan explains.

"Each of the pitches had to be renovated to begin the process of bringing them up to international standard. With time short, a programme of verti-cutting, topdressing,

aerating and seeding was carried out on each pitch. Being Bermuda, thatch build-up can be an issue if not managed, and a combination of lack of equipment, budget and general know-how meant that, until the renovations were carried out, the pitches were not being verti-cut more than once per year, which was simply not enough."

"Following on from the verti-cutting, each pitch was allocated an initial 60 tonnes of sand to begin improving the micro-levels. Once applied and worked in, an additional 10 tonnes was applied to each pitch. The main focus for the pitch team, given the

short lead time, was to provide a safe level surface for the players. The pitches in Kleber Andrade and Bezerrão had the advantage of the SISGRASS system, but we wanted consistency on all of the surfaces."

"To achieve that consistency, we had to address the irrigation systems. Fourteen of the eighteen venues needed their systems recommissioned or upgraded with new pipework, pumps or electrics. In the case of the Estadio Olímpico in Goiania, the pitch only had heads around the outside of the pitch with hoses being used to irrigate the central area. Rain Bird had installed all of

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Ceilandia training ground before renovation



... and after renovation

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For many, it has been the first proper training they have received, and I think my team's efforts in delivering and continuously improving these workshops has made a difference to the quality of the pitches we deliver

these systems previously, and we asked them to assess each system and provide the FIFA pitch team with a solution. Around \$200,000 had to be made available to bring the irrigation systems up to standard, but it was vital work that had to be done to ensure the success of the tournament."

With the renovations and irrigation systems serviced and upgraded, focus switched to the two SISGRASS hybrid installations required in Brasilia and Vitoria. As a very specialised type of work, there are a limited number of companies who offer a system and, of those, many are located in Europe, making the logistics of moving stitching machines to South America at short notice difficult. Following a forty day sea journey, the fibre was installed in each pitch in seven days, and the SIS team worked around the clock in two shifts to ensure the pitches would have the maximum time to recover.

Alan believes that specialised systems cannot simply be installed and the local staff then left to carry on maintenance. To prevent that from being the case, a workshop on how to understand and manage hybrid systems was delivered by SIS director of natural turf, Carlos Reis.

Carlos has vast experience in the construction of football pitches in his native Portugal and around the world, including

overseeing the building of six pitches in Russia for the 2018 finals for SIS. The workshop covered general maintenance as well as the renovation of the pitch. FIFA will also support both venues for the first twelve months to ensure they get the best from the legacy left.

As part of the build-up, and in line with the other FIFA tournaments, a series of training workshops were held in the three host cities. Alan explains how the new format for delivering the workshops has worked and how they've been fine-tuned as the year has progressed.

"The combination of theory and practical on the day has been well received by the ground's teams," Alan said. "For many, it has been the first proper training they have received, and I think my team's efforts in delivering and continuously improving these workshops has made a difference to the quality of the pitches we deliver. The team are also looking for continuous development of the handbook given to each delegate and translated into the host language. It's a useful take away for the groundsmen and acts as a helpful reminder when final preparations are underway."

Training is an important part of FIFA's tournament legacy initiative, as is the equipment they are able to leave at each venue. FIFA aims to leave as much as they

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Delegates at the Brasilia Workshop



... head outside for hands-on training

can in the form of equipment and other infrastructure to help raise the standard of football in a host country. For Alan, providing this equipment is a chance for each site to raise their own standards and keep them at a consistent level, but he recognises the challenges they face when it comes to budgets for maintenance.

Whilst training the local staff is the preferred option, sometimes it just isn't possible. At the training sites, contractors were needed to drastically improve the quality. Many of them were well below the

required standard when the first inspections were carried out, and urgent action was taken to renovate the pitches.

"With a period of only six weeks available to the team between starting the renovations and playing the first game, it was felt best to use four local contractors," Alan explained. "Whilst World Sports, one the best known in Brazil, was given the task of renovating three of the four stadia, other companies Campanelli (training sites in Vitoria) Enarpie (Kleber Andrade) and Green Leaf (training sites in Goiania and Brasilia)

were tasked with delivering the renovations and maintenance."

"The contracts were issued in two parts. The first part was focusing on the renovation and the second part on the tournament delivery. All the contractors met with the FIFA pitch team during the week of the workshops to agree on what could realistically be achieved in the time available. Once agreed, the contracts were issued against the quotes received, with a rate card agreed to bring uniformity to the costs."

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Verti-Drain and carrier in Estadio Bezerrão



Estadio Bezerrão post match cleaning



Bermuda can regenerate very quickly and, with temperatures still high in Brazil at the time of the works, it was felt that any attempts to transition in ryegrass would not be successful. The transition to rye in the stadia was only to boost the aesthetics of the striping, which worked for the three weeks of play

"The renovation programme followed the same format as the stadia with the focus very much on cleaning out the thatch layer ahead of topdressing and fertilising. Bermuda can regenerate very quickly and, with temperatures still high in Brazil at the time of the works, it was felt that any attempts to transition in ryegrass would not be successful. The transition to rye in the stadia was only to boost the aesthetics of the striping, which worked for the three weeks of play."

From the first kick off on the 23rd October to the final on the 17th November, the tournament went well for the team. With all fifty-two games played on schedule and on good surfaces, the 18th Edition of the FIFA U-17 World Cup was well received by players and coaches alike. For Alan and the FIFA pitch team, there was a real sense of achievement at what had been delivered in Brazil given the low starting point they had inherited at the first inspections.

The intensity during the six months leading up to the tournament - and the twenty-three days during it - provided a different test for the FIFA pitch team. For

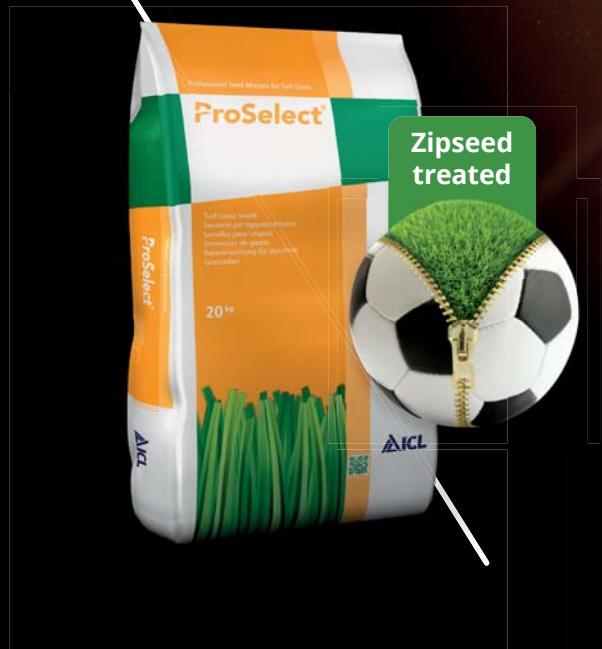
Alan, it was one of the toughest projects he has faced with it being in an area of the world with a lower level of turf infrastructure on a short time frame.

Seven months of hard work from the local groundsmen and FIFA pitch team culminated in a fitting end. The final of the 2019 tournament was played between Brazil and Mexico in the Estadio Bezerrão, with the host nation coming out 2-1 winners thanks to an 84th minute goal that saw them draw level and a 93rd minute penalty that proved to be a late winner and saw the famous yellow shirts lift their fourth U-17 World Cup.



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The Hampshire town of Aldershot is the 'Home of the British Army'. The garrison, plus a wider urban population of 243,000, ensures that the local football team regularly attracts crowds in excess of 4,000, one of the highest in the National League. Currently 'comfortably mid-table', the club's ambition to return to the EFL is aided by Head Groundsman **James Smith**.

Lee Williams paid him a visit to find out more



Aldershot Town Football Club was founded in the spring of 1992 after the closure of debt-ridden Fourth Division club Aldershot FC. They are now part of the Vanarama National League and play their home games at The Recreation Ground, which has a capacity of 7,100. It has been the home of football in the town since 1926 when it was previously used by Aldershot FC. The stadium's current sponsor, EBB Paper, gives the stadium the rather wordy official name of The EBB Stadium at The Recreation Ground; however, it is still affectionately known as 'The Rec'.

James Smith began his sports turf career

as a greenkeeper at Wycombe Heights Golf Centre where he worked under course manager Colin Wilson, before he moved on to set up Turf Tonics with business partner Steve Gardner. "After leaving school, I joined Wycombe Heights as an assistant greenkeeper learning on the job. I was in no rush to gain my qualifications, and it was only in my fifth year at the golf club that I decided to do my NVQ Level 2 in sports turf. I also gained my spraying certificates PA1, 2 and 6. After six years at Wycombe heights, I was approached by Colin to join him at Turf Tonics and take up a position at Bisham Abbey National Sports Centre helping maintain the facilities, which included Desso, hybrid and 3G pitches.





More could be done in schools to promote what we do. I never saw anyone representing our industry on careers day

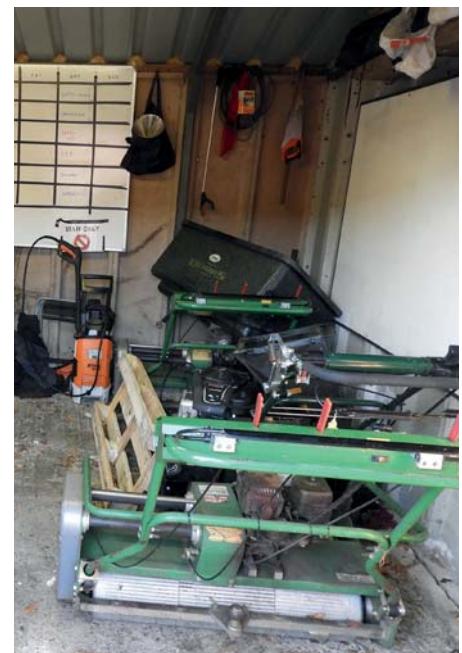
From there, I worked with Sean Woodley at Wycombe Wanderers for a while, before going to Aldershot Town to help Colin who showed me the ropes here for six months before he was due to have an operation. When Colin came back to work, I asked him if I could look after the pitch full-time and, luckily for me, he agreed and made me Head Groundsman twelve months ago."

James is tasked with looking after the stadium pitch on a daily basis, which is a Fibresand construction with a full drainage system and an automatic irrigation system.

"It's supposed to be Fibresand, but we have cleaned it off with the Koro year after year and, this year, there is not much left. It would be great if we could top it up sometime in the future to get the fibre content back to where it should be so we can achieve the optimum performance from the pitch."

"The pitch generally drains very well; there is only a small problem in one of the corners where there is a bit of a dip. We have a fully automated Hunter irrigation system with pop-ups around the edge and in the middle of the pitch."

The stadium has no real shade issues, with only the south stand causing James a small problem in the winter if they get a frost. "Other than the shade covering a few places, I'm lucky enough to get sunlight almost all year round. If the forecast is for a heavy frost, I will use frost covers to protect the pitch before a match. I have an army of volunteers who help me get them on. We don't suffer much from frost down here; we





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probably only need to use the covers two or three times a season."

James talks me through his maintenance regime throughout the season. "Whilst the pitch is growing in, I will cut it at 28mm. Once established, I will cut every day using the Dennis G860, lowering the height gradually each week until I get down to 24mm, which is matchday height. In winter, I will cut the pitch at 25mm three days a week. After the game finishes, I will have

a walk over the pitch and divot for an hour. The next morning, I then go over the pitch with the tractor mounted brush and, occasionally, I like to put the Campey UniRake over the pitch to break up any debris that has accumulated on the base of the pitch. Then I will use the Allett Uplift 86 to clean the surface."

"I didn't have a very good start to the growing in season as, three days after the renovation, we had a massive downpour.

This washed all the seed into piles, so I had areas around the pitch where the grass was too thick and places where nothing was coming up. So, I overseeded again with the dimple seeder to fill in the affected areas. Once the pitch had established, I had to go over with the scarifier to thin out the thicker areas of growth."

An essential part of James' maintenance programme is aeration. "I have carried out a lot more aeration this season what with

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Getting Personal

James Smith - don't go out for a pint with him ... he'll forget his wallet!

Who are you? James Smith, Head Groundsman at Aldershot Town Football Club.

Family status? Currently single and living by myself - which is great!

Who's your hero and why? My brother. He did a lot for me when I was younger.

What's been the highlight of your grounds career so far? Helping Colin at Turf Tonics as I learned an awful lot from him. Also winning Groundsman of the Year at Aldershot.

If your younger self saw you now, what would he think? You ain't done too bad.

Which famous people wind you up? I honestly can't think of one.

What job would you love, other than your own? I would love to be a snooker player.

What was the most embarrassing moment in your life? Not so long ago, I went shopping and, when I came to pay, I realised I had left my wallet at home ... after I had bagged everything up and had it in the trolley.

Brexit or Remain? Remain.

What is your favourite film? In Time.

What scares you? Ladders.

What would your autobiography be called... and who would play you in the film? James Smith - The grass is greener on the other side. I think Jay from the Inbetweeners would be a good fit to play me.

What is your favourite sport? Football.

What would you cast into Room 101? People on the phone whilst driving - who doesn't have hands free these days?

Do you have a lifetime ambition? To own my own house with a swimming pool in it.



Which three people, living or dead, would you invite to a dinner party? Cristiano Ronaldo, Holly Willoughby and Micky Flanagan.

What's the best advice you have ever been given? Don't eat yellow snow.

What's your favourite smell? Lynx Africa.

Which three albums would you take to a desert island? One Direction, Little Mix and Jess Glynne.

What's the daftest work-related question you have ever been asked. How quick does the astro turf grow? He didn't realise it was fake! The same person also asked why it was a different colour.

What's your favourite piece of kit? Definitely the Air2G2.

What three words would you use to describe yourself? Shy, funny and skinny.

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

What talent would you like to have? To be able to read people's minds.

What law/legislation would you like to see introduced? For it to be double time on Sundays.



the heavy rains we have been experiencing around the country. I have used the Toro ProCore 648 three times with 19mm tines at a depth of four inches and the Air2G2 twice with six-inch tines."

James is responsible for the timings and application of fertilisers throughout the season. "With me being here every day, I know when it needs a feed. I don't take soil samples; it's a matter

of keeping my eye on the pitch and knowing what has worked in the past. I will use a granular fertiliser every three weeks, mainly a 10:4:4 at low rates of 25g/m², and this is topped up with a liquid fertiliser mixed with bio-stimulants and turf hardeners."

Since Turf Tonics have been managing the pitch, Premier Pitches have undertaken the end of





season renovation works. Last summer, the top 25mm was koroed off; then it was topdressed with forty tonnes of sand and brushed in. It could have done with more sand, but the budget wouldn't stretch that far. We then overseeded with 25 bags of Johnson's Premier Pitch with the dimple

seeder three ways. Finally, we applied a granular pre-seed fertiliser."

The machinery James uses is owned by Turf Tonics. This means he has access to a variety of kit to help him look after the pitch. "I don't have my trailer licence yet, so I depend on the other lads dropping off

What's in the shed

Dennis G860
Allett Uplift 86
Campey UniRake
Toro ProCore 648
Greentech tractor mounted brush
Cushman dedicated sprayer
Fleet Beamrider
ICL spreader
Kubota tractor

machinery when I need it. The main pieces of kit I use each day are stored here."

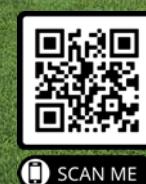
I ask James what, if money was no object, he would invest in to help improve the quality of the pitch. "I'll tell you what I would like; a new, fully constructed Desso pitch with undersoil heating and a remotely operated irrigation system. I do get quite good recovery here because of the amount of light, but the pitch would hold together so much better if it were a Desso, in my opinion. It would also be nice to have some SGL lighting rigs to help the goalmouths

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recover in winter."

Foxes can be a problem for James with the stadium being open. "They cause a lot of damage to the pitch, especially after a match day. I often come in the morning after the game to find they have buried pies, chips and even bottle caps! What they want with them, I don't know. They also like to go to the toilet on the pitch, so I am always picking up their mess."

James tells me, like many others around the country, the pitch suffers from leaf spot from time to time and also red thread. "We do use fungicides if the budget allows, but that decision is down to Colin and Steve; generally, though, it will grow out."

Travelling around the country, I hear all the time that the industry is struggling to attract new talent. With James' background, I thought he would be well placed to give his thoughts on this issue. "In my opinion,

the main issue the industry faces when it comes to attracting young people from school to join us is the rates of pay in a lot of places; they can earn more money working in a supermarket."

"I also find it hard with the younger generation these days as they are always on their phones, tablets or computers sat at home. They don't tend to want to come out of their comfort zones. If they are not outside playing football or golf, how are they meant to gain an interest? More could be done in schools to promote what we do and create more interest in the job. When I was at school, I never saw anyone representing our industry on careers day. I suppose the hours of work can be unsociable and working in all weathers can put some people off but, like many other careers out there, if you are willing to put the work in the rewards are there."

//

The pitch generally drains very well; there is only a small problem in one of the corners where there is a bit of a dip



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SGI



RFU Twickenham

Buttar earning his bread!



In September 2019, **Jim Buttar** stepped into Twickenham for the first time as the Rugby Football Union's Head Groundsperson – the man in charge of the iconic Twickenham Stadium. Blair Ferguson went to meet him



Set in south-west London, the world's largest dedicated rugby venue, with a capacity of 82,000, dominates the skyline and emanates the history of English rugby. Being in charge of this venue is the pinnacle of a career and, when meeting Jim Buttar pitchside in the view of the distinctive British Racing Green seats, you can tell it's a role that suits him.

At just twenty-two years old he became the head groundsman at Rushden and Diamonds Football Club, before moving to Tottenham Hotspur where he spent three years as deputy and eleven as head groundsman at White Hart Lane, winning Premier League Groundsman of the Year two years in a row. A two-year spell with Pro Pitch as a consultant developed a different skill set to his already impressive repertoire before he was appointed in his current role.

With the SGL lighting rigs out and terraspiking continuing, we venture upstairs to a hospitality box overlooking the illuminated turf and begin with a quick summary of Jim's four months in the job and what drew him back to venue management from consulting on events like the 2018 and 2019 UEFA Champions League Finals and the FIFA Club World Cup 2019.

"It's been four months, and it feels like four weeks, it's gone that quick. But I've loved it, I've loved every minute, it's been good fun," Jim began.

"I was really honest in my interview and said I had to consider if this was something I wanted to go back into because I had a period working at a venue for fourteen years and loved every minute of it, it was a really enjoyable experience. But then I've had two years of being comfortably out of that sole venue position and pushed out of my comfort zone with so many different challenges that I've had to understand and overcome."

"I had an interesting conversation with a colleague about two years ago, and it was one of those 'what sort of job would it be, if it came up, would you definitely go for' questions and this was one of them. I'm very aware within the industry the aura this job has, the venue and working for the RFU. It sits at a level that you think is top of the tree and I felt like that was what I needed to get back into."

"Working at a single venue is different from consultancy and, to a degree, I missed the routine. To be able to tinker with small margins and see the results, change it again, did it work, did it not work. I think you'll find I'm speaking on behalf of a lot of the guys when I say that's what we do. Okay, we're fine tuning all the time, and it's very rare we'll sit and say 'I'm happy now, we'll just keep doing this all the time, and it'll always come out good'. That's not the case, so you're thinking we're at eighty percent, but to get the next twenty percent we'll have to



I've always approached a job with the attitude that, if you're not going to give one hundred percent, then don't do the job. Everyone is going to have their off days, that's just human nature

keep tinkering and changing."

"I love that variety, and I've got a lot more scope with this job, it's not just Twickenham. Eighty-five percent of my time will be dedicated to this and the site that it sits on, but I am currently assisting and offering advice to Neil Caldicott at Penny Hill Park to keep the facility there to the high standard expected of the RFU. I'm working with Neil to try and replicate that and building up a bit of a programme, and I'm planning to use that as a bit of a testbed for things that I want to use here."

"I've always approached a job with the attitude that, if you're not going to give one hundred percent, then don't do the job. Everyone is going to have their off days, that's just human nature. However, if your aim is to deliver that and go home and be able to sleep at night because you've done the best you could have done that day to deliver the pitch for an Autumn International fixture, or a Six Nations fixture, Premiership Final or whatever fixture is being played, it is



to keep it at that consistent level, and the only way you can do that is by putting one hundred percent in."

"I've done it at all my jobs. I think when you've worked at the elite end for a period of time you're very aware, but I think you have a bit more confidence in yourself after a certain period of time within a role that you can deliver. On the outside, you can give the portrayal of a cool, calm and collected individual but, on the inside, the mind is racing, going through the mental check list and the maintenance schedule. Is everything done to the standard required? If not, identify why not and then see if it can be changed. It's a job at the end of the day, and our bottom line is to deliver that surface."

"Nothing can replicate the pressure you feel to produce the goods. Somebody says I wish I had your problems, but do you? Where they go from the realms of, I've got problems, I can't keep grass, and my pitches are overused etc. there are reasons behind

that. But, when all of those reasons get taken away from you because you've been given solutions for them, then you've got no excuses or reasons not to produce. That's where the pressure comes from. And I think, when people look at it like that and think you've been given everything and something goes wrong, what happens then? And the answer is your neck is on the block and some serious questions are asked."

"It's a high-pressure job, and there's the understanding that there are certain elements that are taken out of your control. Ultimately, the weather is a huge factor, but we've been given all the resources and budget that's required to maintain that surface. They've listened to your recommendations, they've provided you with the resources, and you have to deliver."

As previously mentioned, Jim is up for the challenge. His introduction to the job was a steady one. In August he was invited to the Quilter Internationals at Twickenham to see how a match day worked and experience





"

That's been quite a nice process, and my previous job probably put me in good stead because I was pretty much doing that every four weeks, so I was continually developing my communication skills

how the grounds team operated. It was then he was able to speak with his deputy head groundsman, Ian Ayling, and get all the information he needed before orchestrating a plan for the transition.

"When you come into somewhere, especially after Keith Kent had been here for such a long time, you know he would have had his systems and his schedules and how he would have worked with the guys. Then, with myself coming in, there's a transition process that has to take place. And that's how I am as a manager; coming in and working my way through that process of understanding how they've done it before, how I like it to be done and slowly making that transition, so it's not me coming in here and rocking the boat and saying 'we need to do it like this tomorrow'."

"It's more a case of 'have you thought about doing this?' It's how you use your language and how you communicate. You're not coming in saying 'we need to do this because that was wrong in the past', it's more of, 'that's okay, but have you thought about doing this'. That's been quite a nice process, and my previous job probably put me in good stead because I was pretty much doing that every four weeks, so I was continually developing my communication skills. I was getting dropped into a new venue and doing the same thing. We'd cover what they'd done before, which consultants have you had in before, here's a programme we can probably try, have you thought about doing etc."

"The guys here have obviously got all the skillset and experience. They know what they're doing. But again, they've always done it a certain way with a different manager, so in this case, it's slightly adapted and changed a little bit. As I said, I've enjoyed that process. The people at the RFU within my department have been absolutely brilliant. I've had lots of support, so it's been quite a smooth transition."

"It's been a good time to come in because it was a World Cup year, so there were no

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I'll start dialling it in now and have a better understanding of the environment that it's growing in as well because, obviously, it's a big stadium and it's not the most hospitable for grass growing



Autumn Internationals, so I've had an elongated introduction into having fixtures here. We've only had two, Barbarians vs Fiji in November and Harlequins vs Leicester Tigers at the end of 2019, so it's been quite nice to see how the pitch reacts to what I've done in terms of inputs and how it performs."

"I'll start dialling it in now and have a better understanding of the environment that it's growing in as well because, obviously, it's a big stadium and it's not the most hospitable for grass growing. Like a lot of others, there are certain microclimates; some are similar, and some are a little bit different. I've noticed, with the stadium being as big as it is, that it's actually quite windy. At this time of year, it's quite difficult for feeding and spraying applications. Again, you start to understand what the boundaries are with regards to working and, at this time of year, we have to constantly monitor wind speeds and directions so we can determine the best time to carry out a spray or feed application."

"I have a fundamental way of working, which is an ethos as it were. I know I feel comfortable working within a certain

schedule and I've got a way of personally working with the guys, and things like that, and I'm very happy with how it works. I've been able to replicate it at different places, and it seems to be quite positive feedback in terms of how that's all worked. There will be things that work best here in terms of Twickenham itself as a venue, and some of what I want to introduce won't work as well as planned for whatever reason, so I think there's lots of sharing of knowledge, ideas and experiences."

"It's all part of my management approach and I think a lot of groundsman kind of adopt the same thing, and it's that we are all trying to manage turf health. We're trying to limit the peaks and troughs because, inherently, you end up getting other problems which will impact playing performance. Normally that's disease, and pitches never perform very well if they're quite lush from badly timed nitrogen input, so you're always trying to work out what the best growing pattern will be for that particular venue. That depends on usage, and again going through that process and that ethos, I've got a very layered approach with regards to the nutritional input, the

basis being that it's dialling it in for the right times."

"People can come in here up to two weeks after a fixture has been played and the pitch won't look in great conditions, but there's a reason for that. It's all a part of the recovery, and I won't be mowing patterns in or anything like that, I'll be allowing the grass to stand up and be as natural as possible. And then, as we start working towards a fixture, that's when we start to improve that aesthetic and then it's what we do in terms of turf health, what sorts of inputs we put in specifically for it to be able to handle that usage."

"It's a good venue for that approach because you can give the pitch that time between fixtures. And again, rugby is not hugely in need of moisture management in the sense that it doesn't need it for playability, so again my moisture management is now for turf health rather than the actual playability, so that's really helped. We haven't had to have this whole thing of watering an hour before kick-off and at half-time, all that's gone and, in that sense, being here has been very useful."

Experience and age have contributed to



It's all part of my management approach and I think a lot of groundsman kind of adopt the same thing, and it's that we are all trying to manage turf health





Jim's adaptation from football to rugby. Knowing not to stress about damage and appreciate the time between fixtures has been important, as has getting to grips with intense pitch usage.

"Some periods I might have five or six weeks when I've got no fixture but then, unfortunately, when they do have a fixture here, it tends to be quite an intense time," Jim explained. "With Barbarians in November, we probably had seven hours'

worth of rugby physically on the pitch. We had three to three and a half hours of 800 kids playing mini-tournaments and then we had the warm ups and the actual game itself in the afternoon. Whereas I'm used to football, where it might be every other week, or you might have two games in the space of ten days, but it would be for two hours and then two hours. Again, balance-wise over the annual season usage will probably be quite similar, but I'll have very quiet periods and

Career challenges ...

I moved from Rushden and Diamonds to Tottenham Hotspur in 2003. It was a steep learning curve and really opened my eyes to how different it is to maintain and grow grass in a large, inhospitable stadium. It took me some time to adapt and re-assess the whole "growing grass thing".

Being robbed of natural resources you take for granted, and the impact that has on your job is, at times, monumental and also deeply frustrating. This, of course, was before the wonders of grow lights, so White Hart Lane was, for its size, a notoriously shaded pitch. The south goal line would only see maybe three hours of sun in total for the year. This would be on the longest day before the shade line made its steady march back towards the north.

We would have fifty games a season at Rushden and Diamonds and it wouldn't have a huge effect on pitch performance or certainly nothing out of the ordinary. At White Hart Lane, it was a different story, maybe half that amount of fixtures would be making us sweat and we would be fighting it to the end. We were aiming for quality and consistency and we did manage that eventually. Technology and products moved along enough for it to be implemented and this, again, needed to have a degree of learning to achieve what we wanted.



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I feel like I'm at an age where I understand there's a process. They've done the game, we've prepared for it and this is what we've got, and now we need to repair and get ready for the next game



State of the industry?

Having been in the industry for over twenty-two years, I have come through the whole process, an apprenticeship scheme at sixteen to where I am today. I absolutely love it and wouldn't imagine me doing anything else.

It's difficult to see and I won't say our industry is struggling, but I certainly would say that it has stagnated somewhat and has been on a slow decline, maybe over the last two decades with having the ability to attract newcomers. This is speaking as a manager who, in previous roles, has been seeking suitable staff to come and work with me and my teams and seen first-hand the issues.

I am very aware of the fact that our industry is not seen in the same light as other "trades" in this country. For example, the plumbing, electrical and engineering industries are recognised with their core skillset and the value they bring; we, most certainly, should be seen in the same light.

I appreciate there is an element of supply and demand for quality trades and maybe that's something that has to happen within our industry too. Having the demand outstrip the supply will naturally raise the stock of hard working groundsmen and women across not only this country but across the globe. If this shift takes place, then there will be a natural attractive quality for youngsters to have a serious thought when looking at their career options when looking at our industry as a choice. Prestige, fulfilment, job satisfaction and value.

then ridiculously intense periods where they throw everything and the kitchen sink at it, and we've got to try and recover from that ready for the next one."

"Another difference from football is the playability. I think in open play in terms of the damage you'll get from rugby in comparison to football is probably marginal if we're talking about hybrids. The big thing you've got is when we start talking about scrums and mauls because you've got lots of guys in quite a small area and, if there are issues in the scrum and they're reset, they don't tend to move too far. For instance, we had three resets on the West side in the big game, and we can still see the signs of that now, and we're three weeks past it."

"I had to adjust to it because, in football, if I had hair, I would have ripped it out. But it's one of those because you have the 'oh my god, what I am going to do to fix this', whereas now I feel like I'm at an age where I understand there's a process. They've done the game, we've prepared for it and this is what we've got, and now we need to repair and get ready for the next game."

"But the guys have been really great, they've adapted, and they've been very open minded with my ideas. We're working with such small margins. It's not like we're going to do something here and it's going to give us a thirty percent advantage or better quality or anything like that. We're eighty, ninety or ninety-five percent there most of the time, so we're just chasing the small margins, so it's little tweaks here or there."

Away from his main focus of Twickenham, Jim is looking to become fully immersed in Rugby Groundsmen Connected by the end of 2020. Clearly, he is keen to give back to the industry and he speaks enthusiastically about having the opportunity to work within a programme that's already helped a lot of clubs and has the potential to help many more. Along with being an IOG Ambassador, he views this as a chance to leave a legacy.

He explains: "I think it's huge for the sport that there are guys at the volunteer level

giving up their time to try and produce and maintain pitches for their clubs. I'd love to be able to help and give advice exactly like Keith's done, and do the workshops. There might be some slight adaptations to how Keith's done it to how I might approach it, but the ultimate goal is to enhance the quality of those pitches at the grassroots level so that players can use them for longer and they can sustain that usage and still have a good enough quality. Again, it's all about sports participation and getting as many people as possible playing rugby on good quality pitches."

"That has a whole legacy ahead of it. Keith is still actively involved in his "semi-retirement" and we will work in tandem for the foreseeable future, making sure we deliver sound advice for all of the volunteer groundsmen so they can deliver pitches fit for play as best they can."

As the interview comes to a close, attentions turn to the more distant future of the pitch and the equipment used to maintain it. The Desso GrassMaster surface was installed in 2012 and is due to be reviewed with a part or full reconstruction the likely outcomes. On the equipment side – an openness to new technology and the RFU's awareness of their carbon footprint will guide purchases in years to come.

For now, the upcoming Six Nations campaign [at the time of writing] is the focus. Jim's feelings on this are a mixture of excitement for a new tournament in a different sport and another day being focused on the job. Whatever his feelings on the day, there's no doubt that, when England and Ireland cross the white line on February 23rd to a capacity crowd, they'll step onto the first of many pitches prepared by Jim and his team that is more befitting of the occasion.



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Shrewsbury Town

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The 2019-20 season has proved problematic for many lower league sides, with mild temperatures and torrential rain hampering pitch preparations. For Shrewsbury Town, an extended FA Cup run, which saw them host Liverpool at home, added to the problems for **Dave Saltman** and the grounds team. But with the likelihood of more money for the coffers, even the odd pitch invasion can be tolerated

We have been maintaining the surfaces at Shrewsbury Town FC for the last four seasons and I have written several articles on the works that we have carried out previously, both at the Montgomery Waters Meadow stadium and at the recently acquired Sundorne training ground.

As a fairly established League One club, it's nice to be able to say that their finances are well governed, although that means that any expense required, capital or otherwise, are scrutinised and only made available with a damn good business case... and even then I don't take it as a given!

We start every season with high aspirations, to retain a good quality grass cover throughout the 40-week playing calendar, so I usually split the year into

temperatures, the groundsman must work diligently to try and keep the grass healthy, upright and the water flowing quickly from the surface. It's a time when you'd prefer to see less games, as well as avoid doing too much disruptive work on the surfaces to retain as much grass cover as possible.

To me, this is the time of the season when the hard endeavours from the first and second quarter come into their own. The early work in producing and establishing a good healthy population of grass, preferably with as little weed grass as possible in the spring/summer and the encouragement of a good root mass, that has reasonable depth by the end of the autumn. All of which becomes a big aid to helping the pitch through the depressing winter months.

Having worked at stadiums for over thirty years, I have become far more philosophical and pragmatic about each season; it's very much swings and roundabouts. You have one season where the team have poor cup results and/or are drawn away, and the weather is generally kind on match days, then another season where there is an inordinate amount of home cup games and the weather seems to save its worst just for match day.

This season has been amazingly mild but particularly wet so far and, in the case of Shrewsbury Town, there have been a lot of cup games, most of which have been drawn and played at home or required a replay at home. Even in the Leasing.com Trophy, we played the away game at home against Manchester City as they have special dispensation in this competition not to play at the Etihad. Add in the Central League Cup (reserves) and FA Youth Cup matches, as well as hosting an England U20's game and our annual Armed Forces final, we are up to twenty-nine games already this season as I write this at the start of February.

Over half of these played from November to January during some of the wettest inclement weather I've seen. Of these games, eight have been hosted on wet days, one in particular when we recorded 62mm of rain from midday Friday to 1.00pm Saturday. In the third round FA Cup replay against Bristol City, the pitch just about drained sufficiently from some heavy downpours before they kicked off. If this extra game wasn't bad enough, the late home goal and a jubilant crowd invading the surface afterwards to celebrate just crowned our long day!

If I just fill in a few spaces; this season's renovations carried out at the end of May 2019 were basic - scarify, vertidrain, overseed, topdress with 90 tonnes of sand and fertilise. (Only every other year do we Koro and cultivate with some additional concentrated fibresand incorporated).

We also went some way to addressing a serious historic pH problem of 4.2, spreading eight tonnes of hydrated lime once the grass was growing in June 2019.

Our nutritional programme contains three



This season has been amazingly mild but particularly wet so far and, in the case of Shrewsbury Town, there have been a lot of cup games, most of which have been drawn and played at home or required a replay at home

quarters. The first quarter is the renovation and growing in period. For many of us, this window has shortened and shortened, so what used to be a standard twelve weeks can be as little as four or five weeks these days.

The second quarter is the start of the playing season during the summer/autumn growth period. A time when you continue to mature the grass, but it resists and recovers quickly from any wear and, to be honest, I'm comfortable allowing as many games as we can get on the pitch (in terms of regular first team fixtures) being played.

The third quarter is the worst and most difficult; temperatures drop, the plant stops growing and there is little to no recovery from maybe October until March, or even April. I often refer to this time as the damage limitation quarter. Due to low soil and air



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That's the only downside of a game to be played live on BBC1 on a Sunday afternoon. I had some discussions with the manager about the preparation of the pitch and it was decided that we would prepare as normal for the game

slow release operations per annum, fortnightly half rate feeds of standard NPK analysis, appropriate for the time of year, and then regular monthly spraying of a concoction of liquids that usually include Biomass sugar, Humimax, fertiliser and SeaAction seaweed.

Due to the low pH, we have also included Bullet Calcium in the mix this season and, during the cooler months, some Bullet Phosphate and chelated iron as well.

In the growing season, we would add in a growth regulator. This offers more root intensity in the build up to a healthy winter plant, as well as enabling us to reduce the mowing operations per week. While people still argue over the expense of using growth regulators, for me it's a no-brainer against the wear and tear of machinery and operator fatigue trying to keep up with fast growing grass. The use of a growth

regulator also saves on those 6.00am starts on match days, removing the need to mow the pitch.

All the above is coupled with a regular (almost weekly) aeration programme of vertidraining, to reduce compaction from usage, weather and maintenance, as well as retaining the maximum amount of air space for root colonisation and easier percolation of surface water.

Since last June, we have measured the pH levels periodically and the last set of results showed that it had increased to just over 6.0. Of course, I could have told you without testing that it was improving, as our resident worm population have become very active again across the stadium pitch!

The FA Cup replay win against Bristol City meant a dream draw at home to the Club World Champions and current runaway Premier League leaders Liverpool. I could





have just written Liverpool but, for little League 1 minnows Shrewsbury, this is a big thing and the reason why there was a pitch invasion at the end of the Bristol game.

Having just played Lincoln City on Saturday 11th January and Bristol on Tuesday 14th, we had the luxury of our very own 'mid-season' break of twelve days before the Liverpool game.

The pitch was repaired and vertidrained and then sprayed with our usual concoction, as described above, on the afternoon of the 15th. It was left alone the next day as it was pouring with rain and we applied a half rate of 3:3:12 Maxwell Premier on the Friday.

The start to the following week for the game started with heavy frosts in the mornings, making it difficult for the lads to get the training ground ready for the players, but thankfully the frosts had lifted by the time they came out at 11.00am each morning.

The stadium pitch had its first cut of the week on Thursday 23rd. Despite not being cut for over a week, less than a quarter of a box of grass was collected, most of this from the goal areas where we concentrate our homemade lighting rigs. For anyone who

needs to convince their powers that be the benefit of artificial lighting, just get them to look at the goalmouths at our stadium. I'm also a strong advocate of leaving the pitch alone as much as possible during the winter months. If there is nothing urgent, stay off it. Please don't carry out operations for the sake of it, or because you think the hierarchy expect to see you working on it.

The advent of a big FA Cup match brings its own problems to a smaller venue, as we need to accommodate the TV bandwagon. Camera positions hastily erected around the ground using scaffold towers, the pundit's studio positioned in the corner outside our garage under the west stand and the not-so portable advertising LED boards positioned on three sides that face the main cameras. The studio meant that we couldn't get the tractor and vertidrain out if required, the LED boards sat in front of the surrounding irrigation pop-ups so essentially prevented the watering from the outside and the scaffold towers reduced seating capacity.

Still, that's the only downside of a game to be played live on BBC1 on a Sunday afternoon. I had some discussions with the manager, Sam Ricketts, about the preparation

of the pitch and it was decided that we would prepare as normal for the game.

The lads double cut the pitch on Friday and again on Saturday prior to marking it out as light began to fade that afternoon.

The forecast had been reasonably dry all week, but Sunday that changed and there was rain and showers starting from 6.00am until the game kicked off at 5.00pm.

Despite this season's games and the wet weather, we were pleased with the way the surface looked and played for the game, all the nice comments were well received and I think Martin Keown had said before kick-off that, for a League One club, the surface was about as good as it gets. It probably helped that the game televised just prior to ours was Tranmere v Manchester United, where clearly the club are having major drainage issues this season.

Anyway, what was equally pleasing was the game, dramatic end to end stuff with most of the football played on the floor. Town pushing the mighty reds all the way to gain a replay at Anfield, the stuff of dreams! The 2-2 draw ensuring another payday for the club coffers.

At the final whistle, the pitch was



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At the final whistle, the pitch was subjected to another few hundred unwanted foot diveters as the inevitable pitch invasion ensued and they eventually congregated on the South West corner of the pitch, egged on by Messrs Lineker, Hart, Shearer and Wright up in the temporary studio

subjected to another few hundred unwanted foot diveters as the inevitable pitch invasion ensued and they eventually congregated on the South West corner of the pitch, egged on by Messrs Lineker, Hart, Shearer and Wright up in the temporary studio.

The importance of a good cup run for clubs in the lower leagues is the much-needed revenue that can far exceed the 'bread and butter' money from the league games. The home draw against Liverpool drew the TV boys in and, whilst the full house, merchandising and corporate hospitality will all have helped, the replay back at Anfield in front of 54,000 will easily double that money, despite the much reduced ticket prices and lack of TV.

For a financially secure and well-run club like Shrewsbury, the cup money will be invested wisely. It was pleasing to hear Sam talk after the game to the BBC commentary team. He was asked if the money would be used to strengthen the squad, but his reply was that he wanted to see these additional funds being spent on the infrastructure at

the club, such as continuing the improvements to the playing surfaces at the stadium and training ground.

I've worked with four managers since starting at Shrewsbury Town and all have had the desire to see more investment on the pitches. I have seen a huge change in their expectations, as well as the players, and it really would be great if perhaps the EFL could start to regulate and even help clubs to fund the construction and maintenance of decent stadium and training ground facilities for the betterment of football.

Despite the amount of games and the weather, the stadium pitch is holding up well and that's a clear indication of the hard work that the lads put in alongside the nutrition programme and cultural practices.

Roll on the spring fourth quarter - growth and recovery!





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Meridian Sports & Social Club

All by myself

Meridian Sports & Social Club is a community-focused sports club based in Charlton, South-East London. The site lies just a stone's throw across the Thames from London City airport, the O2 in Greenwich and the Thames Barrier, and only ten miles from the centre of London. Head Groundsman, **Tony Provan**, has had his fair share of ups and downs in his career so far, much of it of his own making



//

I do believe the industry has more coverage on TV than it has ever had in the past, and I hope this can generate more interest to those looking to start a career in our industry. The more we explain what we do and the opportunities available, the better chance we have of attracting young people

Tony Provan is a big Charlton Athletic fan and dreamed of working for the club, so when the opportunity of work experience came about whilst at school, he jumped at the chance. "They had me painting walls in my first week but, at the same time, I was always keeping an eye on what the groundsmen were doing out on the pitch. So I decided to ask Paul Geary, the club's head groundsman, if could I join his team for my second week and work on the pitch. Luckily for me, he agreed."

"At the end of my work experience, I expressed my interest in the job and how much I had enjoyed it. Paul told me he had been impressed with what I had done and offered me an apprenticeship once I left school; and he kept to his word. I spent eight years at the club. I was then offered the chance to be Head Groundsman at Brentford."

"Being honest, whilst I was at Charlton and Brentford, and being a young lad working around players like Scott Parker, I got caught up in the stars and couldn't get out of it. In 2008 and just twenty-three years old, I had taken the head groundsman job at Brentford, but unfortunately my lifestyle let me down and it got to a point where I would rather be in the pub. My ego, at that time, got the better of me, and I believed in my own hype - and eventually I got found out."

"I had to get away and take a good look at myself, which I eventually did. After three years of being a complete wally, it was my then wife who helped me turn my life around and encouraged me to get back to doing what I love, which is groundsmanship. It's only when you grow up, look back and think, if only I had put in the effort I do now, where would I be? It does frustrate me, but I'm happy. I've learned from my mistakes in the past and have become a much stronger and





It's a bog-standard fertiliser, but it gets me through the season and does the job; it's an 'if it's not broken, don't fix it' type of approach

rounded person for it."

In 2011, I was given a chance to get back into the industry working at Meridian Sports Club where I worked for a couple of years until I was offered the Head Groundsman job at Gillingham in 2013. I put my all in until we agreed to part ways. Immediately after that, I worked for a contractor working at Charlton Athletic training ground doing some renovation work and installing drainage. Then, after speaking to the chairman here at the Meridian, who I had always remained in contact with, he told me there was a position at the club and asked if I would like to take it. I was more than happy to take him up on his offer, and I have been back here since December 2015."

So far, Tony has gained his NVQ Levels 1



and 2 in Sportsturf and would like to take Level 3, but the cost, alongside work and looking after his kids, gets in the way. "I was going to do the Level 3, but the financial situations at the clubs I worked at didn't allow it. I still plan to do it in the future. I have also gained my PA1, 2 and 6 spraying certificates. I do recommend to any young groundsman or greenkeeper that they should 'grab with both hands' any opportunities given to them to further their education."

Looking after the site on his own, Tony is responsible for the upkeep of one full-size first team pitch with a small stand, dugouts, catch nets and floodlights, along with four full-size pitches used for Sunday league football, and 9v9, 7v7 and 5v5 pitches. All

are constructed on a 30/70 rootzone mix. There is also a full-size 3G pitch. These pitches must cater for forty-two teams ranging from under-eights to adults.

None of the grass pitches have any drainage or irrigation to speak of, except for a mains hose used to water any hot spot areas in summer on the main pitch. "It can be very frustrating in the summer watching them burn off when you have just got the pitches where you want them, especially the first team pitch. I have put plans forward in the past for an irrigation system and, to be honest, I bang that drum nearly every week in the summer. It would be great to have a system put in, but I fully understand the club has other plans and issues to address in the clubhouse first."

It is clear that Tony has a massive challenge on his hands when it comes to providing the standard of pitches he has been used to in the past. Nevertheless, he does what he can with a limited budget. This effort is starting to reap rewards as Tony recently won Groundsman of the Year 2019 from the London FA. "It can be frustrating at times not having the funds available, even though I knew what I had to deal with when I took the job, and I accept that. My difficulty is, having worked at places where we had the means to carry out the correct practices and do things right, I just wish I had the same here. I don't miss the rubbish and stress you sometimes have to deal with at professional football clubs though."



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I have put plans forward in the past for an irrigation system and, to be honest, I bang that drum nearly every week in the summer

"As I have said, I don't have much of a budget, but that does not mean that the club don't support what I'm trying to achieve here. They give me what they can, and I do enjoy the challenge. It was a proud moment to receive the award after all the hard work I have put in. It's been difficult at times, but it's always good to get nice comments from people; it means a lot to me."

Tony has a limited amount of machinery available to him, so the maintenance of the

pitches is restricted. "I cut at 27mm all year round using a Toro 3100 Reelmaster which gives a great cut and is reliable. In summer, I will cut all the pitches at the beginning of the week to tidy them back up after play over the weekend. I will cut again at the end of the week to stripe them up for the games. Cutting in winter is a matter of if and when. I would like to scarify the pitches a few times a year and have the means to pick up the debris after training or matches.

Unfortunately, I have to keep to the most basics of basics, and this goes against what I have been taught in the past; again, this can be frustrating. With the amount of football that is played here, I would say the players do the scarifying for me. When I have time, I will go out and put the biggest divots back to try and keep the levels. I knew what I had to work with when I came here, so I'm not complaining and, in the future, we may have the funds to add some extra items of kit;



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Getting Personal

Tony Provan - the pigeon won in a game of chicken

Who are you? Tony Provan - Head Groundsman at Meridian Sports Club.

Family status. Divorced, but have three beautiful girls who are my world.

What's been the highlight of your grounds career so far? I've had a few ... working for Charlton Athletic when we were playing in the Premier League, whilst learning my trade under Paul Geary. Being part of the team preparing the pitches for the England and Argentina national teams when they trained at Sparrows Lane. Becoming Head Groundsman at both Brentford and Gillingham and, recently, being named London FA Groundsman of the Year.

If your younger self saw you now, what would he think? I think he would be impressed with how driven I am to succeed and my commitment to the job.

Which famous people wind you up? Not really anyone, apart from Diane Abbott ... enough said.

What job would you love, other than your own? I would love to be an F1 driver for the lifestyle and the thrill.

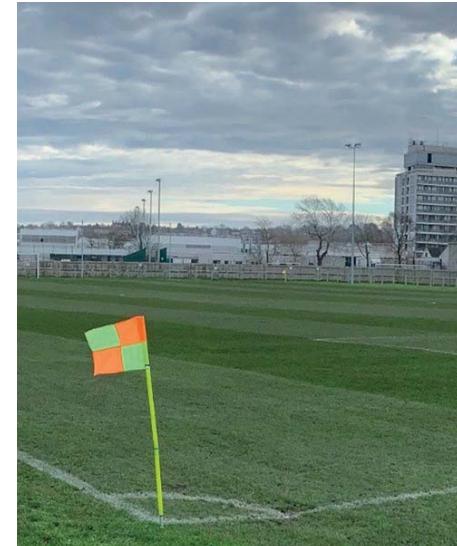
What was the most embarrassing moment in your life? I was cutting the pitch at Charlton Athletic. The stadium was full of stewards, so there was no getting away with what happened. There was a pigeon struggling to fly that kept buzzing past, then it landed by the goal area. As I was approaching, I presumed it was going to move, but it didn't budge. At the last minute, I had to swerve, lost control of the mower and I slipped over in front of everyone. Luckily, the mower had slowed down and didn't do any damage to the machine or advertising boards.

Brexit or Remain? Brexit. I believe in life you win, and you lose. No matter what has been said or done the people voted, and the result was a Brexit win, so that's the result.

What is your favourite film? Law-abiding Citizen. Also, Lock Stock and Two Smoking Barrels comes close.

What scares you? People creeping up on me making me jump - I hate that.

What would your autobiography be called... and who would play you in the film? It would be called Two Steps Back, Three Steps Forward. Two steps back for



the bad decisions I've made in my life. Three steps forward are for overcoming them and being the man I am today. Jason Statham to play me - who else could represent the baldies?

Which historical time and place would you most like to visit? When we won the World Cup in 1966. I would have loved to experience that feeling of winning.

Do you have a lifetime ambition? I've been fortunate to have worked for Charlton, Brentford and Gillingham. I'm extremely happy at Meridian Sports Club and they have been fantastic in backing me, both on and off the pitch. At this moment in time, I just want to produce the best pitches I can.

Which three people, living or dead, would you invite to a dinner party? My sister, as I never got to meet her - she died at six months old from septicaemia. Plus my mum and nan, who are not with us either. I would love to introduce them to my daughters and get the cuddles and kisses that they have never got.

What's the best advice you have ever been given? Think before you speak. I should have listened to this more.

Which three albums would you take to a desert island? Linkin Park - Hybrid Theory, Oasis - Morning Glory and the Prodigy - Fat of the Land.

What's your favourite piece of kit? The Toro 3100 Reelmaster; it gives me a fantastic cut with a great finish. However, I personally miss the Dennis G860 and would love one at Meridian.

What three words would you use to describe yourself? Strong-minded, honest and determined.

What is the single most useful thing you could tell a 16-year-old groundsperson/greenkeeper? Try hard, listen, absorb and learn as much as you possibly can. Stay grounded. You never stop learning.

fingers crossed."

Aeration on the pitches is carried out by a local contractor when funds are made available. "I would like to get the pitches verti-drained every one or two months, but I generally only manage to have them done twice a year."

Tony is only able to fertilise the first team pitch, using a conventional 12:4:8 granular, every eight weeks. "It's a bog-standard fertiliser, but it gets me through the season and does the job; it's an 'if it's not broken, don't fix it' type of approach."

Renovation of the main pitch consists of a light topdress with sixty tonnes of a 70/30 rootzone mix to help hold the moisture in the ground. Then it is overseeded with fifteen bags of a ryegrass seed mixture with a Vredo disc seeder two ways. "Ideally, I would like to Koro off, if we had the funds available, but with the lack of irrigation, it





I do recommend to any young groundsperson or greenkeeper that they should 'grab with both hands' any opportunities given to them to further their education

would be hard to re-establish.

One piece of kit Tony would like to invest in would be a Dennis G860 with scarifying and brush cassettes. "This one machine would give me a lot more options and would help me achieve my goals; this would be the dream."

The pitches suffer heavily with worm casts throughout the year. "It's an absolute nightmare here when it comes to worm casts, and I can't emphasise how much of a problem it is for me. I can get the pitches

cut and striped up then, as soon as the worms come up, it can look like someone's just played on them; it kills me. I have asked for a dragnet on several occasions to help disperse them, but as yet to no avail."

Finally, I asked Tony the question I like to ask everyone I meet; what is the state of our industry at the moment, and what can we do to help bring in new blood? "I think the job is poorly paid and underappreciated within a lot of organisations for how hard people do work and the skills involved in providing a

quality playing surface. I do believe the industry has more coverage on TV than it has ever had in the past, and I hope this can generate more interest to those looking to start a career in our industry. I think articles from yourselves and various other organisations, and also getting stuff out there on social media, can help promote our industry to a wider audience. The more we explain what we do and the opportunities available, the better chance we have of attracting young people."



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King's School, Canterbury

Oldest school ties

It is said that St Augustine first founded a school here in 597AD and it became the King's School in 1541 when it was re-founded by Royal Charter under Henry VIII. Before the start of the Lent term, Neville Johnson went to this historic seat of learning to meet **Neil Dixon**, the man who's just taken charge of its sports grounds and gardens

As in every cathedral city, wherever you are, a glorious ecclesiastical building looks down on you: none more so than Canterbury where there's an ever present sense of history. Canterbury Cathedral and the King's School are inextricably linked.

King's School, Canterbury for all its great age is a very 21st century, co-educational private establishment with 850 students between thirteen and eighteen. It has thirteen boarding houses scattered around the precincts of the city's cathedral. Very modern, very progressive, but with indelible links to the distant past, that's King's School, Canterbury.

Neil Dixon took up the reins as Head of Gardens and Grounds at the King's School only last September, moving from his home in Essex to become a 'man of Kent'. Already there's a pride and awe in the way he speaks about his new surroundings and the job he's taken on here. Walking around the

school and cathedral precincts with him it is very apparent.

Neil has been in turf care all his working life, since the age of sixteen. He started out as an apprentice greenkeeper at the Royal Mid-Surrey Golf Club where he worked for seven years. He then moved on to the Lensbury Club under Peter Craig, who became a huge and lasting influence on his professional attitude. Effectively he switched from greenkeeper to groundsman in 1997, he recalls.

Likely as not, it was his ten years later spent in charge of the grounds at St Paul's School in London, and a further two as head groundsman for Regents Park, that made him a 'shoe in' for the job at King's when it became available for the current school year.

For the past couple of years, Neil had switched to the education side of the turf industry as a lecturer at Merrist Wood College. He had thoroughly enjoyed teaching, but began to miss the 'cut and thrust' of actual pitch work. The chance to



King's Canterbury school life with the cathedral an ever-present backdrop



Neil Dixon, Head of Gardens and Grounds at King's School, Canterbury



“

There's nothing like the problem solving pressures you get from front line duty. I had to get back into it. I wanted so much to get back 'on to the tools' you could say

take over the running of outdoor facilities at the country's oldest school was an irresistible challenge for him.

“Whilst teaching at Merrist Wood and going to various golf clubs, sports clubs and schools with students it was the interaction they had with the professionals out there that drove home just how much I did miss real pitch work,” he said.

“There's nothing like the problem solving pressures you get from front line duty. I had to get back into it. I wanted so much to get back 'on to the tools' you could say.”

Neil believes that the private schools sector will always have much to offer career groundsmen, but King's Canterbury is particularly special in that it is part of a World Heritage Site, much of it being in the precincts of Canterbury Cathedral. It is the

school gardens and open space areas in the Cathedral surrounds that are most open to public gaze and where the added responsibilities are most felt.

“We are private and yet very public, so our work has an extra dimension. Everyone sees us. It's a rewarding pressure,” he said.

Neil says he is more than comfortable wearing two distinctive ‘hats’, being in charge of both outdoor sports facilities and the presentation of gardens and lawns.

He has a team of sixteen working for him across two sites: four groundsmen at the main sports area and two at nearby junior school grounds, plus seven gardeners looking after the main school gardens and lawns, and three at the junior school. Very much in keeping with Neil's recent turf education background, a new apprentice,





Cricket at Birley's

Scott Nolan, joined the grounds team on this first working day of the New Year. He will be studying at Hadlow College.

The gardening team is in the process of being restructured with one or two new faces taking up positions in recent months.

"It's a great mixture of experience and youth: the perfect team, I'd say," said Neil.

Neil's first practical project at King's was about as far away from the sports field as you can get. It was to refurbish Headmaster Peter Roberts' lawn, a focal point for many

an important gathering during the school year. It would be true to say that the 550 square metre lawn had slipped below standard with substantial weed growth. Neil recognised that it needed attention and the decision was taken to strip it, level it off and reseed in the October half-term.

"In the past, I think there had been a division of labour between the gardens and grounds staff," said Neil. Part of my aim is to forge a more cohesive effort. The Headmaster's lawn project was my first

opportunity to put this into action and get both gardeners and groundsmen involved. It's doing very well and, come spring, I'm confident the Headmaster will be very pleased with it."

There are eight hectares of sports pitches at Birley's, named after former headmaster Norman Birley, where all the main school's grassed sport takes place. In the Autumn term rugby and lacrosse are played, and during the Lent term it's football and lacrosse. It's cricket - and athletics - all the



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There's so much more recreational time at boarding schools and, here at King's, they are especially keen to give students every opportunity to take part in all sports



way during the Summer term, and the game is very much encouraged at the school, and girls cricket is nowadays very much to the fore.

In passing, mention should perhaps be made that one of the school's most famous alumni is former England cricket captain and until recently Sky Sports presenter David Gower. It was he who, fifteen years ago, came to open the very modern looking sports pavilion that's a focal point of sport at Birley's. Jim Marvin is Neil's head groundsman at Birley's and he's been at the school for thirteen years.

Two miles away at Sturry is a further eight hectares of grounds used by the junior school. Gary Lee, who has twenty-four years experience at the school, is Neil's head groundsman there.

"I'm fortunate to have two such seasoned professionals as my sports ground 'generals,'" said Neil.

There is too the Recreation Centre, which used to be playing fields, but now entirely artificially surfaced for outdoor hockey and with extensive indoor sports facilities. Care of the hockey surfaces is also within Neil's remit.

But it's Birley's that is the nerve centre of sport at King's. "There's so much more recreational time at boarding schools and,

here at King's, they are especially keen to give students every opportunity to take part in all sports," said Neil.

"School Bursar Mark Taylor tells me he wants to impress upon parents that we spend a lot of time and money seeing that facilities here are of the highest standard. He wants us to demonstrate how active we are."

Being available to talk to parents on Saturday match days is very much at the core of Neil's remit in running things at King's. He says he always makes a point of being visible and approachable.

The pitches at Birley's are set on a heavy clay soil, consequently wet in winter and fast drying in summer. Five-metre centre drainage does a reasonably good job by and large, but Neil hopes to improve things substantially over the next couple of years by stepping up secondary drainage activity by way of regular verti-draining and much more scarifying and spiking.

Director of Facilities and Grounds at the school, Clare Reed is Neil's boss and he says she's very clear about what she wants to achieve in all areas. Both she and Neil agree the need to get away from relying on contractors as much to carry out this and that task, as has been the case in the past. Since Neil's arrival the plan is very much to



Uplifting half term. The Headmaster's old lawn is taken up



... shrouded in germination sheets

up the self-sufficiency game.

Contactors have been used - quite successfully it must be said, but at a cost - to carry out verti-draining and cricket square scarifying, pretty much as a habit, an historical practice. Neil is setting about changing this and getting his team to do much more of the surface preparation work themselves. Saving money is, of course, an aim, but ownership of tasks is very important too, according to Neil.

"I've always been convinced pride in work

reaps the best results," he said. "Contractors have done a good job over the years, and I will still turn to them if a job is too big to handle in-house, and certainly for any large scale renovation work, but I want us all to be more responsible for the vital tasks of good grounds management."

When it comes to 'thorns in the side' in his first few months looking after Birley's, Neil puts worms at the top of the list.

"We have a massive worm problem like so many schools and clubs, and it's frustrating

that there's nothing these days on the market to combat it directly. My plan is to attack the source of the problem," said Neil.

"I've noticed in my first term here that the First XV rugby pitch is especially affected, I think, because it is only used a couple of days each week and wear is minimal, reseeding is only sparingly carried out. The resulting thatch is an abundant food source for worms. The same scenario will apply to the pitch's First XI football usage during the Lent term.

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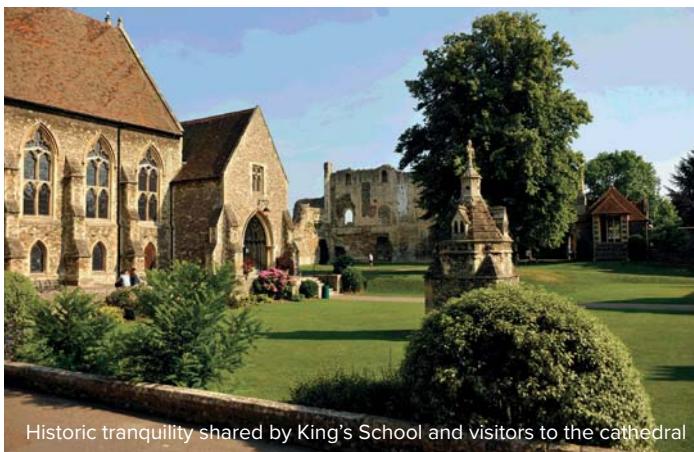
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- SISIS Tigerake
- Billy Goat vacuums x 4
- Vicon tractor-mounted spreader
- Wessex roller mower
- Selection of Honda rotary mowers - with and without rear rollers
- Selection of brushcutters and hedgecutters - long reach and standard

"My intention is to carry out vigorous scarifying during the coming Easter holidays to rid the surface of thatch and, with any luck, the unsightly worm action."

After the exceedingly wet autumn and winter, Neil's immediate plan at Birley's was simply to get the pitches neatly cut and marked, and see that they were always fit for purpose and ready for play. There would be no aeration for six to eight weeks into the New Year.

"Pitches at Birley's are always playable and cancellation almost never happens. They are not precious: they are there to do a job," he said.

Neil already has an excellent working relationship with Richard Singfield, the school's Director of Sport, who believes it is essential to provide students with the highest level of facilities possible.

"Students work hard and deserve to let off steam on the pitch. They are entitled to 'cut them up'. We're here to deal with all that," said Neil. He's clearly anything but a grumpy groundsman.

"I have in my mind's eye what I want to

achieve here," he said. "I do still like to get out and do some mowing, but it's the overall planning and problem solving that brought me here."

Trust is a big factor in the way Neil runs his team. He encourages his groundsmen to cut in whatever pattern they wish. He believes very much in the value of changing how a pitch looks when cut. His long-term project at Birley's is to improve the grass pitches, but in the short term he will concentrate on sharpening up presentation.

"All that matters is that I am happy with the end result. I like to think that I don't need to micro manage each and every professional task."

There's a wonderful past at King's Canterbury and, for Neil, his team and the delightful grounds, a very positive future too.

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St Bede's College

A win-win college collaboration

St Bede's' partnership with its grounds team stretches back forty years and is still going strong. **Greg Rhodes** reports

St Bede's College, Manchester is a Catholic HMC independent co-educational college for three to eighteen year-olds.

The distinctive and imposing red brick buildings have enjoyed academic and sporting prowess since Victorian times. Set in extensive mature grounds, the college itself is a quarter of a mile down the road from the twenty-acre sports provision that lines a good length of Brantingham Road, Chorlton-cum-Hardy.

Featuring period changing rooms and clubhouse, the sportsfields have to be in prime condition year-round to host a huge calendar of college and private hire fixtures.

Co-ordinating the extensive undertaking is sportsground manager and sports coach Andy Brown, who works closely with the turfcare team, which has managed the site for nearly forty years.

"We've witnessed some real footballing talent here over the years," Andy declares. "Before Manchester City

opened their academy site, they trained at St Bede's. Pitch quality had to be top-notch as you can imagine."

Well before Andy came in post, contractor Oakmere had been taking care of turfcare. "We began here in 1981," says founder Bernard McConville, "and have been working closely with the college ever since."

So closely in fact that the contractor has its base at the college's Brantingham Road grounds. "All our kit is stored here," Bernard continues. "It's really convenient





**We recommend to Andy
what we believe needs action
then receive instructions
on how much of it we can
implement in that year**

to be able to roll out our machinery straight on to the pitches.”

Contractors have been criticised for a ‘ticking the boxes’ exercise - arriving on site, doing the job and leaving for the next venue. “Except among the wealthy independent schools, many educational establishments simply haven’t the budget to devote to on-site grounds teams and machinery,” Bernard states.

“You could say we are about as close as you can get to a fully functioning dedicated grounds team and spend a big slice of our time ensuring St Bede’s has the quality of

playing surfaces they demand for such an extensive sporting programme.”

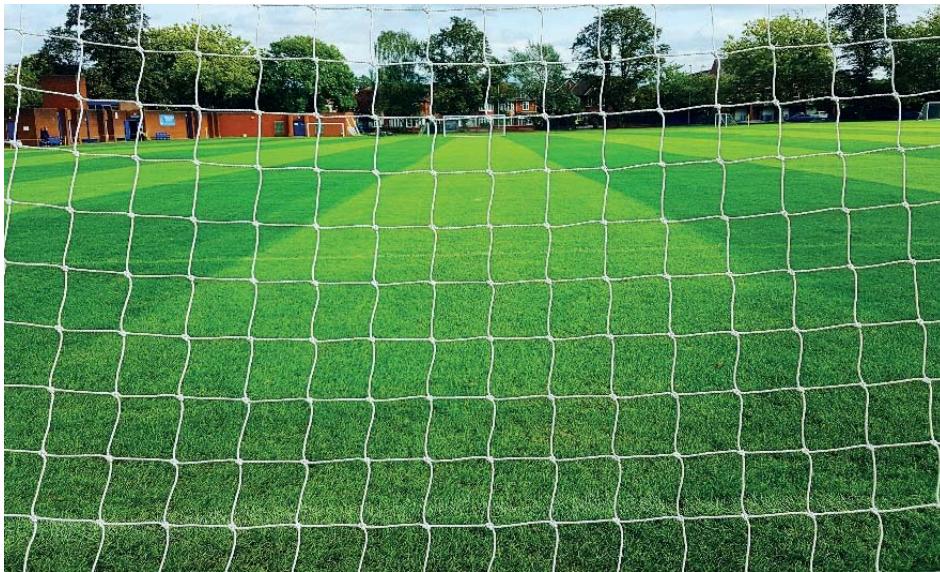
Trained in horticulture, Bernard first moved into landscaping before shifting to sportsturf maintenance. “It was about the time that the private schools market opened up. Most schools and colleges were not allowed to purchase machinery but could contract out groundscare.”

Operating within a tight catchment of up to seven miles radius of the city centre, Bernard began work for the likes of the University of Manchester and the then Manchester Polytechnic before taking on the task at St Bede’s.

“My policy has always been to focus more extensively on fewer grounds so that we can really deliver results in the way a school’s or college’s own team would do.”

Although Bernard oversees a continually evolving programme at St Bede’s, the next generation of turfcare is already in place. Bernard’s son Ben, 36, takes on much of the daily duties and runs the company day to day. “I was working in a sports shop,





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It's important to stress the importance of resting pitches during periods of intensive use and rotating them is a key part of our maintenance regime

twiddling my thumbs," Ben recalls.

"I'd get itchy feet to be outside and felt cooped up indoors. I lasted a few months before dad asked me if I wanted to join him in the business and jumped at the chance."

That was nearly fifteen years ago and Ben soon knew he was in his element. "I love the job and applying the range of machinery and equipment across St Bede's grounds," he explains, "and preparing different playing surfaces."

The college's outdoor provision includes football (junior and senior pitches), rugby, hockey and rounders, with field and track athletics and tennis in summer.

With new director of sport Mike Park in post, working in tandem with Andy, the scale and scope of the sporting programme is set to escalate further.

From a standing start in turfcare, Ben has progressed to handling the technologies emerging almost daily across the sector.

"Gone are the days of linemarking with string and a good eye," Ben states. "Now our machine of choice is the laser-guided Beam Rider. All the GPS guided kit coming out can be a bit mind-boggling but saves so much time."

Ben recalls the heady days of St Bede's hosting City training. "They certainly demanded the highest quality and came on site with all the perimeter advertising, banner tapes, stewards and security - a

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huge operation."

St Bede's also hosted the ISFA tournament here - the first time it had moved from Eton College. The event attracted huge attention, with sporting great Sir Alex Ferguson opening it, then complimenting the college on how well the grounds were presented and played. Praise indeed from a stern judge.

Also on the college's turfcare team is assistant groundsman Pawel Kalinowski, 31. "He's one of the better workers you could wish for," states Ben, "who never says die." Bernard adds: "The industry may be all about qualifications these days and that's fine but work ethic is what first attracted me about Pawel and he has that in spades."

Ben continues: "St Bede's is an ideal contract for us as we are not really into small areas but focus on the 20-25 acre sites, and for those, machinery is key."

The team favours Major triple gang

mowers to tackle St Bede's grounds. Their latest 6m-wide model fits snugly within a full-size goalpost. The pedestrian mower fleet service the college lawns, while John Deere X495 mowers with collector handle compact, awkward areas such as around trees.

Among its renovation equipment of Amazon scarifiers and Charterhouse Verti-Drain, the SISIS Quadraplay still has a role. "It's more than twenty-five years old now and going strong. A sturdy bit of kit," Bernard enthuses.

"The lightest compact tractor hauls brushes over the synthetic hockey pitch. At seventeen years old, it's done well for the college. We lift the sand infill and replace it every three years."

"With plenty of experience in cricket square renovation, including work at Whalley Range Cricket Club and Alexandra Park close by, Oakmere is confident

in moving forward with the college reintroducing the sport."

"The foundations are there, lying between two of the full-size pitches and the school is keen to bring cricket back to the ground after some years' absence. The sport was popular when the college was male only. "Girls started to be admitted and accounted for up to 45% of pupils, making selection difficult. Usage fell away but cricket across the board is gaining ground again," Bernard explains.

The team's key challenge is to ensure the pitches are ready for fixtures, Ben stresses. "We have to juggle timetables quite a bit and meet Andy every day to finalise work in line with the sporting programme".

The college has stepped up pitch hire - another complicating factor - while City still train here occasionally. "We used to renovate their Platt Lane facility before the club sold it to the university, so they know our capability and seemed happy with our work," Ben continues.

Meanwhile, the director of football is busy building up the programme at the grounds, especially as the girls' game is burgeoning nationally.



My policy has always been to focus more extensively on fewer grounds so that we can really deliver results in the way a school's or college's own team would do



Both college grounds and sports hub enjoy a healthy selection of trees, including ash, chestnut and maple. "The fine line of Lombard/Manchester poplars were felled when the hockey pitch was constructed, however," Bernard recalls, "replaced with pieris."

The wildlife diversity prevalent then has shrunk a little, he adds, as magpies and crows have taken command. Magpies can bring their own issues, he continues. "We

look after the goals as well and suffer from the birds picking at the nets and ruining them. Obviously we have to take care that we maintain sound wildlife management practices so it's a persistent bugbear."

A contemporary of David Shelton at Manchester Business School, shortly before he established AFT Trenchers, Bernard oversaw the installation of 6.5m centre lateral drains at the college in 1986, using one of the new AFTs.



I'm pedantic about getting everything right, I suppose in part because I'm so passionate about what I do

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The budget didn't stretch to banding at the time but it may be time to rethink and check that the drainage is still fit for purpose, he says.

As expected among the education sector, risk aversion and health and safety rank high indoors and out. "We certainly are asked about our safety practices across the grounds and strive to be as organic as possible," Ben says.

"Best practice is what we aim for - pesticides aren't applied and we knapsack spray herbicides as sparingly as we can."

"Cooper Pegler and Pullman models work well for us as they are robust and apply treatment liquids accurately and at the correct pressure, especially important when we are maintaining the garden borders around the college buildings."

Like many a Premiership football squad, rotation is key when accommodating the sprawling fixtures programme. "Meetings with Andy may last up to half an hour or as little as five minutes, depending on the

agenda," Ben notes. "It's important to stress the importance of resting pitches during periods of intensive use and rotating them is a key part of our maintenance regime."

Speaking of best practice, Ben has a keen eye on delivering perfection. "I'm pedantic about getting everything right, I suppose in part because I'm so passionate about what I do."

The heavily tree populated site gives the team a perennial headache, Ben notes. "A never-ending battle to keep the pitches and gardens clear of leaves," he says. "As the main college building stands opposite Alexandra Park, foliage blows across the grounds, on top of those from trees growing here. Our vacuum suckers ease the task but sometimes you think it's a thankless one."

Worm casts present another issue. "As the pitches are soil based and we do not apply any pesticides, worms heavily populate the grounds. We don't mind them as such but the costs of constantly backlapping and sharpening cylinder blades





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I love the job and applying the range of machinery and equipment across St Bede's grounds, and preparing different playing surfaces

on the walkbehinds we used when City were prohibitive once they had moved to their Academy, so we sold them."

"Over the years, we have pushed for more sand-based playing surfaces but that's still work in progress with the college."

What does make life a breeze for the team is their Major TDR2000 triple rotary gang mower. "Our 5m earlier model was fine for several years but it became clear we had to invest in a larger one,

although the maintenance on it was minimal," Ben explains, "so we bought the 6m version, which really saves us stacks of mowing time."

The balance of sporting provision across St Bede's six playing areas has shifted over the years and seasonally, with junior grassed areas doubling as tennis courts in summer. Five years ago, two rugby pitches began hosting football as the fixtures programme demanded. Lately though, one

of them has reverted back to rugby.

"Because the soil-based pitches can become heavy going if the cut height is too low, we tend to keep football at 28-35mm, and around 45mm for rugby," Ben explains.

And like the rest of the team, he is eagerly awaiting the return of cricket as Mike Park's sporting vision materialises. "The two junior pitch foundations are waiting to be brought back to life and as we have plenty of experience with cricket

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What's in the shed

John Deere 6220 tractor

John Deere X495s x 2

Major TDR2000 rotary gang mowers x 2

John Deere 4840 compact tractors x 3

Honda rotary mowers x 4

SISIS Quadraplay

Charterhouse Verti-Drain

Amazon scarifiers

Cooper Pegler and Pulmic knapsack sprayers

BeamRider linemarker

BLEC vacuum sucker

Fraser trailer



square preparation and renovations, I hope we see the game return to St Bede's soon."

The turfcare programme compromise is one usually struck between the grounds team, Andy and the bursar. "We recommend to Andy what we believe needs action then receive instructions on how much of it we can implement in that year," explains Ben.

The budgets sustainable in City's time in residence were unsustainable once they had left but Oakmere has stayed true to its choice of seed supplier, Ben says. "DLF Premier Pitch was our preference when City were here as it's extremely hardwearing. The mid-range DLF Pro 81 or 80 we specify and apply now does the job well for the current sporting standards - hardwearing ryegrass mix with a broader leaf."



The accent on an organic programme wherever possible carries through to fertilising, with a selection of Marathon Sport slow release granular applied across the pitches in autumn, spring and summer (when the team scarify and renovate). "The pitches had been Koro'd just before City started playing here," adds Ben.

"Weeds are not too much of a problem. Plantains can spring up in summer. We apply T2Green selective herbicide just before renovations and when fresh growth appears."

Around the gardens, knapsack spraying sees off unwanted growth on hard surfaces, walls and on borders, kept at bay by wood chip and bark. The lawns look after themselves, Ben adds. Our Honda roller rotary mowers stripe them up nicely."



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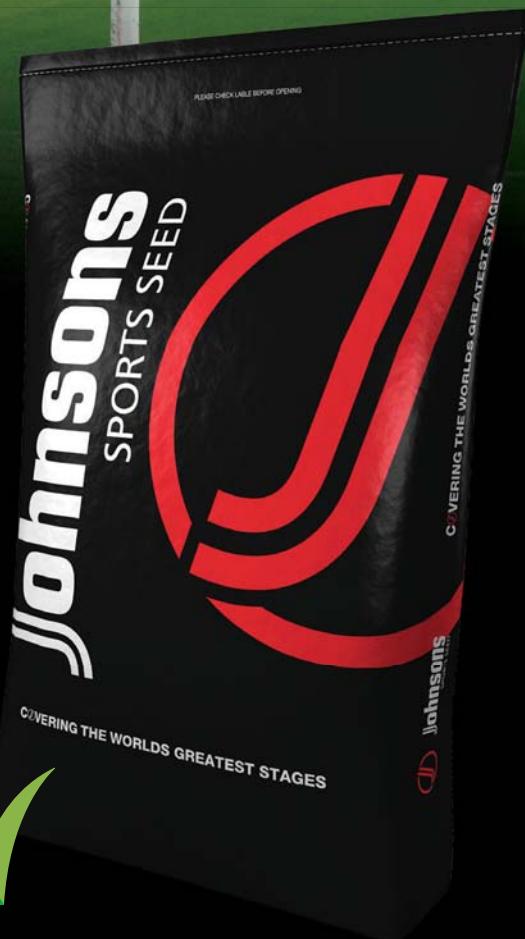


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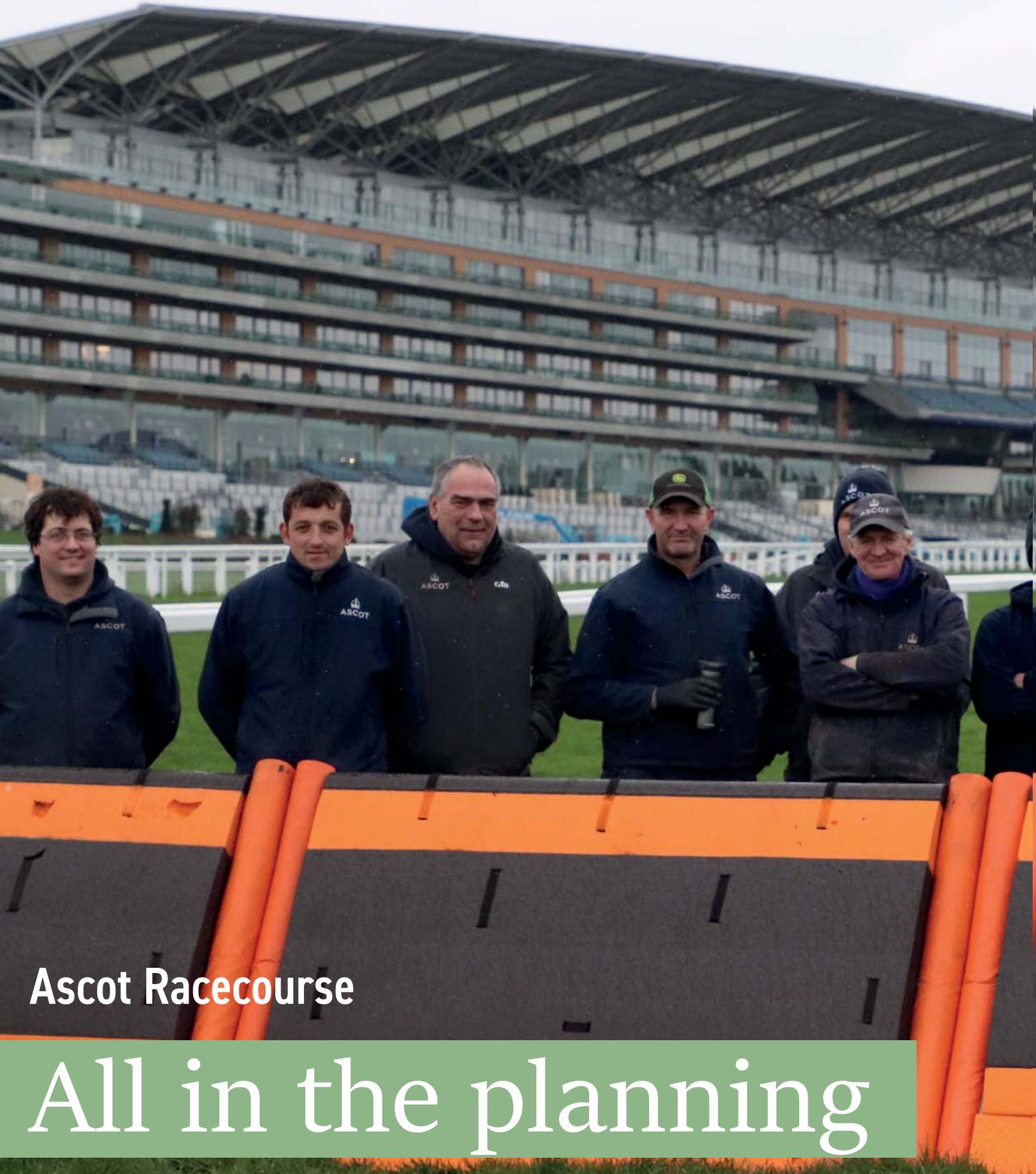


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Ascot Racecourse

All in the planning

An employed team of groundsmen and gardeners tend to one of the UK's premier racecourses. Jane Carley went to meet the team at Ascot to discover how Clerk of the Course **Chris Stickels** and his team prepare for a busy calendar of racing, including a very 'Royal' occasion



The mammoth effort by the grounds team to prepare both tracks for Champions

Day involved six men, moving two and half miles of rail by hand, minimising any vehicle movements on the sodden turf

Preparation and teamwork are everything at Ascot. Renowned globally for the five-day Royal Meeting in June, the independently-owned and managed Berkshire racecourse also hosts key jumps fixtures over the winter and, in 2011, launched QIPCO British Champions Day, a high profile international flat racing fixture which is a key part of the season's grand finale in October.

"We always knew that the timing of QIPCO Champions Day would make it vulnerable to wet weather," explains Clerk of the Course Chris Stickels. "We even looked at using rain covers to protect the turf and, whilst the costs and required infrastructure were prohibitive, the practicality of removing covers when it might still be raining, creating inconsistencies and all sorts of other problems, was the real barrier."

By 2014, the Ascot team had hatched a contingency plan which would make effective use of the twenty hectare racing surface which nestles between Ascot high street and the main routes to Windsor. Chase and hurdle races are run on the inside of the round flat course which meets the mile straight in front of the Grandstand, made famous by the Royal Procession, where the Queen's carriage leads another three landaus, opening each day of Royal Ascot.

The National Hunt (jumps) track is left largely unwatered during the summer months, with just enough irrigation to maintain grass growth in a dry spell.

"We'd mapped out the rail alignment to allow one and a quarter, one and a half and two-mile races to be run on the jumps track part of the round course, creating an 'inner flat alignment' on ground used for the hurdles in the winter and offering better footing in wet conditions. The straight is not such an issue as it was rebuilt on a sand and gravel raft when the track was redeveloped in 2004-2006, although the organic matter has increased over time, and it does hold more moisture now."



This repairs the surface and assists with drainage, but you have to ensure the ground can take it. We also verti-quaked in summer when the conditions were hard, which has visibly improved root development

Drainage works have not been neglected on the round course, with sand slitting, sand banding and topdressing ongoing since 2004, but the unprecedented wet autumn of 2019 meant that the inner flat alignment plan had to be used for the first time.

The mammoth effort by the grounds team to prepare both tracks for Champions Day involved six men, moving two and half miles of rail by hand, minimising any vehicle movements on the sodden turf.

"It was a lot of work moving the rail, but thanks must go to the team who are really keen and were well prepared for it," Chris comments. "With several Group 1 races on the card, the plan was always going to generate discussion - in a normal year, the jumps course would be too firm and patchy for flat racing, but in those conditions it was ideal, and the verdict from the industry was

favourable. In the end, it saved the meeting as parts of the outer course were waterlogged."

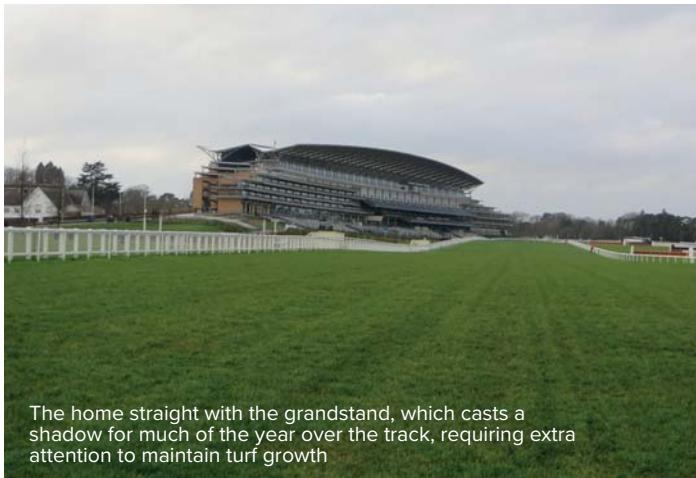
But, with the National Hunt season looming and the first meeting just two weeks after Champions Day, the pressure on the team was relentless, who now moved to repairing the track for the jumps fixtures.

"Fortunately, we were able to plan a wide alignment for the hurdles course, so the first time that ground was used again was for the December 20th-21st meeting, giving time for recovery," he says.

Winter brings its own dilemmas and, after several dry autumns, 2019's deluges produced 'proper jumping ground', i.e. very soft conditions, attracting plenty of runners and testing the renovation skills of the Ascot team.

"The track is 'put back' the day after





The home straight with the grandstand, which casts a shadow for much of the year over the track, requiring extra attention to maintain turf growth



Where the straight crosses the new bridge over the Winkfield Road, the shallower soil means that the turf dries out more quickly, so more water is needed

racing and, if conditions allow, we will verti-drain after every fixture," explains deputy head groundsman Donny Reece. "This repairs the surface and assists with drainage, taking the moisture through the soil profile, but you have to ensure the ground can take it. We also verti-quaked in summer when the conditions were hard, which has visibly improved root development."

With a busy racing calendar, being proactive and taking advantage of any suitable opportunity for renovations is key, agrees head groundsman Reon Sanford.

"We use a GKB scarifier to remove thatch and weed grasses and then topdress. One

of our more challenging areas is in front of the grandstand, which casts a shadow over the home straight and slows grass growth, but in 2019 we renovated this section in August and the turf is already more consistent."

The jumps track also gets heavily used by the crowds at the Royal Meeting where it is used for marquees and public viewing.

"It can get scorched in hot sun or cut up in wet weather, so we'll use penetrants and wetting agent and decompact with the Verti-Quake and Verti-Drain, followed by irrigation as needed - once it starts coming back it's important to keep on top of it and encourage the growth," says Donny.



The jump track can get scorched in hot sun or cut up in wet weather, so we'll use penetrants and wetting agent and decompact with the Verti-Quake and Verti-Drain



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Irrigation is handled by five Briggs booms, with Hunter pop-ups installed where the line is too narrow for the booms on the flat track; more pop-ups were added alongside an overhaul of the control software in 2016. Where the straight crosses the new bridge over the Winkfield Road, the shallower soil means that the turf dries out more quickly, so more water is needed here.

The 2006, £200 million redevelopment of Ascot included the installation of an extensive rainwater harvesting system collecting from the grandstand and other roof areas; this is directed into two lakes in the centre course and another across the road; water is also purchased if required.

Ascot has its own overseeder, but a Vredo disc seeder is hired in when a window of opportunity arises to improve specific areas, with pure ryegrass being introduced via

mixtures from supplier Barenbrug.

Toro ride-ons take care of mowing duties in summer, with the jumps track left to grow on in winter unless a cut is needed in late February, whilst three Iseki cut and collect ride-ons are gathered from the lawns/paddock team to join forces with the two dedicated to the track to maintain the flat track, keeping compaction to a minimum.

Any suitable method of improving the surface or tackling a problem is considered. After success with an Air2G2 pneumatic decompactor to treat wet areas, a Charterhouse Oxyshot was deployed before the December meeting to target specific deep compaction in the parade ring and home straight.

A GKB Drainmaster is hired in as needed and a soil recycler is also under consideration, with the goal of continually



What's in the shed?

Tractors and utility vehicles

- John Deere 5090R
- John Deere 4520
- John Deere 5100M
- John Deere Pro Gator 2030a
- John Deere Pro Gator 2030a with sprayer
- John Deere 855 XUV x 2
- John Deere TH 6x4 Gators x 2

Mowers

- Toro Groundsmaster 5910 (track mower)
- Toro Groundsmaster 3500 sidewinder (car parks)
- Iseki SXG 323
- Iseki SXG 323 x 2
- John Deere JS63 hand mowers x 4
- John Deere 8800 mower
- John Deere 2653 mower
- Honda HRD536QX hand mowers x 2

Other equipment

- Trilo SG1100
- Trilo SG 1100
- Charterhouse Verti-Drain 7216 x 2
- Charterhouse Verti-Quake
- GKB VS200 V-Strong scarifier
- SISIS slitter
- Bogalle L2 PLUS fert spreader
- Briggs 82-220 irrigators x 4



improving drainage and grass growth.

The well-stocked machinery shed also plays host to a brewing process which produces compost tea.

"We were using a lot of fungicides and wanted to find a way to improve soil health so that we could avoid these treatments," explains Reon. "It's possible to buy in compost tea, but we have found it easy to make."

Woodchip from the estate is composted along with grass cuttings, brewers' grains from a local brewery and mushrooms picked from the track in a 1000 litre IBC and turned by hand every two to three days whilst it matures over a 50-day period, before the compost is placed in a 'tea bag' in non-chlorinated water to produce the 'tea'. The liquid is then mixed with biostimulants and yeast extract before being applied via a John Deere self-propelled sprayer.

"The mixture needs to be monitored carefully for spores and beneficial nematodes, but it has proved highly effective in boosting the turf, and has eliminated the need for fungicides," comments Reon.

Whilst pesticide use is minimal, the John Deere sprayer has been updated for 2020 with the addition of GPS guidance to cut



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Padded hurdles have been successfully introduced, cutting maintenance costs



We have one member of staff who looks after the hurdles and he could be mending twenty broken hurdles a meeting, now he can focus on repainting and refurbishing as required, and the time savings are substantial

input costs and increase accuracy.

Although Ascot is not tied into any particular manufacturer, Reon and Donny have good relationships with many of the leading suppliers, and green tractors dominate. Ascot mechanic Alex Leisk came from a John Deere dealership, so has an extensive knowledge of the brand.

One Fit Pad hurdles were introduced for the 2018-19 jumps season and the team have seen the benefits of minimal breakages and easier handling compared to traditional brush hurdles.

"We have one member of staff who looks after the hurdles and he could be mending twenty broken hurdles a meeting, now he can focus on repainting and refurbishing as required, and the time savings are substantial," comments Chris.

Chase fences are rebuilt at the rate of five per year, and open ditches have been updated recently with the addition of Leylandii on the take-off side to improve definition and encourage better jumping.

Maintaining a full team of employed staff is preferred to using casuals. Including Donny and Reon, nine groundsman look after the track, car parks, heath and outlying areas which totals 80ha, whilst a dedicated mechanic looks after the equipment. Five gardeners take care of flowers, plants and hedges and two more are responsible for the extensive lawned areas.

"We have found it to be a better way of working. Permanent staff know their jobs

and need less supervision, so we can get on; we have a great team here," explains Reon, who came to Ascot from New Zealand via golf course work in Ireland and Sweden, and initially worked under the course's longstanding head groundsman Gilly Gilford.

The effectiveness of the programme and the Ascot team's forward planning is evident in the track's ability to cope with a relentless, demanding and high profile fixture list alongside the vagaries of the weather.

"The effects of the dry season in 2018 could still be felt in spring 2019," reflects Reon. "Then it was wet into the run up to the Royal Meeting, but the track drained so well due to the decompaction and scarification that a track record was broken on the Saturday."

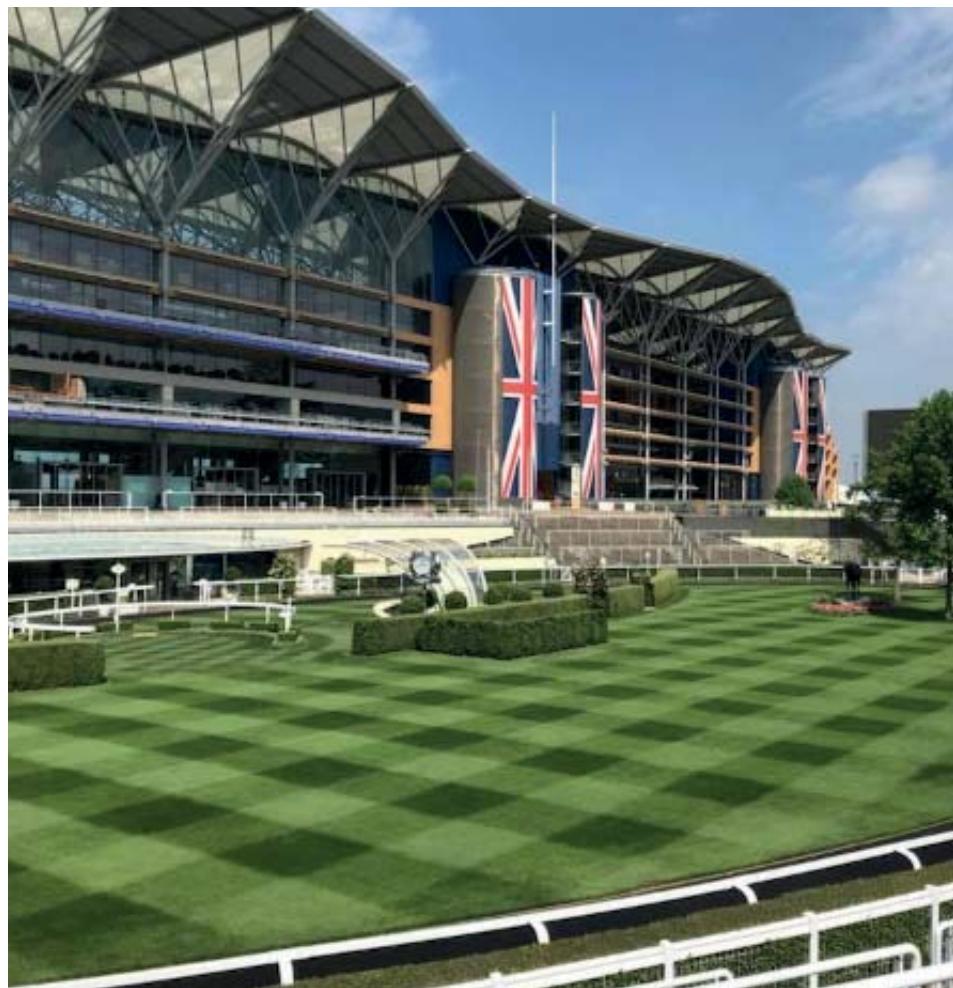
Team spirit was put to an exacting test in December 2019 - at the time of Pitchcare's visit, final preparations were being put in place for the popular Christmas Meeting. But, after 10mm of rain at the end of the first day of the meeting, the Saturday card had to survive two inspections, and required last minute realignment of the hurdles and a change to the rail configuration to create a usable racing line on the sodden ground towards Swinley Bottom. But, once again, Ascot's grounds staff pulled out all the stops to produce a day of racing fit to kick off the festive season in style.



ASCOT



Top: after scarifying and reseeding.
Bottom: new growth from divotting.
Right: the parade ring and grandstand





Next Day
Delivery



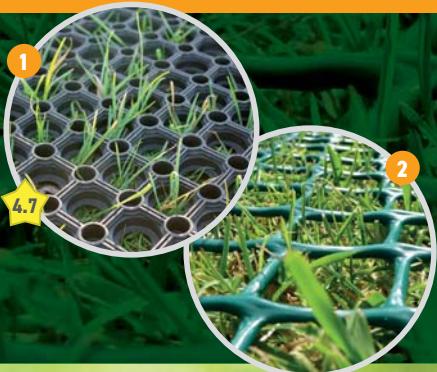
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FEBRUARY/MARCH 2020

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Nostell

Spirit of place!

Knowing such a marvellous house, gardens and grounds - with Robert Adam architecture and Chippendale furniture in abundance - and then learning about a certain "black-eyed lioness", David Mears was pleased to visit the National Trust's Nostell recently, not as a regular visitor this time, but to meet **Paul Dibb**, Garden and Park Manager

To be able to take a behind the scenes tour of the gardens and grounds, meet the team responsible for development and maintenance and secure an in-depth interview was indeed an opportunity. I arrived early on a bright but cold January morning and was warmly greeted at the machine shed and maintenance facility by Paul and a few of his team. As there was good weather: little cloud, some sunshine and it was dry, we decided to take advantage to walk and photograph. Fairly close by to the maintenance facility and hidden from public view, we came upon a path at the side of the middle lake I've walked a number of times as a visitor; most

times with family or friends. With Paul at my side and with such a wealth of information, this walk now took on a totally different aspect. Although I had been along this path many times, I realised that there had been many rhododendrons here in the past. Paul told me that all the rhododendrons in this area had succumbed to disease (*Phytophthora Ramorum*) and had been removed carefully and correctly. New planting is part of a major project; more of this later.

We walked along, spotting two well grown but still not white cygnets at the water's edge. Paul commented that released American mink are a problem for the swans and not all cygnets make it! We looked



across the lake towards the rear of the house and the gently sloping grass bank to the lake and I learned something new: it seems that, many years ago, and to create extra theatre, the family would take their guests down from the house to a landing stage and then by boat across to where we were standing. They would then walk a short distance to the Gothic Arch we were about to go through. This arch was gated in those days and rendered; so that explains the use of random stone and its current appearance! All would then be revealed as they entered the Menagerie Garden (created in 1743) and were able to see the black-eyed lioness, monkeys, colourful birds and



Paul Dibb, Garden and Park Manager at Nostell



The Gothic arch



The Cock Pit Menagerie garden

other exotic species. What a spectacle would have greeted them; theatre indeed!

We carried on walking past the small pond. "Not a pond," Paul told me, "That was the cock pit!" Now it is a pond however and home to great crested newts. We continued and I learned more about the Menagerie House, designed by Robert Adam and where the "keeper" lived. It was hard to imagine this well cared-for area once contained a small zoo! Our walk continued back around the lake, over the bridge and up to the front of the house where we met all the team to take the essential team photo!

Paul and I then continued through the old stable yard and round to the kitchen garden. Here we met Mark Westmoreland and found him preparing a garlic bed. What was most fascinating, however, was the rhubarb cultivation. Most have heard of West Yorkshire's Rhubarb Triangle, a 9-square-mile area, famous for producing early forced rhubarb and Nostell is right at the tip! It's clear that Mark is passionate about his job and is the resident expert, often giving tours

and talks. He explained that the forcing bed is based on a 300 year old principle and that maintaining the right temperature is crucial. In the old days, loads of manure was used, however woodchip, from estate pruning and maintaining sustainability, is now used and achieves the desired temperature. Mark opened up one of the five crowns in the bed and pulled out a digital thermometer: 34.6°C inside and 9°C outside; perfect! I then looked in to see how much growth had been achieved in a week. The photo shows the amazing speed of growth! Mark told me that he has his crop in three weeks; If only I liked rhubarb! The rhubarb (19 varieties grown) is just one of 130 different fruit and vegetables varieties produced in the Kitchen Garden. An amazing 270kgs of rhubarb are used in the café each year and, it seems, rhubarb scones are going down very well with visitors! Nothing goes to waste and, if the kitchens don't take all, any surplus is offered to visitors for a donation!

The Kitchen Garden, where work to reinstate it began in 2012 following local funding, saw the planting of an apple

orchard, using all Yorkshire apple varieties. This work was quickly followed by vegetable beds and other kitchen garden beds to provide the café with home grown fresh produce. Apart from the cost savings, the scheme has proved to be a hit, not only with the kitchen but visitors alike!

There is much more visitor interest now attending garden talks with many getting involved with hands-on work such as pruning. The "new" garden certainly is working and part of the staff development and student activities. Not that we saw flowers at this time of the year, but I can vouch for the wonderful displays in season, not forgetting non-edible bananas growing too!

We then took a look at the amazing play area adjacent to the garden. It seems that there had always been a play area dating back to when the family managed the estate, but following safety concerns and some deterioration, a number of items were taken out of use. This led to a decline in visitor numbers, especially families needing play facilities. Something had to happen, so



Mark Westmoreland demonstrates rhubarb forcing



Rhubarb growth after one week!



Kitchen Garden and produce. *Image Lynne Minette*

it was agreed to invest in a new play area. A specialist company, Timber Play, was consulted and a plan drawn up for a "Play Trail". Paul liaised with them and planning permission sought. This took much longer than expected and the work envisaged for the winter did not happen. With Timber Play installing one major item all the other work, including landscaping, was completed by Paul's team in August 2008; the time when there are higher visitor numbers! Nevertheless, hard and long work prevailed

and the job was completed in good time. As Paul said: "We all got stuck in! The area is a credit to them and has ensured that visitor numbers have returned and improved!"

Following this walking exploration, it was time for a cuppa, so we made for Paul's office and continued with questions about Paul, Nostell and the team's work.

Paul has been at Nostell for thirty four years. When he left school at sixteen he knew he wanted an outdoor job and, despite an offer of a higher paying joinery



Enjoying the zip wire at the new Play Area.
Image National Trust

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**We all got stuck in!
The area is a credit to
them and has ensured
that visitor numbers
have returned and
improved**

job, opted for a YTS horticulture course. "My father, when I asked what I should do, told me to go for the job you love. I clearly remember that I was paid £16 a week!"

Paul's first job was landscaping and tree surgery; not really what he wanted, which was horticulture. Fortunately, a position at Nostell was spotted by Paul and he discovered that a new team of gardeners was to be set up there to replace contractors. This seemed ideal, so applied and got the job, which entailed day release to college and he soon obtained an NVQ in Horticulture. Now he was making progress and doing what he loved. His work must have impressed as he was offered and took on the position of Head Gardener when he was twenty two! His inspiration to get into

horticulture came from his granddad, as young Paul enjoyed helping him on his allotment. Paul remembers seeing the fruits of his labours and that gave so much satisfaction.

Paul also recalls that, during his early years at Nostell, he was fortunate to have help and encouragement from two people in particular. William Craven, the Land Agent at Nostell Estates, took a keen interest in his development and Andrew McVitie, the Senior Rural Surveyor for the National Trust, also helped and encouraged him. "He showed me how to advance my career," said Paul.

As Garden and Park Manager now, Paul is responsible for his own budget, reporting to the General Manager. His team of six and

army of volunteers comprises gardeners, rangers and a tenant farmer, each of whom has their own specialities and favoured activities. The team, shown below at the front of the house, are:

Back row left to right:

- David Hudson-Spragg, Gardener. On his second stint at Nostell, having started on a YTS scheme and taken on full time. After a number of years, he left for another garden but the lure of Nostell has seen him return! Loves gardening and always has
- Paul Dibb, Garden and Park Manager
- Mark Westmoreland, Gardener. Started at Nostell in 2012. Got the bug from being a volunteer and from his grandfather





Front row left to right:

- Michelle Tierney, Assistant Gardener. Been at Nostell since September 2019. Came from Ribble Rivers Trust and a Horticultural Apprenticeship. Is gaining, at Nostell, what she needs; more horticultural experience
- Richard Farrah, Ranger. Been at Nostell since 2016. Has a degree in Geography and is passionate about the outdoors and conservation
- Richard Grayson, Ranger. Secured a seasonal Ranger's role in 2012, which led

to a full Ranger in 2014. Loves working in the outdoors; a far cry from manufacturing where he used to work!

- Hazel Irving, Volunteer Ranger. Came to Nostell on her birthday in October 2019 and is on site each Friday. Is studying Arboriculture at Askham Bryan College. Gardeners focus on the forty acres of gardens, and their work involves mowing, planting, watering and pruning. With such a large number of rose bushes and fruit trees and twice per annum pruning there's plenty of pruning work! Another big job is hedge

cutting; mainly yew with some hawthorn and beech.

The Rangers, with their conservation background, concentrate on habitat and woodland management and resources. Their work entails fencing, cycle track maintenance (there are two cycle tracks now and popularity grows!) along with habitat management and monitoring.

The entire team share mowing over the site and all equipment is also shared. Regular work is usually rangers out in car parks and visitor areas mowing and strimming on Mondays and Tuesdays, with

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The general public are paying to be here! We have a system called 'Spirit of Place' guiding the work. In essence it is; how did the family want the place to look?



Springtime in Kitchen Garden.
Image Paul C Dunn



The work in the gardens and grounds is striving to be sympathetic to the original designs and concepts



gardeners mowing and strimming menagerie and other park areas. Rangers tackle large park area mowing during the rest of the week with gardeners involved with every day gardening demands.

Daily maintenance of machinery is carried out by the team, but annual servicing is outsourced. Paul is also able to seek help from the National Trust's Gardens, Forestry and Nature conservation consultants. Large tree work and climbing is outsourced to a local contractor.

Additional help comes from volunteers who are keen to help and learn. They are in every day except Thursdays in the garden when mowing is a priority; team members are not available to supervise and train volunteers that day. Volunteers help to maintain the high standards set at Nostell and often this can lead to employment; Mark and Richard are prime examples!

The total acreage of the site is 300 acres of parkland with forty acres of gardens and two lakes. The soil across the site is predominantly clay, slightly acidic and on a

sandstone bedrock. Compaction is becoming more of a concern now that visitor numbers are growing and the grounds are open all year round. Changing weather patterns have not helped either. Paul would like to invest to rectify the compaction problems. High winds can be an issue and cause damage in unsheltered areas. Bearing in mind that the site is a visitor focused operation, snow and ice needs to be taken seriously. Paul and his team have management plans and a snow plough, gritters, etc., to ensure the site remains open and safe; visitors need to know that they can come to Nostell, whatever the weather!

Asking about presentation, Paul said that this is very important; "The general public are paying to be here!" he says. He goes on to say they have a system called "Spirit of Place" guiding them and their work. In essence it is; "how did the family want the place to look?" The work in the gardens and grounds is striving to be sympathetic to the original designs and concepts.

There is no real end of season as Paul



Leaf blower in action. Image National Trust



says; "we are open every day, except Christmas Day now. Renovations are tackled as dictated by seasons and weather and our ability to work around our visitors."

I asked about special events outdoors as they seem to have waned. Paul explained that, with wetter seasons and possible hirers unsure about attracting numbers, fees fell and the once attractive letting of parts of the grounds meant the Trust was unable to generate the revenues necessary. Taking this into account, and with the cost of

clearing up and site remediation, it was decided to cease such large scale events. Attracting regular visitors took on extra impetus and has resulted in a steady increase in visitor numbers and, of course, revenue. Currently 150,000 folk visit the house and gardens and 300,000 the parkland every year. Each year is seeing an increase as many are seeing outdoor activities and exercise as an essential part of their lifestyle.

I asked what special projects were being

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Getting Personal

Paul Dibb - mood swing if you hide the biscuit barrel!

Who are you? Paul Dibb. Garden & Park Manager for the National Trust at Nostell.

Family status (married, single, children etc.)? Married with three grown up children.

Who's your hero and why?

Roy Lancaster, Plantsman/Gardener. His knowledge is inspiring.

What would you change about yourself? More intelligent, less moody.

What's your guilty pleasure? A good Speyside single malt.

What's been the highlight of your career so far? Winning an award for the conservation of countryside, habitats, cultural assets and natural resources.

What are your pet peeves? Intolerance and unpleasant people.

If you could go anywhere right now, where would it be? Thailand to see my daughter.

What's the best part of your job? Working with people of all backgrounds and abilities, sharing passion for horticulture, conservation and hopefully inspiring people.

... and the worst? Finance and having to, very occasionally, deal with some unpleasant people.

Do you have a lifetime ambition? To canoe across Scotland on the Caledonian Canal.

Which three albums would you take to a desert island? Cult - Sonic Temple, Tears for Fears - The Hurting, U2 - Joshua Tree.

Who would you choose to spend a romantic evening with? The wife or, if she can't make it, Shakira!

If you won the lottery, what is the first thing you would do? Resign

What would you consign to Room 101 and why?

Intolerance; things would be very much different if people were more understanding.



Which three people, living or dead, would you invite to a dinner party? My granddad Oliver and my dad, so my dad could get to meet his father who was killed in action during the war just after he was born. Sabine Winn - I would like to meet the lady who was influential to the development of the gardens where I work.

Do you have any bad habits? I eat too many biscuits.

... or any good ones? I eat too many biscuits, I really enjoy them.

Do you go to bed worrying about the next day's workload? Most nights.

What are you reading at the moment? - Hard copy or online? London by Edward Rutherford - hard copy.

What's the best advice you have ever been given? The standard you walk past is the standard you accept.

What's your favourite smell? Honeysuckle.

What do you do in your spare time? Walk lots, gardening, occasionally jogging, five-a-side football.

What's the daftest work-related question you have ever been asked? "There must be nothing to do in the winter, do you get laid off?"

What's your favourite piece of kit? Any good strimmer.

What three words would you use to describe yourself? Balding, grey, moody.

What talent would you like to have? To be able to read people's minds.

What law/legislation would you like to see introduced? Higher state pension.



Paul demonstrates this year's planting project

worked on currently. Paul highlighted three:

The major project is working on the large lake dam. This is a capital project and for stabilisation work. Secondly, he hopes to tackle the construction of a new greenhouse in the kitchen garden; necessitated by the growing demand for produce from the café! And thirdly, a large planting project in the Menagerie Garden. This has been brought about by the removal of diseased rhododendrons mentioned earlier. Paul has researched this thoroughly and planting will begin with trees and shrubs using a plant list from the 18th century.

Looking at projects that have been carried out in recent years, three again were the major ones: we have already covered the kitchen garden and play area, reporting on our walk through the grounds. The third, however, is the Parkland Restoration. This commenced in 2003 and entailed arable reversion; turning arable fields into wildflower meadows, opening up public access and much woodland management being carried out. Restoration of some major structures was included too; the Robert Adam gatehouse, the boat house and bridges. The grand plan is to restore the parkland to the original 1849 estate map. "We are nearly there!" says Paul.

We next touched on training, education and Health and Safety. All are important to the Trust and Nostell. Paul ensures he and his team comply with current legislation. All have been trained and continue to receive appropriate training. Those with specialist skills have undertaken extra training

and are certificated as required, such as chainsaw operatives.

Being a visitor focused site, Health and Safety for everyone is always to the fore and an awareness of possible hazards, particularly for visitors is maintained. There are four First Aid trained people in the team and a National Trust H&S officer is available.

Machinery used by the team:

- Two tractors (larger John Deere 4720 and a compact 2510 John Deere). A new John Deere compact is due to be added shortly
- John Deere 2653A triple ride on mower
- AS Motor AS510 mulch mower
- Stihl and Husqvarna chainsaws
- Stihl brushcutters
- Stihl pole saw
- Timber Wolf chipper
- Sit-on compaction roller

John Deere equipment is sourced in the main as part of a national deal the Trust have.

More cordless kit is due to arrive and trials of Cramer items have proved good; Bluetooth reporting facilities are most handy!

"We use local dealers for servicing and supply," Paul tells me. Hiring of machinery does not happen very often, but Paul thinks they may need to hire a scarifier shortly.

"So what would be the item you'd put at the top of your wish list?" I asked. "A cherry picker would be so useful" came the reply!

Pests and diseases were covered next and the American Mink is the main pest; they need to be trapped. As



East vista from the front of the house

mentioned earlier, the swans suffer badly. Squirrel control is also essential as there is much tree damage. There are no real disease problems now that the rhododendron issue has been dealt with. There has, however, been a small amount of Ash Dieback.

Next we spoke about the importance of ecology and the environment. "This is huge," says Paul. "We are stewards for this wonderful environment. Conservation is so important".

As you would expect, a very detailed environmental policy is in place and regular contact is maintained with the Environment Agency. The trust employs environmental specialists who are on hand to provide help and advice.

Ever aware of pollution prevention and legislative compliance, Paul has a recycling wash system on his wish list. Furthering conservation, they also produce their own compost in a traditional three bay system.

Paul tells me that they are working towards the National Trust L.O.N. programme. No, I didn't know either! It stands for Land, Outdoor & Nature. Work includes assessing key species and habitats on site, enlarging habitats and improving them and providing extra habitats for new species. Paul has just finished writing an Estate Management Plan to help achieve these goals.

What about the state of our industry? Slowly moving forward would be the feeling. Paul believes that the work they do is undervalued and that more investment should be forthcoming to provide education. To raise their profile is difficult. "We have an area gardens consultant who feeds back information and concerns to head office," says Paul. "We all need to shout up!" To stay informed, magazines are read and occasional attendance at trade shows; workloads permitting!



We have an area gardens consultant who feeds back information and concerns to head office. We all need to shout up!

In conclusion, it seems that Paul and his team are very committed, care passionately about their work and have a vision of what Nostell can aspire to. It is also evident that the work at Nostell is appreciated by visitors; a quick look at Trip Advisor confirms Nostell's growing popularity with very good reviews. Little wonder that the café is to be relocated to larger premises in the stable yard to cope with demand!

All images David Mears unless otherwise stated.

Our thanks to the National Trust for providing some of the images and certain historic information

For more information about Nostell visit <https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/nostell>



Nostell

Nostell Priory – A Brief History

Nostell Priory, one of the great houses in northern England, with its three hundred acres of parkland including two lakes and forty acres of gardens, is situated adjacent to the A638; the Doncaster to Wakefield Turnpike Road in years gone by. This fashionable Palladian house is considered by many to be an 18th-century architectural masterpiece. It is also believed that it is the only house, now belonging to the National Trust, that was able to boast a menagerie, created in 1743.

The present house, built by James Paine for the Winn family, dates from 1733 and was erected on the site of a medieval priory. (Charles added 'Priory' onto the name in the 19th century, as a recognition of the historical origins of the site. The treasure house, gardens and parkland that so many visitors enjoy today are known as 'Nostell'). The house was designed to be more than a home but one that would demonstrate status. Much of the house was constructed through two generations of Winn's and, despite massive costs, the results were spectacular.

Following the death of Rowland Winn (4th Baronet) in 1765 and Rowland Winn (5th Baronet) inheriting Nostell Priory in 1765 at the age of 26, changes occurred. It seems he did not wish James Paine to continue working on the house but gave the work to the budding Robert Adam whose fame was increasing. Adam commenced work on the house in 1766 and created a number of splendid rooms over a ten year period. Working alongside Adam were the cabinet maker Thomas Chippendale (over one hundred of his pieces remain in the house today), plasterer Joseph Rose the Younger and painter Antonio Zucchi. In 1785 the 5th Baronet was killed in a carriage accident on the road to London and work on the house was immediately stopped. Vast sums of money were owed to Adam, Chippendale and Zucchi and the building project was left incomplete. A plan by Adam for four new wings had got no further than the empty shell of one.

The baronetcy died out and Nostell was eventually inherited in 1817 by Rowland and Sabine's grandson, Charles Winn. Winn had part of the house redecorated, but he had neither the money nor interest to complete the major building plans of the previous century – indeed he thought Nostell

"overgrown" and a "burden". Financial challenges continued for the Winn's but fortunes were revived thanks to coal on the estate and the growth of the steel industry in Scunthorpe along with discovery of ironstone on another Winn estate. Rowland (Charles Winn's son) who inherited in 1874 invested carrying out repairs and refurbishments to the house. In many ways this time marked the point Nostell finally fulfilled its original purpose. As well as being a successful businessman, Rowland Winn was a major player in the Conservative Party, rising from M.P. to Chief Whip. The house played an important role in supporting his career, playing host to everything from mass political rallies to more intimate weekends with guests of influence and status. In 1885 he was made 1st Baron St Oswald (named after the saint to whom the original Nostell Priory had been dedicated). The dream of the 18th century Winn's had been realised.

In 1953, the house was given to the National Trust, with full management taken over from the family in 1997. From a chequered past defined by exclusivity and money, Nostell is now a place of wonder and enjoyment for everyone.

Amenity Sprayer Operator of the Year

Award winning application





Paul Gater, First Assistant and spraying specialist at Caldy Golf Club, has won the prestigious title of Amenity Sprayer Operator of the Year, presented at the glittering BTME Awards ceremony in January



Paul Gater's route into turf management started as a junior member at Auchterarder Golf Club in Perthshire, Scotland. "The club gave me an opportunity to work on the course for a short time, which I enjoyed, and it took off from there," he reported.

Having attended Elwood College in Cupar, Fife, he started at Caldy Golf Club, on the Wirral peninsula near Liverpool, in 1994. Now, as First Assistant to course manager, Carl Crocher, as well as carrying out all greenkeeping duties, Paul's main responsibilities involve applying chemicals and fertilisers, including ensuring accurate stocks and records are kept.

For spraying he holds a PA 1/2 & 6, along with his National Certificate in greenkeeping; NVQ 3 and 4; chainsaw certificate; First Aid level 3; excavator licence and welding certification.

The club's primary sprayer is a Team sprayer purpose built for turf application, with a 600 litre capacity tank. He also has a walk over EvenSprey Pro 50 litre tank, initially brought for a newly constructed greens project, but adding flexibility for winter applications.

"In the summer months, I can be out spraying weekly," he reported. "We apply Primo Maxx to greens once every two weeks, and monthly to the tees and surrounds. We also use compost teas monthly on the greens, tees and surrounds. In the winter months, spraying depends on the weather and what needs doing."

The club has developed a robust Integrated Turf Management programme to ensure applications are better targeted and only used where justified to maintain turf quality.

With fungicide treatments, for example, Paul says the strategy is to apply as soon as disease is seen to control any outbreak. "Get the timing wrong and it can have devastating effects that can last through to the spring," he added.

For weed control, Paul highlighted they now focus treatments on holes alongside the cliff tops first, as the wind tends to blow seeds across the course and this approach reduces potential weed spread. This action has reduced the overall area treated each year, and the amount of herbicide used.

"Having the odd weed here and there is okay, if it's not interfering with play. We tend to leave it until we reach a threshold, before



It really highlighted the importance of reading the label and the application instructions, including water volume and nozzle choice, to get the best out of the product

spraying a targeted area."

Other treatments regularly used include an intensive wetting agent programme to help dry out the playing surface, along with soluble iron sprayed on the fairways for green up and helping to keep turf healthy through the cooler months.

One new treatment used in the past year has been Acelepryn to target high levels of leatherjacket activity on the greens. With the club's ITM approach, it was used in conjunction with an aeration and overseeding programme and compost tee to further encourage recovery and plant health.

"It really highlighted the importance of reading the label and the application instructions, including water volume and nozzle choice, to get the best out of the



product," he pointed out.

"Nozzle selection is a key part of accurate application, to deliver the appropriate water volume at the required speed to hit the intended target.

"I tend to use water volume of 300 l/ha for foliar products, such as Primo Maxx and selection of fungicides. But to penetrate through the sward, with wetting agents, compost tees or Acelepryn, I use 600 l/ha, applied with air induction nozzles where coarser droplets get through to the soil more effectively."

"When I use a Syngenta product, I use the GreenCast Turf App, which helps me with choosing the right nozzle for optimum application."

Paul advocates nozzles are checked regularly for output and spray pattern, and

changed when needed. "We tend to keep a spare set of nozzles accessible for when required." An App on his mobile phone is used to check forward speed and help with calibration.

On a fairly exposed site, drift reducing nozzles can give a big advantage for better targeting sprays, compared to conventional flat fans. To further reduce drift risk, Paul says that they have a weather station to check wind speed, along with various forecasts and apps. Furthermore, he uses a hand-held wind speed monitor to check the actual levels before he sprays.

"An ideal wind speed is usually between two to nine miles per hour - which is a light breeze. If it is more than 15mph, I won't spray," he advises. "But I'm also conscious that still conditions with no air movement



Recording the way treatments were applied and the results helps develop optimum results, here with selective herbicide



Products are kept in a secure chemical safe at Caldy Golf Club with all part cans clearly labelled



Used PPE and other items for safe disposal are kept separate



Syngenta Technical Manager Glenn Kirby

Sharing spraying Top Tips

Syngenta Technical Manager and application specialist, Glenn Kirby, highlighted the skills and experience of sprayer operators is paramount in achieving the full potential from all applications and assuring future sustainable use.

"Paul has shown he has outstanding skills and works to very high standards to achieve the best possible results. He has proved a successful winner by showing that best practice can deliver efficient and, above all, safe amenity spraying."

"All of the Awards entrants have demonstrated the essential techniques for safe and responsible spray application. Sharing their ideas and advice can help all operators to become more effective."

Glenn's Top Tips for accurate application and a guide for future Awards entrants include:

- **Know your target and where you want the spray to end up – on the leaf; the crown or in the soil?**
- **Select appropriate nozzles, pressure, water volume and speed to give the best chance of hitting the target.**
- **Where you have to make a conscious compromise with tank mixes, focus on the priority part of the application.**
- **Understand the way different products work, along with the physiology of the pathogen/weed and the turf plant - to optimise application timing.**
- **Check over the sprayer every time. Look at pipes and joints for leaks at pressure; check tyre pressures; assess spray pattern from each nozzle; balance booms for constant pressure.**
- **Maintain accurate records, of what you applied, where, when and how - and the result. Refer back to develop your own best practices.**
- **Have the sprayer regularly tested to NSTS regs.**

A series of Glenn's Art of Application videos on GreenCast offers further practical ideas and advice to improve spraying accuracy.

can cause problems, if the spray just hangs over treated areas and any unexpected gusts may take it off target."

He pointed out still conditions can be a particular issue first thing in the morning or late evening, when temperature inversion occurs, which is a challenge since it's often an opportune time without players on the course.

Drift mitigation measures Paul advocates to help keep sprays on target include:

- **Boom height - a stable 50 cm above the target**
- **Nozzle selection – utilise low drift options**
- **Operating pressure - operate at 2 - 3 bar maximum**
- **Vehicle speed - slower is better for drift reduction**
- **Check wind conditions - be aware of gusty winds**
- **Correct sprayer set up**

To further protect off-target areas around the course, they have designated buffer zones, which at Caldy are long strips of uncut grass which form a boundary. One of these sensitive areas are the bee hives they have on site. Caldy's washdown area for machines integrates a reed bed system to

ensure no contamination reaches the environment.

He has also fitted an in-line water meter at the filling station, so he knows precisely how much is in the sprayer for the area to be treated and avoids waste being left for disposal.

With a focus on safety and minimising risk of point source contamination, Paul has an approved waste contractor route for disposal of chemical, washed out packaging and used PPE. All PPE is always kept in a clean zone. Everyone who is assigned to spraying has his or hers own dedicated PPE, which they are responsible for looking after.

"From 2016, new legislation came into effect that all mounted and pedestrian sprayers must comply with national testing; so we always make sure the sprayer has an MOT through NSTS services every year. It ensures the sprayer is working correctly and also helps to minimise breakdowns. Plus, for the insurance policy, it's important to have," he commented.

Paul is also sure to let people know what he's doing and where. Signs go out around the clubhouse and first tee before any spraying takes place, as well as on the club's website. "Keeping everyone safe is key," he added.

Amenity Forum Awards

The Amenity Sprayer Operator of the Year recognises and rewards top sprayer operators across the amenity industry. It aims to further improve standards, by identifying the best practice of individuals to enhance results.

Organised by the Amenity Forum, the Awards are sponsored by ICL and Syngenta, and supported by BASIS. Two categories cover Sports Turf application and Landscape and Industrial.

Previous overall winners have undertaken study tours to the US and Europe, along with BASIS training and further education offers. All entrants to this year's Awards also have the chance for a place on the Syngenta Application Academy 2021.

Preparing knapsacks

Spray into
spring





Knapsack and handheld sprayers both have maintenance demands to keep them operating sweetly. The knapsack sprayer is overlooked as a tool despite its importance in groundcare and it should be part and parcel of any maintenance programme.

Allan Wainwright, National Account Manager, Cooper Pegler and Berthoud sprayers explains how we prepare for the new season

Spraying serves a vital purpose, so why wouldn't you want to maintain kit to high operational standards?

The traditional March to October operational window means sprayers can lay dormant in the shed for several months - plenty of time for innards to seize up and make 2020's first spray a real bugbear.

If you're a grounds professional, who dutifully gave your knapsack sprayers their pre-winter maintenance checks, your kit is likely to be ready and waiting for the new season. It's far easier to prepare for that first outing by conducting best practice before storing sprayers away for winter. Failing that, pre-season maintenance may well pay off. There's nothing more frustrating than finding you have a problem before you even start spraying.

Sprayers often have to survive heavy duty, but we can overlook them when it comes to servicing. I feel this is a major failing and, all too often, sprayers just carry on until they pack up - then the complaints start.

However, regular upkeep and care will reward you with lasting, trouble-free

operation for this key kit.

Sprayer choice can depend on what you want to apply and the size of your target area. Knapsack sprayers are designed to take most kinds of groundcare treatment liquids, as are hand-held units, but maintaining crucial parts is essential.

Passing my PA1/PA6 has made me further aware of the value of visual checks, but like other groundcare equipment, it's often what you cannot see that is as important as what you can.

That's why a pre-winter (or pre-spring in this case) strip down and maintenance will keep precision parts primed. It's always best to avoid bad habits by getting things right from day one - and you'll rarely spend a more rewarding half-hour.

One customer recently told me he has chalked up twenty years' use of his original Cooper Pegler CP15 Classic diaphragm sprayer. When budgets are tight, why risk needless outlay on cheaper equipment, when quality kit will last ... if it's cared for.

Today's cheap sprayer market is vast, often with few or no spare parts available. The upshot is that too many units end up adding to the waste plastics mountain. You've paid good money for professional





The Sustainable Use Directive requires that hand-held sprayers are checked regularly and a record kept accordingly

quality sprayers designed by professionals - you'll want to maximise their lifetime.

Working closely with the Amenity Forum and Lawn Care Association, I travel the UK and Ireland visiting customers, owners and operators. For them, and those planning to enter the sector, sprayer maintenance forms an increasingly important element of training and development.

Preparing for spring and winter

Why am I talking about winter when we're on the verge of spring? Well, I'll always advise you to prepare for winter, but whatever the time of year, this is your annual maintenance check so it pays to proceed carefully to ensure you pick up any faults.

- Most sprayers are straightforward to dismantle, but it's best to choose a flat surface like a benchtop to conduct the check. This allows you to lay out everything in an orderly manner, ready for reassembly

- For the pre-winter maintenance, strip the sprayer down to constituent parts, dismantling to the diaphragm, checking O-rings and all seals for signs of perishing or cracking
- The type of rubber used depends on the chemicals you're applying and these can vary enormously. Viton resistant seals must be checked for wear to prevent leakage that could damage both operator and environment
- High-resistant glassfibre reinforced plastic (GRP) lances are vulnerable in a different way. I've known ones be trodden on or driven over and snapped or cracked, so keep them clear of mechanical mishaps
- Rinsing sprayers thoroughly with clean water after every use is paramount - triple rinsing if you last applied pesticides
- You can expect most sprayers to run trouble-free from the get-go, but if I do hear of any problems, it's usually after the first or second use and probably resulting



Left to right: piston, outlet and dip tube; piston cup; pumping arm, guides and clamp



From top left clockwise: Pressure setting adjuster with spring and hexagonal-sided fixing screw; clamp ring; pumping handle, crank and guides; diaphragm; dip tube



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The traditional March to October operational window means sprayers can lay dormant in the shed for several months - plenty of time for innards to seize up

functionality and rinse clean

- Check diaphragms for perishing and splitting and replace if necessary. When reassembling the unit, seals will benefit from a small layer of grease, which aids the process and adds a further protective barrier.
- Once you have rebuilt the unit, and conducted a visual dry check, test for leaks by wet checking - part-filling and pressurising the sprayer with water then triggering to ensure there are no leaks.
- With typically 15-20l capacity, knapsack sprayers can place a heavy burden on the back. Operator comfort and safety is vital - inspect padded shoulder, waist and chest straps for any signs of wear or fraying as these distribute sprayer weight more evenly over the body.

The National Sprayer Testing Scheme (NSTS) gives clear guidance on keeping sprayers working safely and efficiently. I provide service labels for operators to stick to sprayer bodies after maintenance checks are completed, which confirm inspection date and who conducted the checks.

Sprayer maintenance is all a matter of commonsense. That said, guidance on how to best conduct regular inspections and the annual winter strip down helps operators and trainers deliver best practice.

My policy is to heighten customer service and support for an aspect of groundcare that needs prioritising. Our presence at trade events and a developing programme of training videos and support material will help that process.



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Smart technology

Technology and turfcare

The world of smart technology is evolving exponentially, and it is thought by 2020 that over 200 billion devices will be talking to each other and sending data on the web*. From buying a cup of coffee to controlling our thermostats, smart devices are continually putting more convenience and control at our fingertips

With computer software, hybrid and all-electric equipment - and even autonomous mowers - being innovated and launched by forward-thinking companies, technology is helping turfcare businesses to better manage resources and workers to complete tasks faster. And, as we all know, speed combined with accurate information is critical in today's business world and, thanks to technology, business is now conducted at the speed of thought and at the click of a remote button.

Using technology and connecting certain elements of turfcare management online can help golf course professionals and groundspeople maintain the perfect playing conditions every day by providing actionable data to help optimise turf management decisions.

The Toro Company has identified a virtual ecosystem of products and services such as irrigation control, fertiliser and pesticide application, turf and soil monitoring, equipment performance monitoring, and technical support that, when connected online, help reduce operating costs, enhance safety and more.

The key is that these information sources not only connect to the internet to send and receive data, but will even connect with each other in the future, providing smarter, more integrated solutions that deliver increased value. The ultimate benefit is a big-picture perspective that delivers more insights about managing turf.

Technology has brought us accurate and easily accessible information and data is one of the biggest things helping industries to manage resources better and complete

tasks faster. The more we know, the more solutions, tactics and plans can be implemented.

Turfcare professionals don't have time to wade through data; they need to be out getting the job done. Delivering connected information on one platform brings easy access to all aspects of the turf, showing how it all comes together to enable decisions to be made that maximise the performance of the crew, the equipment and the turf instantly.

With systems on the market able to wirelessly transmit data on everything from the weather to nutrients in the soil, for the first time accurate information on all aspects of turfcare management is available to turfcare professionals from one access point.

Irrigation control

We all know that, whatever your surface - football stadium, golf course, cricket ground or rugby pitch - effective irrigation is vital to the healthiest grass and to affect the playability.

Advances in technology mean that, where once turf managers were reacting to conditions in order to care for turf, they can now formulate more specific plans based on accurate data. By being able to prepare and implement what the turf needs in advance, rather than trying to fix issues after the fact, the quality of the playing surface can be maintained to the highest standard ensuring the best playability for customers.

When it comes to irrigation, accuracy is key. Having access to information, such as how much water your turf needs, gives turf managers the ability to implement the best course of action which can result in huge





Toro Lynx Central Control gives you greater control than ever with the touch of a button



Having all the information you need readily available and combined into a single intuitive interface gives you greater control than ever before



Whether a football stadium or golf course, effective irrigation is vital, which is why Toro Lynx Central Control allows you to control irrigation from your phone

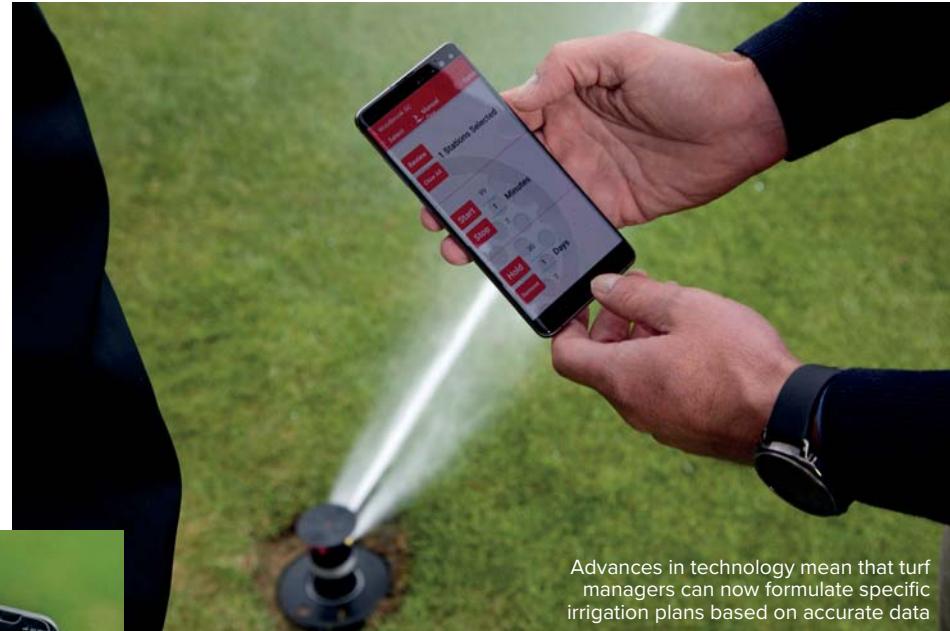
reductions in water used and significant cost savings. Which is why smart irrigation control systems that effectively utilise modern technology are so beneficial. The difference between irrigating for a minute versus fifty-five seconds might not sound big but, with the volume of water being used by sprinklers, it quickly adds up, so having the ability to recognise the exact amount your turf needs and implementing that should not be underestimated.

Being able to access irrigation information in real time from any mobile device with an internet connection is vital in this day and age and possible thanks to products such as the Lynx Central Control system. Now, the touch of a button is all it takes to make changes to your irrigation plan, and with additional extras such as the weather station, you can adapt in response to changes in the weather, no matter where in the country you are.

As well as giving you the ability to monitor and change your irrigation, advanced software systems also allow you to access all the information you need from one place. Having all the information you need readily available and combined into a single intuitive interface gives you greater control than ever before.

Turf and soil monitoring

One of the best ways to get accurate information on the turf you maintain is to invest in a soil monitoring system. With



Advances in technology mean that turf managers can now formulate specific irrigation plans based on accurate data

systems out there that can track soil moisture, salinity and temperature on a daily basis, it's never been easier to make turf management decisions with pinpoint accuracy.

Traditionally, turf managers are taught ways to improve water absorption or how to care for turf when it's worn out. While it's still valid to learn this today, with the role that technology now

plays, decision making for many turf managers is now more down to the analysis of data. How to interpret that data and implement the best course of action is where the challenge now lies.

The Toro Turf Guard Wireless Soil

Monitoring System, for example, accurately monitors soil conditions, allowing turf managers to access the essential soil information they need, when they need it. The Turf Guard sensors instantly track soil condition in real time and can support up to 500 sensors per course or grounds.

Fertiliser and pesticide application

There are a wide range of products applied to turf by spraying, from products that help deliver essential nutrients to those which protect it from diseases and weeds. Whatever the purpose, ensuring uniform coverage and the correct volume of application is vital to maintain high quality turf conditions.

The increasingly sophisticated options on the market for computer-assisted mechanical sprayers is helping to protect



Being able to control irrigation to the second can result in cost and water savings



playing surfaces by allowing turf managers to apply products with extreme precision over larger and more irregular terrain.

Toro's GeoLink Precision Spray System is an example of one of the systems that can help you to achieve a more accurate spraying application, utilising GPS technology to help guide operators and ensure even coverage.

Equipment performance monitoring

When it comes to the core elements of turfcare management, having the best cutting edge technology will help to improve profitability and playability. And this is certainly true when it comes to the management of turfcare machinery. Perhaps one of the biggest investments a turfcare manager can make, ensuring the proper use and maintenance of machinery is vital and made all the more accurate and easier with technology.

With the capability to monitor fleet health, order parts and schedule service activities, easy to use software which tracks your assets improves staff efficiency, lengthens the life of equipment and reduces overall maintenance costs. And with Toro's myTurf Pro web-based asset management system, you can access real-time data for all your assets.

Technical support

Whatever technology you invest in, backup support is vital. Just as you would have IT support for your office computers and laptops, you need it for your turf technology. Making things even easier on that front Toro has created the NSN technical support, a web-based customer portal which provides customers with a knowledge-sharing database, online chat and remote central connectivity and monitoring. So you can get support whenever you need it, wherever you are.

Monitoring fleet health, regardless of brand, is easy with Toro's myTurf Pro web-based asset management system

The whole is greater than the sum of its parts

First coined by the philosopher Aristotle, the phrase 'the whole is greater than the sum of its parts' aptly defines the modern concept of synergy, as we know, together everyone achieves more. This is the approach of the Internet of Turf™, Toro's umbrella term for how it connects the multiple aspects of turf management we have discussed here.

Using the internet, it brings together five of Toro's key technological products; Lynx Central Control System, Turf Guard Wireless Soil Management System, GeoLink Precision Spray System, myTurf Pro Asset Management System and NSN Technical Support, to make a whole that brings even more benefit than its parts for customers.

The future

When managing all aspects of turfcare, there are many different elements to consider, and the biggest benefit technology provides is ease of access to information. With the use of software systems that can be accessed via the internet, you can now find the information you need for your irrigation,



For the first time, turf managers can completely bring together irrigation and machinery and, with a comprehensive overview of all the elements of their role, less time is spent manually collecting data and more time is left for the important tasks

machinery, soil and more in one easy to find place.

For the first time, turf managers can completely bring together irrigation and machinery and, with a comprehensive overview of all the elements of their role, less time is spent manually collecting data and more time is left for the important tasks.

With technology advancing almost constantly, having access to all the information technology can garner will only become more useful as its application in turfcare continues to evolve.

*Source: IDC, Intel, Aberdeen

Article provided by Reesink Turfcare, the sole Toro distributor in the UK for golf and sports fields equipment and irrigation products: www.reesinkturfcare.co.uk





Turf management 2020

Tomorrow's
World today

During the late 1980s, BBC's Tomorrow's World programme ran a regular feature called Tomorrow's World 2020. It aimed to project the major issues and trends of the day, no doubt with an inevitable mixed level of success. As a young avid watcher, such a year seemed a long way off. But, somewhat excitingly here we are - the future, here, now, today! So, what does the reality of 2020 and beyond have in store for us as turf management professionals?

would suggest that two key ongoing fundamental principles will dominate 2020 and the oncoming decade ahead.

Permanence noun

"the state or quality of lasting or remaining unchanged indefinitely."

Of course, if there ever was one core representation of permanence it is the permanence of change, but we will consider that later. In respects to turf management, many things will remain unchanged permanently, not only in 2020 but way beyond.

Plants will require adequate nutrition throughout the year, soils will need to be maintained in a manner which facilitates open pore spaces for the diffusion of oxygen in, and carbon dioxide and other waste gasses out. The same healthy soil structure will facilitate the penetration, percolation and retention of life giving water which, as a master variable within the system, is required to be present in adequate quantities throughout the year.

Soil and plant associated microorganisms will need to be encouraged and nurtured in a bid to foster a functional multifaceted plant-soil ecosystem. The functioning of this ecosystem will be determined by cause and effect, action and reaction, where every input or operation undertaken by the player or turf manager has an equal and opposite reaction. When we get the balance correct desirable plants will prosper, beneficial microorganisms will flourish and abiotic plant stress and abiotic pathogenic plant stress will be mitigated, reduced and avoided.

All the above factors are now and forever will be the core principles underpinning a sports turf surface of consistent quality. As we enter a new year and prepare for the growing season ahead, it is worth taking some time to reflect on the fundamental simplicity of the factors outlined above. Individually, none of these principles is difficult to comprehend. The difficulty, of course, comes from the complexity arising from the interconnected and multifaceted dynamic relationship between each of the

factors. Often, it seems from people there is a desire and a satisfaction to be gained from feeling as though one has control of the system one is managing. It may be helpful to reflect that such a notion can mask the truth. As turf managers, we manage the uncontrollable, the precisely undefinable. We manage within nature, and 'manage' is all we can be expected to achieve.

| Manage | |
|--|---------------------------------|
| Definition 1 | Definition 2 |
| verb <i>"be in charge, control"</i> | verb <i>"survive get by"</i> |

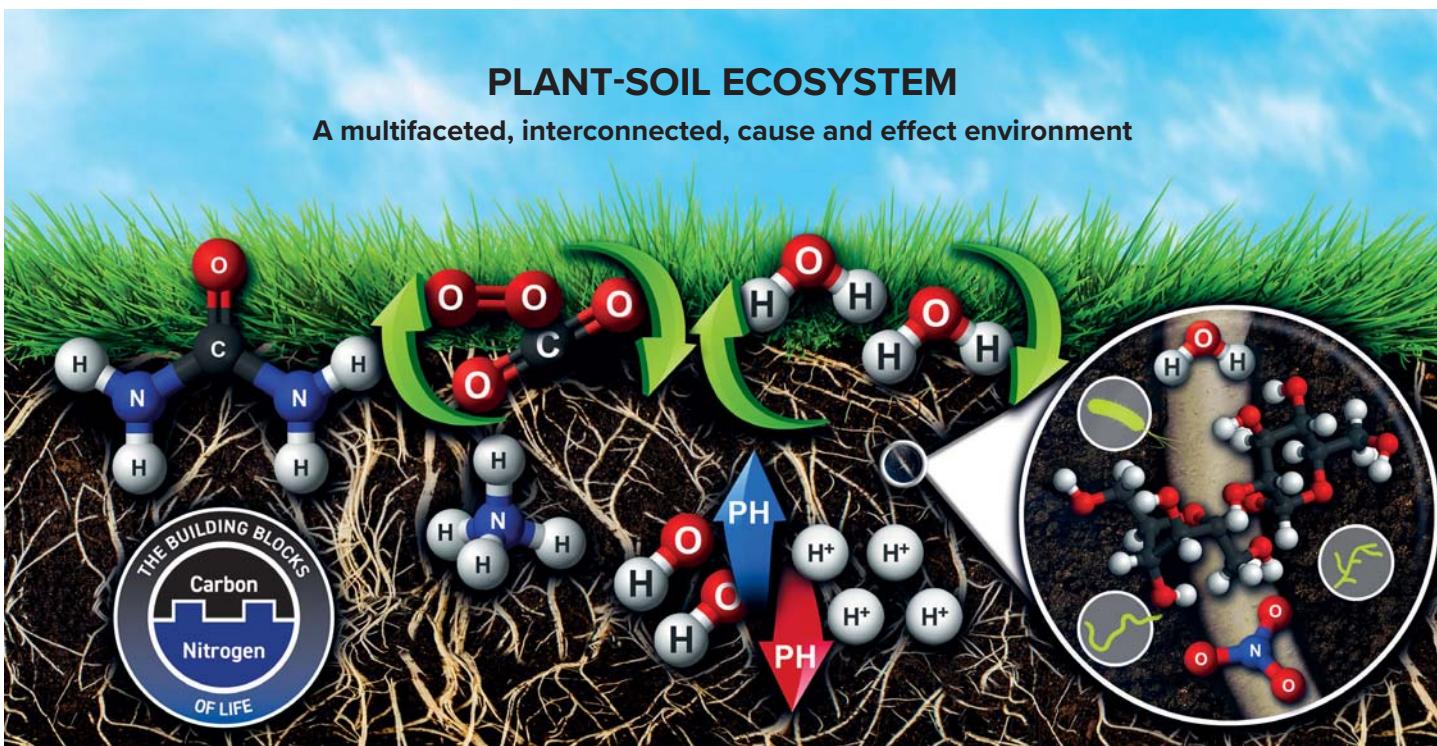
As with many words in the English language, manage can have multiple meanings, two of which are represented above. Of these two definitions, which most closely matches expectations and perceptions of how turf



Whilst many of the universal truths of sports turf maintenance will not change, it is accurate to state that change is the greatest challenge society and sports turf management face over the next decade

managers undertake producing a surface to facilitate play, and which most closely matches the functional reality of the complex ecosystem we are responsible for? On one hand, the word manage is confident and definite, leading to feelings of control and order. 'What do you do?' asks person A. 'I manage the system' responds person B. On the other hand, it can be less confident or definite; 'how are you getting on?' asks person A. 'Oh, I'm just about managing' responds person B. Now, to be clear, I am not suggesting that the highly capable





professionals in the turf sector are 'just about managing', what I am employing this example for is by means of illustration. The suggestion is, that to be in charge or control of a multifaceted, interconnected plant-soil ecosystem, when it is underpinned by the fundamental principles of cause and effect, which then leads to an incredibly complicated and diverse environment, is not necessarily as helpful as it could be, in assisting someone to conceptualise how to most appropriately manage a turf ecosystem in an integrated way. The use of the word manage, to suggest we are in control, or maintaining order is flawed. Rather the truth is; that at any one time all we can ever realistically hope for is to be just about managing to keep the ecosystem in line as best as we can to achieve our

desired outcomes. Of course, the way to keep the ecosystem in line as best we can is to seek a greater level of precision by gaining a greater level of understanding and appreciation for the interconnected nature of the detail.

If *manage* in the form of definite control is not helpful, may I suggest the word *responsible* is a more fitting way to describe the role of a turf manager. This suggests a person who is under obligation to be responsible for understanding and making decisions relating to the maintenance of a plant-soil ecosystem; with the aim of facilitating a surface for play. Of course, Turf Responsible is not really a term likely to roll off the tongue and head up job descriptions any time soon.

Perhaps Head Custodian is a more fitting

job title for the most senior person within our grounds and greenkeeping teams.

custodian
noun

"a person with responsibility for protecting or taking care of something or keeping something in good condition."

Change
verb

"to make or become different"

"to form a new opinion or make a new decision about something that is different to your old one"

As alluded to earlier, change is the greatest representation of permanence in existence; without it, this planet and the life upon it, would never have come to be.

Change was the premise upon which the BBC's Tomorrow's World programme existed. And, whilst many of the universal truths of sports turf maintenance will not change as we enter the year 2020, it is accurate to state that change is the greatest challenge society and sports turf



FIXED MINDSET VS GROWTH MINDSET

//

What is your mindset to change and what is your plan to meet the challenges arising from it?

management face over the next decade. Whether it be change on the largest scale as a result of climate change or the sociopolitical changes which arise as a reaction to what is increasingly being accepted by science and society at large as a climate crisis.

Inevitably, changes will occur in the sports turf industry, but a key thing to remember is that the fundamental truths, underpinning the function of the systems we manage, will remain permanent. The climate, the sociopolitical and economic environments will always change, core truths of nature will not.

Embracing and adapting to change

Adaption to change is a mindset, something realised in the pioneering work of Stamford Universities renowned social and developmental psychologist, Professor Carol Dweck, whose years of research on motivation, personality and development were presented in her 2006 book, Mindset: The New Psychology of Success.

The primary premise of which, is that those who consider that their success and achievements are based solely upon innate ability are defined as having a "fixed" theory of intelligence (fixed mindset), whereas those who consider that their success and achievements are as the result of incremental application, commitment, determination and hard work are said



As turf managers we manage the uncontrollable, the precisely undefinable. We manage within nature, and 'manage' is all we can be expected to achieve

to have a growth intelligence (growth mindset). In practice, the inner workings of both mindsets can be evidenced by an individual's behaviour. Those of a fixed mindset dread failure as they fear it is a negative statement on their own inherent basic core abilities. Those with a growth mindset do not fear failure to the same extent as they realise that their performance can always be improved, and that failure is a fundamental necessity of trial and error, leading to success. Of course, given these two scenarios then it is no surprise that those with a growth mindset tend to attain a higher level of educational standard. Leading to more successful lives with higher achievement, better pay, living standards, health, wellbeing and happiness, when compared to those who exhibit a fixed mindset. Perhaps because where others see barriers and difficulty, rationalised and reinforced by

excuses and self justifying thoughts, the optimistic side of a growth mindset sees opportunity for growth and refinement in equivalent situations.

Turf management is being carried along the crest of a wave of change; from revocations of active substances, extreme weather patterns, technological innovation, participation pressure and a greater sociopolitical awareness of environmental issues.

What is your mindset to change and what is your plan to meet the challenges arising from it?

Article by James Grundy, Agrovista Amenity Senior Technical Manager

This article is written as a companion to Maintaining Sportsturf Surfaces - What's Your Intention? Pitchcare Magazine, Issue 85 - June/July 2019.

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Frank Newberry: Part 1

Putting Things Off

Are you deadline-driven? Event-orientated? A sensation-seeking procrastinator? In Part 1 of this two-part article, Trainer and Conference Speaker **Frank Newberry** shares his thoughts on what drives him and others to delay important tasks sometimes - and the price we all pay for putting things off. Then, in Part 2, Frank offers ten ways we can all reduce our tendency to procrastinate

I don't know about you, but I tend to put off (procrastinate) those tasks that are boring, mundane or overwhelming. At least those tasks that seem overwhelming at the precise moment I contemplate starting on them. So I put them to one side to be done another time (perhaps when I am in the right mood or the right frame of mind). For me, this 'putting off' can be a split-second, impulsive decision.

I also find that I put off tasks that need planning or contemplation, especially proactive tasks where I have to perhaps take the initiative, get support for an idea, or a different way of doing things at work etc.

I cannot resist helping people out

Basically, I put off those tasks that involve me having to think things through! It is not that I am deliberately being lazy or unprofessional, it is just that I cannot resist helping people out with a crisis at work, an urgent or last-minute request or a tight deadline.

Why? Because I need only react in these fire-fighting situations. Not much thinking required, hardly any planning, no need for me to make a business case, float an idea or get support from other people. I just have to turn up, help out where I can, do some firefighting and rescue the people or the project that is in danger. A deadline is met, or an event is ready on time. I even get thanked for my trouble! 'I could not have done it without you Frank', and so on.

Doing my bit, playing my part

So, what if I do not get my own important work done or my deadline met? Then I have a ready excuse. I was helping out with an emergency, doing my bit, playing my part.

Of course, saving the day by rescuing a person or a project can be exciting. Afterwards, we say 'We did it! Yay!' Good feelings all round. The trouble is, the good feeling we get can become addictive.

So much so that, when the next emergency comes along, we are amongst the first to volunteer. Then we get that 'buzz' again, and again when the next exciting reactive task comes along.

Firefighting can also bring us closer together

All this firefighting can also bring us closer together as a work team. Sometimes, it can show us who our real friends are at work. Then there is added pressure on us to conform by helping out - even when our own work suffers. Now the bad news - we may begin to notice that it becomes harder and harder to do the important proactive tasks that we need to do in our own jobs.

Many proactive tasks, like planning improvements, preventing problems or devising training programmes for staff or colleagues, need peace and quiet and time to think if we are going to get them right. It can get rather lonely when there are no easy answers and we have to sort things out in our minds first.

All this while (because of our procrastination) the time available to do our proactive, important tasks is getting shorter and shorter. Why? Because we have perhaps filled up our days with reactive tasks that we like to do; tasks that need little or no planning or contemplation.

We do our best work 'under pressure'

So, the important proactive tasks that could bring improvements, efficiencies and savings are either, delayed even more, or done in a rough and ready way - rather than in a good way. We may tell people that we do our best work 'under pressure', but we may also be getting a reputation for letting our URGENT work get in the way of our IMPORTANT work.

We may meet all our deadlines, but mainly at the last minute, and with our work quality compromised.

The hard truth may be that we know we like the buzz of working hard and getting things done at the last minute but, in reality, we have become sensation-seeking procrastinators. The sensation being the buzz we get when we work hard to meet a tight deadline at the last minute.

Personality plays its part

Personality also plays its part. I recently learned of research that suggests that extroverts are more likely to procrastinate than introverts. For a quick run-down of extrovert and introvert differences just click on the following link to see an earlier article.

<https://www.pitchcare.com/news-media/extro-intro-or-ambi.html>

It is now being suggested that procrastination is more prevalent amongst extroverts because they get stimulus and 'energy' from people and events outside themselves (external) and introverts are more self-sufficient (internal) in this respect. It might follow then that a tight deadline would be more likely to stimulate an extrovert, rather than an introvert, to be more productive at work.

Frighten ourselves into doing a good job

The logic would then be - we can make the stimulus (or sensation) even greater by repeatedly delaying starting a task in order to frighten ourselves into doing a good job at the last minute! Except that, although we may work harder once we



get started on the task, the quality of our work (as already stated) may be compromised.

More on this in Part 2, along with a list of ten ways we can reduce procrastination.

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CRICKET

On your bike!

So that's it; no more sitting on a roller in the Aberdeen sunshine. **Kenny McCurdie** is retiring after twenty years tending the Mannofield Park Cricket Ground, the most northerly venue in International One Day cricket. In this question and answer session, Kenny talks about his career and his plans for retirement

Pitchcare: How did you get into the industry?

Kenny McCurdie: Whilst at college in 1992 studying for an HND in Business Studies, I met the captain of Penicuik Cricket Club who introduced me to the club, and I assisted with the autumn renovations later that year.

I attended the IOG Levels 1, 2 and 3 courses to gain more knowledge and, in 2000, I was invited to interview for my current position

What has been the highlight?

The triangular series in 2007 between Scotland, Ireland and New Zealand was particularly memorable in so far as, for a while, it held the highest One Day International innnings total of 402-2.

What were your darkest moments?

2012 - weedkiller spread on the square, resulting in nine of my fourteen pitches being out of commission for that season.

Mannofield's international status has come to the fore in recent years. That must make you very proud?

Having internationals piques my interest, They are my "Test matches"!

There's a photo of you in deep conversation with Ian Botham. How were you treated by the media generally?

I don't recall the photo! I have had a good relationship with the local papers and the nationals.

What was the best match you saw at Mannofield?

Although rain affected, the Scotland vs England match in 2014 was challenging, but eventually a very good game ensued with Callum McLeod of Scotland taking a screamer of a catch on the boundary

How did you gain the respect of the players, umpires and management?

By being professional.

Did you have many run-ins with players and/or umpires?

It goes with the territory that there's going to be differences of opinion. I'll leave it at that!

Would you say Cricket Scotland is in a good place at the moment?

I don't have a close enough relationship with our governing body to comment, but we are suffering locally from diminishing numbers taking up the game.

By way of addressing this, my club is coaching in twenty schools, but it will take time for those children to filter through to playing at senior level.



Being so far north, did you need to do anything 'out of the ordinary' to combat the weather?

Thermals are always a good option. Keeping covers on to combat the drying effect of the wind is a regular occurrence.

2014 saw you with your arm in a sling. What happened and how did you manage to work through that?

Whilst operating a motorised sponge roller I tore a ligament as I moved it. Fortunately, the Scotland and England physios came to the rescue, patching me up in order that I could complete the day.

How easy was it to find someone to take over your role?

My assistant has been with me for three seasons, so it should be a smooth transition.

Is there anything you would have done differently, professionally and personally?

Not really. Coming from a voluntary position to one of full-time, I had to learn quickly and decision-make at national league level.

Do you have any regrets?

I gave too much time to cricket and not enough to family!

How has the industry changed over the years?

More communication between 'groundies'. Better mechanisation. Studies by universities ensuring that we have proof of best practice.



What will you miss about the job?

Having to leave my thick skin behind!

What are your retirement plans? For example, do you have any interests that have lain dormant that you might revisit?

I have been riding motorcycles with a tour company in Gran Canaria for over seven years, having made many friends during that time. It's the intention to be out there for an extended holiday assisting them from time to time.

Thank you for your time and we wish you a long and happy retirement



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WILDLIFE CRISIS

Britons say they don't have time to help the environment

A new survey has found that more than half of Britain wants to do their bit to fix the nation's growing wildlife crisis, but many just don't have the time

This comes as the 2019 State of Nature Report revealed that 15 per cent of wildlife species have been classified as at threat of extinction.

At a time when Britain's biodiversity is in danger, 56 per cent of the public want to do more to help the natural world.

But, a survey by The National Lottery found nearly a third said they don't have enough time to help wildlife, whilst a fifth admitted they didn't know what they could do.

The National Lottery has now teamed up with wildlife expert Chris Packham CBE and entrepreneur Jamal Edwards MBE to show how



anyone can do their bit to preserve natural habitats in an increasingly urban world.

They have joined a group of animal lovers from the London Wildlife Trust at Woodberry Wetlands, Hackney, where they built 'bug hotels' which are simple structures that can shelter wildlife.

"As a society, we're more aware than ever of the need to protect natural habitats," Mr Packham said. "But this new research shows that, while we want to do more to protect our wildlife, lots of people don't know what practical steps they can take in their daily lives to help."

Woodberry Wetlands is just one example of 3,500 projects across the UK which exist to help preserve nature, due to funding from The National Lottery.

Over the past 25 years, to help protect and conserve wildlife, The National Lottery has injected £829m into natural heritage conservation across the UK.

This includes £548m on biodiversity projects and £227m supporting important and historic landscapes - including more than 70,000 hectares of land acquisition. In addition, more than £900m has been spent revitalising more than 900 public parks.



Notable wildlife successes include seabird recovery on Scilly Isles, red squirrels making a comeback in Northern Ireland and the reintroduction of the Chequered Skipper butterfly in Rockingham Forest.

As well as restoring and opening spaces like the Woodberry Wetlands, The National Lottery funding has also helped support endangered animals, flowers and trees.

This included species such as bats, basking sharks, water voles and the great yellow bumble bee.

"Young people are more conscious than ever of their impact on the natural world around them," Mr Edwards says. "I've learned a lot from Chris, and from The Wildlife Trusts, the Woodland Trusts and the RSPB, about how we can create change ourselves."

He continued: "I've been amazed to find out how much funding goes to these brilliant organisations. I never thought that buying a National Lottery ticket could not only make someone a millionaire but could also go towards saving a species or helping conserve nature in the UK."

Article by The Independent



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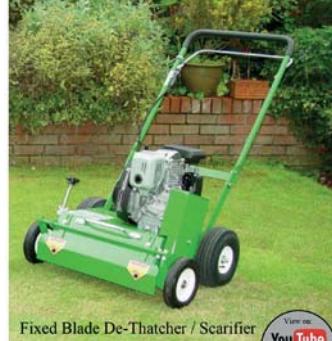
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Machinery and Supplies

Product Update

A round-up of the latest product news announced in recent weeks



The FM48 is a powerful, towed, long grass cutter with a working width of 1220mm (48"). A reliable 13Hp Honda engine with an electric start drives two 'V' belts and 42 cutting flails. These sharpened flails are easily replaceable to extend the lifetime of the machine.

As of 2020, the FM48's transport wheels situate at the rear of the machine, instead of the side. By mounting the transport wheels in the new position, the mower cuts closer to the edge and can squeeze through narrow pathways.

Mounted at the rear of the cutter is a one-piece roller. This roller is easily adjusted to fine-tune the cutting height and alleviates scalping by ensuring the flails lift above the highest peaks on uneven ground.

A screw jack effortlessly raises or lowers the transport wheels, allowing you to travel to and from storage on pneumatic wheels, before dropping the mower onto its steel roller. This steel roller flattens and neatens the ground behind it, it protects the user from the rear of the flail mower, and it is invulnerable to punctures, unlike rival mowers which operate on wheels.

The tow bar is typically mounted central to the mower, and it can be offset to the side of the vehicle when it's desirable not to flatten the grass by running it over.

A jockey wheel is mounted onto the tow bar to help manually move the 245kg machine in and out of storage.

www.schsupplies.co.uk



The latest new product launched by Pellenc - the Prunion long-reach pruning shears offers users unbeatable cutting power and work quality.

This new generation of pruning shears combines innovation with strength and accuracy, to optimise and assist trimming work for perfect results - every time.

The Prunion long-reach pruning shears revolutionise tree pruning. Their wide cutting diameter (up to 45mm) makes them very convenient to use and, with the 250 battery, users can connect two Pellenc tools simultaneously.

With two pole sizes available (1.5m or 2m), the pruners can be adapted to work any at height safely.

Key features of the Prunion long-reach pruning shears include:

- Optical trigger for instinctive control of the half-opening feature
- Slim, comfortable, oval handle suitable for right and left-handed use
- Four work modes to suit any cutting style
- Simplified maintenance (just weekly greasing)
- Light weight (1600g or 1870g depending on model)
- Balanced pole for more comfort and precision

All Pellenc batteries and tools come complete with a three-year commercial warranty as standard - the first manufacturer to offer this on battery-powered tools.

Pellenc is exclusively distributed in the UK and Ireland by Etesia UK.

www.pellencuk.com



The BR 800 C-E from STIHL is the latest addition to its range of innovative and high-performance blowers, ideal for professional landscapers and local authorities.

Producing a high-performance blowing force of 41N, the 80cc STIHL 4-MIX® engine runs on a fuel-oil mix just like a 2-stroke model and offers the benefits without the compromises of 4-stroke power. The STIHL 4-MIX® engine provides fast acceleration, more power, added torque, and lower noise during operation to complete jobs quickly and more easily. In addition, the engine offers reduced emissions and increased fuel efficiency.

To make getting up and running even easier, the BR 800 C-E is designed with a convenient starting system featured on the side of the

machine, allowing users to start the blower while wearing it. The simplified starting system also features an automatic choke reset and a switch position on the control handle that is always 'ON', ensuring that the professional user can start the BR 800 C-E with ease.

Thanks to its intuitive design, the BR 800 C-E has an excellent power-to-weight ratio and comes complete with an ergonomic backpack carrying system including S-shaped shoulder straps for maximum comfort when wearing. Additionally, the BR 800 C-E incorporates STIHL's anti vibration technology that reduces feedback from the machine's engine, allowing professionals to comfortably use the tool for extended periods of time.

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Machinery and Supplies

Product Update

A round-up of the latest product news announced in recent weeks



The new Etesia Donky electric wheelbarrow offers operators even more versatility with the ability to customise it.

The classic plastic tub can be removed and replaced with whatever is required for the task ahead. Users may choose to attach a wooden board for transport or assembly of work equipment, or alternatively they may opt for the all new tin tub which will ensure that it is even more robust.

The Donky allows the transport of bulky products (boards, cross member, closing fabric and reel), and provides a working surface at a suitable height. It also features a tray emptying function which is achieved by a central lever, with unlocking and assistance.

With a powerful 1700 watt engine, electronic advance management and two driving wheels with an agricultural profile, the Donky has an impressive capacity to move in difficult terrain. Unlike non-electric motorised wheelbarrows, users can enjoy up to two days of work without any harmful pollutants - in turn helping to protect the environment.

Working and moving in complete silence, and not creating any noise problems for the surrounding area, the Donky can move up to 250kg or 180L (400L with the boards) in one trip. With a tank integrated in the tray and a 1" valve, it can carry 85L of water or liquid and a spray hose can be connected to it.

The hourly cost of use of an Etesia Donky wheelbarrow is approximately £0.03 meaning that the operator will notice significant savings when compared to a fuel based wheelbarrow.

www.etesia.co.uk

Charterhouse has introduced the Redexim Top-Brush - a 6m wide triple poly-brush ideal for course presentation, organic matter removal and dispersal of worm casts.

With more and more chemicals being withdrawn from the market, turf managers are turning to mechanical methods of maintenance to reduce contributory factors to disease. Regular brushing helps to remove dew from the surface and stand the grass plant upright, helping to ensure a better cut, remove excess

Husqvarna has launched two new powerful battery-powered brushcutters which will raise the bar for performance.

Increased levels of productivity are available for professionals when using the Husqvarna 535iRX or 535iRXT, thanks to the Husqvarna-developed high torque motor, large cutting diameter and effective anti-vibration system. A host of new key features make the products a great addition to the collection of any landscaping professional.

Designed and developed with commercial tasks in mind, these two innovative brushcutters are built to be robust, powerful and equivalent to petrol products in the 35cc range.

The new brushcutters are part of the 500-series product range and offer Husqvarna's first anti-vibration system on a battery brushcutter. This feature further reduces strain on the user allowing for smoother operation during extended hours of use. These products are also equipped with a new user interface, allowing the user a constant view of the battery status to more easily plan their work.

www.husqvarna.com



GreenTek are once again leading the way, with ultra-wide versions of the type of equipment that was formally only found on greens.

Their Multi-Brush, Multi-Roller, and Multi-Sarel all have massive 5.4m working widths, and the new Fairway Groomer is 3.6m wide. Working on lightweight compact tractors or utility vehicles this equipment is suitable for high frequency use to maintain pristine fairways on a weekly basis.

Cultural practices such as brushing to disperse dew and worm casts, grooming to reduce thatch, rolling to improve trueness, and sarel rolling to improve percolation and reduce runoff, are all now viable treatments for fairways.

www.greentek.uk.com



moisture and ensure optimum airflow into the turf canopy.

Ideal for large areas such as golf fairways, the 3 poly brushes can be accurately adjusted to the desired depth, depending on whether a light surface brush or a deeper agitation is required. Its independent 'wings' can then be hydraulically lifted and folded for convenient transportation and storage.

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Joining the established and reliable TH range of ISEKI compact tractors is the brand new TH5420, coming complete with a Stage V compliant engine, low emissions and a new range of accessories.

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For keeping the rough pristine we have the top of the range SF450, a powerful, large capacity centre collect mower which is now also available with a Muthing Flail deck, making it the ultimate combination of quality and reliability.

Its large upfront deck and 1300litre high tip collector allows you tackle the thickest of grass whilst collecting and leaving a pristine finish every time.

The ability to cut and collect without blocking, thanks to its turbine driven straight through chute, enables the SF450 to take on whatever the weather throws at it. This is the hallmark of ISEKI mowers.

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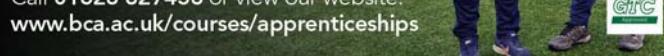
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Machinery and Supplies

Product Update

A round-up of the latest product news announced in recent weeks



With a Redexim touch, the BLEC Multivator returns to the renovation stable by popular demand.

The Multivator returns good quality material from depths of up to 30cm back into the upper layers of the soil profile. Once the soil has been successfully exchanged, the rear-mounted brush then ensures material is distributed evenly to leave a clean finish in its wake.

A popular machine from the BLEC portfolio in days gone by, the Multivator returns with a working width of 180cm and a 75hp tractor requirement. With a number of new features under the guidance of Redexim design and engineering, the Multivator will become a popular tool for contractors, local authorities and large-scale landscapers once again.

www.blecmachinery.com



The Toro Greensmaster 1026 is the latest model in the redesigned Greensmaster 1000 series.

The GR1026 brings consistency to fixed-head pedestrian greens mowing. With its innovative telescoping handle, each machine in the range can accommodate operators of different heights and skill levels and now with the GR1026 can deliver the widest cut yet at 26 inches.

Additional benefits that come with not only the GR1026, but the GR1018 and GR1021 too, include a heavy-duty 3.5hp Honda engine and a choice of cutting units.

www.reesinkturfcare.co.uk



Cub Cadet has launched the all-new 22" INFINICUT® which has been designed specifically with golf in mind and features Bluetooth wireless connectivity via Android smartphones.

The electrical architecture is designed around the automotive industry standard CAN bus protocol. The Cub Cadet design team has commissioned a bespoke BLDC motor, specifically intended to offer quiet, efficient power to the traction and cylinder drive. This is teamed up with an upgraded automotive lithium battery module that offers unrivalled duty cycle and reliability. These developments have come together with advancements in both the bedknife adjustment mechanism and cylinder manufacture.

The company have designed and invested in a new in-house, state-of-the-art cylinder manufacturing process to ensure Cub Cadet cylinders will be the most accurate in the industry. The revamped bedknife adjustment mechanism now offers best-in-class reel-to-bedknife setting retention. These innovations, coupled with the new CNC manufacturing processes that have been put in place help to ensure the quality customers have come to expect from Cub Cadet cylinder mowers.

www.cubcadetturf.com



Techneat's new Acuspray Solo will complement their existing range that already includes both the SPPS and Acuspray machines.

The new model offers operators a high level of build quality from a lightweight and robust moulded construction together with corrosion resistant zinc plated steel work.

Designed and manufactured in the UK, it's a user friendly sprayer emitting very low decibel emissions so it can be used late in the evening, early in the morning and is ideal for use in built up areas. The machine, powered by a 12v battery, has a 2m boom offering the operator excellent spray coverage and a 35L tank ensuring fewer stops for refilling.

Most of the controls, including a pressure gauge that monitors and regulates the Solo's output, are conveniently located on the sprayer's tank and the boom folds neatly for easy storage.

The Acuspray Solo's 35L tank enables it to cover up to 875m² before refilling is required, making it far superior to the coverage offered by a traditional knapsack sprayer.

Techneat sprayers are available from the Pitchcare shop

Charterhouse Turf Machinery has launched what is considered to be the 'next generation' of their renowned Verti-Drain range.

Offering a 1.9m working width, the new Verti-Drain 2519 is set to become the tool of choice for turf managers looking for a high-productivity aerator.

The 2519 model incorporates the very best of Redexim precision design and engineering to bring a new high-speed machine into their portfolio. Offering a PTO speed of up to 540rpm, it can cover up to 8739sq.m per hour when spaced at 165mm.

As standard, the Verti-Drain 2519 comes with 12mm solid tines but it can accept a range of solid tine options up to 19mm, and hollow tines for coring. This versatility, combined with a variable working depth of up to 250mm, makes it suitable for an array of end-users, across the full spectrum of the maintenance calendar.

Together with a new draw-rod system, it features an easy to adjust heave lever and slip clutch PTO drive. With practicality and finesse at the heart of the machine, the 2519 also features new lighting and styling.

www.charterhouse-tm.co.uk



Four years on, the next generation of ProNitro® is now available, featuring DLF's new Hydroactive Water Management Technology.

ProNitro®'s targeted combination of controlled release nitrogen and sustainable water distribution optimises the delivery of essential nutrients and moisture to the developing seedling.

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OFFSIDE



Moving the goal posts

In a recent post-match interview, Ole Gunnar Solskjaer popped a joke about the groundsman saying: 'I think the ground staff must have moved the goal, half a yard.'



What! Wait, no. The groundsmen are to blame for Man United not being clinical in front of goal? Not the fact they had a shot on target rate of 31.25%, only hitting the target five times of the sixteen shots taken?

This was just honestly the worst comment I have probably heard, even if it was a joke!

Klopp has also been criticised for using the pitch and the wind as excuses. Making a gesture that the groundsman moved the poles, is another level of weird things to see in a post-match interview. It leaves the impression that the boss' river of excuses is running dry.

Wonky markings delay game by fifteen minutes

Hellas Verona were made to wait for their win over Genoa recently, as the referee noticed the penalty area lines were not straight before the match began.

Referee Maurizio Mariani noticed the issue at the Stadio Marc'Antonio Bentegodi during his pre-match pitch inspection.

Genoa confirmed on Twitter; 'The start of the game has been postponed for a quarter



of an hour to retrace the lines that delimit the penalty areas,' and the players and fans were made to wait.

Household appliances used to dry pitch

The first T20I between India and Sri Lanka at the Barsapara Cricket Stadium in Guwahati was abandoned due to the

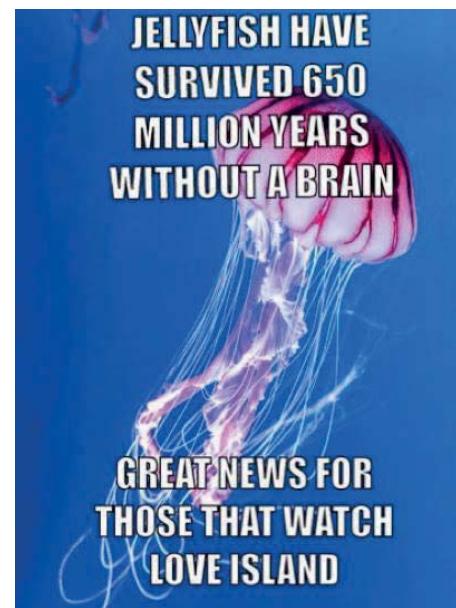


wet pitch so, groundsman used a vacuum cleaner, hairdryer and an iron in an attempt to dry the pitch.

The match was called off without a ball being bowled. India won the toss and opted to bowl first, but soon the heavens opened up. The rains resulted in the delay of the start of the match. However, once the rain cleared, the groundsman removed covers. The rain returned, and the groundstaff were unable to keep the pitch dry.

Social media users were quick to take a dig at the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI).

As seen on social media ...



The course is fine. What do you mean it's waterlogged?

If you spot anything you think might give readers a chuckle send it to: kerry.haywood@pitchcare.com

DIARY DATES

MARCH

- 1st:** Football - Carabao Cup Final, Wembley Stadium ([efl.com](#))
5th: Football - FA Cup fifth round ([thefa.com](#))
7th: Rugby Union - Six Nations, Ireland v Italy, Aviva Stadium, Dublin ([sixnationsrugby.com](#))
7th: Rugby Union - Six Nations, England v Wales, Twickenham Stadium, London ([sixnationsrugby.com](#))
8th: Rugby Union - Six Nations, Scotland v France, BT Murrayfield, Edinburgh ([sixnationsrugby.com](#))
10-13th: Horseracing - Cheltenham Festival ([cheltenhamfestival.net](#))
14th: Rugby Union - Six Nations, Wales v Scotland, Principality Stadium, Cardiff ([sixnationsrugby.com](#))
14th: Rugby Union - Six Nations, Italy v England, Stadio Olimpico, Rome ([sixnationsrugby.com](#))

APRIL

- 2nd:** Golf - Women's golf major - ANA Inspiration, Mission Hills ([lpga.com](#))
3rd-5th: Rugby Union - European Champions Cup quarter-finals ([epcrugby.com](#))
4th-5th: Football - FA Cup semi-finals, Wembley ([thefa.com](#))
4th: Horseracing - Grand National, Aintree ([grandnational.org.uk](#))
7th-8th: Football - Champions League quarter-finals, first legs ([thefa.com](#))
9th-12th: Golf - Masters, Augusta National ([masters.com](#))
10th: Football - Women's Euro 2021 qualifying: Wales v Faroe Islands ([uefa.com](#))

MAY

- 1st-5th:** Rugby Union - European Champions Cup semi-finals ([epcrugby.com](#))
5th-6th: Football - Champions League semi-final, second legs ([thefa.com](#))
9th: Football - Women's FA Cup final, Wembley Stadium ([thefa.com](#))
9th: Football - Scottish Cup final, Hampden Park ([sfl.co.uk](#))
14th-17th: Golf - US PGA Championship, Harding Park, San Francisco ([pgachampionship.com](#))
16th: Football - League Two play-off final, Wembley ([thefa.com](#))

To have your event included in this magazine diary section, please email details to kerry.haywood@pitchcare.com

- 14th:** Rugby Union - Six Nations, France v Ireland, Stade de France, Paris ([sixnationsrugby.com](#))
15th: Football - Women's FA Cup quarter-finals ([thefa.com](#))
19th-23rd: Cricket - Sri Lanka v England first Test, Galle ([ecb.co.uk](#))
21st-22nd: Football - FA Cup quarter-finals ([thefa.com](#))
27th: Football - Euro 2020 warm-ups: England v Italy; Wales v Austria ([uefa.com](#))
27th-31st: Cricket - Sri Lanka v England second Test, Colombo ([ecb.co.uk](#))
28th: Horseracing - Lincoln Family Fun Day, Doncaster ([doncaster-racecourse.co.uk](#))
30th: Football - Euro 2020 warm-ups: Wales v United States ([uefa.com](#))
31st: Football - Euro 2020 warm-ups: England v Denmark ([uefa.com](#))

- 12th-15th:** Cricket - first round of County Championship fixtures ([ecb.co.uk](#))
14th: Football - Women's Euro 2021 qualifying: Belarus v Northern Ireland; Wales v Norway; Scotland v Portugal ([uefa.com](#))
14th-15th: Football - Champions League quarter-finals, second legs ([thefa.com](#))
18th-19th: Football - FA Cup semi-finals, Wembley ([thefa.com](#))
19th: Football - Women's FA Cup semi-finals ([thefa.com](#))
28th-29th: Football - Champions League semi-final, first legs ([thefa.com](#))

- 23rd:** Football - FA Cup final, Wembley ([thefa.com](#))
23rd: Rugby Union - European Champions Cup final, Stade de Marseille ([epcrugby.com](#))
25th: Football - Championship play-off final, Wembley ([thefa.com](#))
25th: Football - Europa League final, Gdańsk ([uefa.com](#))
28th: Cricket - first round of T20 Blast group matches ([ecb.co.uk](#))
30th: Football - Champions League final, Olympic Stadium, Istanbul ([uefa.com](#))

QUOTE ME HAPPY

"Supercalifragilisticexpialidocious" - shy and retiring Ian Holloway describes how he's feeling about life at Grimsby.

"I was running the towel and drinks out, I said to him: 'Just imagine it's another game at Durham, mate, you'll be alright. Just try and hit the top off.' And then I ran off thinking: 'Why did I say that? We're in the middle of a Test match in Cape Town, and I'm trying to pass it off as just another game.' Then he got the wicket that over, and I thought: 'I'm a genius.'" **Mind doctor and 12th man Mark Wood reflects on his encouragement for Ben Stokes during the final few overs of the gripping Newlands Test.**

"Coming back to England having lost the World Cup final was awful. The day I returned to Sale for training, I felt something on my shoulder - I turned round to see a World Cup winner's medal and my smiling team-mate Faf de Klerk." **England Rugby's Tom Curry had a pretty good 2019, apart from the World Cup final!**

"Look, I chased girls. I drank alcohol, spent lavishly and thought I was someone that I wasn't. I lived that life and, in my experience, what did it give me? Hollowness and emptiness in my heart." **Rugby League's Sonny Bill Williams on finding Allah.**



Sonny Bill Williams

"Option A: rub shoulders and train with Morgan, Narine, Russell and Cummins on a daily basis. And potentially play in front of 70,000. Option B: nick off to a medium pacer on a green one in 8 degrees in front of a few hundred pensioners." **Notts CCC and T20 'specialist' Harry Gurney weighs in on the "should Tom Banton play in the IPL" debate.**

"They needed somebody in. I think he was not their number one and I would be surprised if he was their number two or three as well." **Jimmy Floyd Hasselbaik says Odion Ighalo must be the 'luckiest man' in football after securing a move to Old Trafford.**

"I just made far too many errors to be a professional athlete today. I just have to pretend like I don't want to punch the wall, but in reality I do!" **Serena Williams slammed her own performance after losing to Wang Qiang at the Australian Open.**

It's about obsessing over the little things, the details no one else sees. It's never tolerating anything less than the best. Perfection is a mindset. And that's worth being proud of.

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