

PITCHCARE

The turfcare magazine from pitchcare.com

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DON'T MISS

FIFA Update

2022 marks men's World Cup year for the FIFA pitch team. Qatar's final installations training and touches are being made as preparations continue for the wintertime showpiece event

A GREEN OASIS IN THE CITY CENTRE

Bath Cricket Club's ground sits in the heart of the historic city, just a short walk from its centre. In this article, Gordon Gill, the club's Head Groundsman for close on twenty years, charts his career to date and talks about practices that will be familiar to many cricket groundsman the length and breadth of the UK

Meet the new Banchef

Arboga Golfklubb lies approximately 120 kilometres due west of Sweden's capital, Stockholm. It is here that Head Greenkeeper Reece Harvey - or to give him his correct title, 'Banchef' - has recently made his home. In this question and answer session, he charts his career to date



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WELCOME TO

PITCHCARE

Many returns

This month's foreword falls back to me, after a necessary break to rid myself of breast cancer. I'm pleased to report that everything has gone well and I'm well on the road to a full recovery.

The support and well wishes from industry friends was nothing short of overwhelming and it goes to prove that we are a family. Thank you to each and every one of you, but the biggest thank you goes to my work family for being so supportive and holding the fort!

Also making a recent return was BTME. Whilst some exhibitors reported the show was quieter than usual, I think its comeback was bound to come with a little trepidation; both with some visitors choosing not to attend and have caution after the pandemic, plus some greenkeepers too busy in the calendar with a new March date.

BIGGA reported that, although numbers were down, exhibitors suggested valuable business was done as the exhibition halls buzzed with the greenkeeping industry reconvening properly for the first time in over two years.

Following the exhibition, CEO Jim Croxton made an appeal for greater support for greenkeepers and golf club staff to cope with growing memberships. "The success of this year's Continue to Learn education programme at BTME has proved once again that BIGGA members continue to rise to the challenge that managing a golf course in the 21st Century brings. Today's greenkeepers are better educated than ever before, overcoming the challenges they face each day to present stunning golf courses for their members to enjoy.

Greenkeepers have held up their end of the bargain and now it is time for the golf industry to do the same."

Quite how we do this remains to be seen, although the appeal does come with a recommendation to increase salaries for golf staff by five percent! Again, how this is enforced and how we attract new people into the industry is the big question?

In this issue (page 82), David and John Lawrence from Edgbaston Priory explain in-depth about their involvement with the Heart of Birmingham Vocational College (HBVC) to provide working opportunities for young people with special needs. It is well worth a read to see if you too could support the initiative and increase productivity at your clubs.

With summer just around the corner, bringing longer nights and increasing temperatures, everything is beginning to look somewhat brighter!

**Keep smiling
Kerry**



SAY THAT AGAIN!

"One thing that will always be great within the industry is the real family feel and the willingness to help people along the way. Long may it continue"

Stuart Lee Adams, Cardigan Golf Club

"The most curious question during the interview was; Do you like football?, to which I answered honestly; "I don't like football but I do love working with grass"

Salvador Lomeña Santos, Marbella Football Center

"Replacing old machines can be difficult because we keep them well maintained, meaning a mower that might be twenty-five years old still does a job and only looks five years old"

Gordon Gill, Bath Cricket Club

"As an industry, it means we need to move away from looking at the barriers that perceptions of disability create, and look at the opportunities that disability offers"

John Lawrence, Edgbaston Priory

"There's little we're doing here that you wouldn't have read in a textbook thirty years ago; we are not looking to reinvent the wheel"

Darren McLaughlan, North Berwick GC

"We've been together a long time now and she knows to prompt me to talk about the day, rather than keeping things under wraps. Debbie can tell if it's been a bad day. We are both good listeners and I'll ask her how her day has gone too"

Matt Merchant, Emirates Old Trafford

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DAVE MEARS

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Issue 102 - April/May 2022

Gordon Gill, Bath Cricket Club

COVER STORY: A green oasis in the city centre

Bath Cricket Club's ground sits in the heart of the historic city, just a short walk from its centre. In this article, Gordon Gill, the club's Head Groundsman for close on twenty years, charts his career to date and talks about practices that will be familiar to many cricket groundsmen the length and breadth of the UK **P66**

GOLF

Meet the new Banchef

Arboga Golfklubb lies approximately 120 kilometres due west of Sweden's capital, Stockholm. It is here that Head Greenkeeper Reece Harvey - or to give him his correct title, 'Bancheff' - has recently made his home. In this question and answer session, he charts his career to date. **P12**

Rewilding the heathland

Woking Golf Club lies in the heart of rural Surrey and sits on the region's typical heathland. Phil Helmn MG paid a visit to meet with the club's Course Manager, Andy Ewence who is working on a rewilding programme to return the heathland characteristics to the course alongside rejuvenating tired and out of date bunkers. **P22**

It's no pullover!

Founded in 1895 and listed as one of the top twenty courses to play in Wales, Cardigan Golf Club has seen considerable improvements in recent years. Projects continue under the watchful eye of Course Manager and Head Greenkeeper Stuart Lee Adams, and he met with Kerry Haywood to tell us more. **P36**



Arboga Golfklubb

WINTER SPORTS

Spain's elite training centre

As top class football training facilities go, Marbella Football Center is up there with some of the best in the world. Regularly used by elite teams from the UK and Europe, along with national sides, the pitches have to be in the best condition at all times. Salvador Lomeña Santos is the man in overall charge of all things agronomic. **P38**

Levelling the playing field

2022 marks the start of the men's World Cup year for the FIFA pitch team. Qatar's final installations, training and touches are being made, but as preparations continue for the wintertime showpiece event, Alan Ferguson and his team have been at work delivering three other tournaments. **P44**

Let there be light!

March 2022 is a positive time in the long and proud history of Ipswich Town Football Club. Ten months on from the estimated forty-million-pound takeover by the American based Gamechanger 20 Group, optimism has returned to the Suffolk club. A positive Grounds Manager, Ben Connell, explains all to Blair Ferguson. **P52**

Where turf care is Complete

Not one of the traditional names perhaps in English football, but Crawley Town is well established and, for the eleventh year in a row, assured of EFL status next season, sitting comfortably midtable in League Two. Neville Johnson went to its People's Pension Stadium to talk to the contractor who looks after the pitch and discovers he and his team are very much part of the club's family. **P60**

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SUMMER SPORTS

Every which way a winner

Turning round an international cricket square 90 degrees and absorbing ever busier sporting calendars have only served to further raise standards at Emirates Old Trafford, where Greg Rhodes caught up with multi-award winning Head Groundsman Matt Merchant. **P76**

Growing opportunity

In September 2016, at the start of the academic year, the Edgbaston Priory Club began working with the Heart of Birmingham Vocational College (HBVC). HBVC is an independent specialist college for young people, generally aged 16 to 25, with special educational needs which may often include autism. Assistant Grounds Manager John Lawrence and Grounds Manager Dave Lawrence explain the journey so far. **P82**

MULTI SPORTS

Local hero

Working to meet the demands of a growing interest in cricket, the one-man grounds team at Kineton Sports and Social Club channels a passion for the sport to maintain high standards. Jane Carley talks to sole groundsman Andrew Cartledge who is tasked with looking after the seventeen acre site. **P94**

SCHOOLS & COLLEGES

Hope springs eternal...

Student wellbeing ranks high in Liverpool Hope University's strategy for upgrading its landscape provision. Greg Rhodes speaks to Martin Grayshon, Head of Grounds and Gardens. **P100**

EQUESTRIAN

Grand old course of York

Racing's elite has become more demanding of turf standards in recent years, so how do you ensure the best possible going in the cold, wet north of England? Jane Carley meets Head Groundsman Adrian Kay at York to find out. **P106**



Matt Merchant,
Head Groundsman,
Emirates Old
Trafford

PUBLIC PLACES

Caring for Clumber

Bought by the National Trust in 1946, Clumber Park, originally home to the Duke of Newcastle and once part of the famous Sherwood Forest, is visited by thousands each year. Caring for the vast expanse of this 3,800-acre site comprising parkland, heath and woods is no mean task. David Mears went along recently to meet Gareth Jones, Lead Ranger and discover more. **P112**

ARTIFICIAL SURFACES

Mitigate the migration

The ability of a synthetic turf surface to sustain high levels of usage and allow large numbers of people to play and enjoy sport has cemented their role in many communities. One important fact to consider when it comes to both the usage and maintenance of your synthetic surface is minimising the migration of infill into the environment. Tom Shinkins of GKB Machines explores. **P122**

TECHNICAL

Seven-step method

As much as it is exciting to be in the market for a utility vehicle, it can also be overwhelming. Here's how you should think about whether an electric vehicle is right for you, says Dave French, sales manager at Reesink e-Vehicles. **P126**

Rough Treatment

North Berwick's Course Manager Darren McLaughlan is undertaking a five-year rough management programme to return the course to a more natural state. **P130**

TRAINING & EDUCATION

Fight or Flight? Or Freeze?

Turfcare Sector Trainer and Presenter Frank Newberry turns his attention to a fear that many of us have in life - the fear of public speaking. He offers three quick and easy ways to minimise the fears that are strongest in the final hour before we make a speech or presentation. This final hour is when we are most likely to fight or flee or freeze! **P134**



Salvador Lomeña Santos, Marbella



Adrian Kay, York Racecourse



Andrew Cartledge, Kineton Sports



Andy Ewence, Woking Golf Club

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New training courses



Reesink's new range of training courses, of which there are now four, are now held at the customer's venue and focus on getting the best from Toro equipment in just two days.

Lee Rowbotham, service manager at Reesink Turfcare, says: "We knew coming out of the pandemic we were going to have to look at doing things differently and we decided all the courses would all be hosted at the customer's venue using their own products. This ensures there's little disruption to the new schedule, but most significantly it comes with the advantage of the customer learning in an environment they are familiar with, about products that they have and use daily."

The courses cover the Safe Use of Ride-On Mowers which is ideal for new starters giving a thorough overview of operating, checking and maintaining ride-on mowing equipment. The Turfcare Mechanics course is aimed at instilling confidence in troubleshooting, routine servicing and maintenance of Toro equipment as well as understanding Toro Fault Codes and Level 1 Hydraulics and Electrics fundamentals to incorporate on board machinery diagnostics.

The Professional Sprayer course focuses on how to calibrate and operate Toro spraying equipment and the Compact Tractor Driving course is a quick refresher course on what to look out for on pre-use checks before using a compact tractor and its attachments, guiding you through basic operations and manoeuvring.

All provide manufacturer backed certification at the end of the course and both course material and assessment are included in the fees. Each course ranges from one to two days of training and can be conducted on an individual basis or in small groups.

Lee continues: "We've tailored these courses to meet our customers' needs, whether that be carrying out preventative maintenance, fine tuning their cutting units or calibrating their Toro sprayer. We feel that having this knowledge has so many benefits in getting the best from their Toro and TYM equipment."

Reesink Turfcare offers competitive prices and flexible dates so that they can book training ahead of time, safe in the knowledge they are getting the best deals possible.

Training is an invaluable investment in the workforce and developing skills and expanding knowledge in the products they use and repair on a daily basis.

To find out more contact Reesink Turfcare on 01480 226800 or visit reesinkturfcare.co.uk

Learning LIVE 2022 - Call for Papers



Organisers of SALTEX are looking for the best speakers in the grounds management industry to showcase their knowledge at the show, which will take place at the NEC, Birmingham on 2 and 3 November 2022.

Learning LIVE, SALTEX's all-encompassing education programme, provides advice, insight and real solutions to the biggest issues that the grounds management industry cares about most. Organisers aim for the seminar programme at SALTEX to be engaging, informative and educational for attendees.

Since its creation in 2015, the most popular Learning LIVE sessions have been case studies and presentations from companies or

individuals who are prepared to share personal experience and learnings, but the submission of presentations on new and emerging trends, technologies and innovations that will benefit the sports turf industry are also encouraged.

Each proposal will be evaluated and those that most closely match the needs of the attendees will be selected.

Please note that Learning LIVE is an educational, editorial opportunity - to discuss commercial or promotional opportunities at SALTEX please contact Sarah Cunningham - saltexsales@thegma.org.uk

For more information visit www.gmasaltex.co.uk

Cosham football centre plans approved by committee

A new football centre in Portsmouth has moved a step closer after councillors approved plans for a pavilion and all-weather pitches.

The proposals for the "football hub" at King George V Playing Fields at Cosham are aimed at improving grassroots participation in football.

The city council said the plan was "good for sports and recreation" in the north of the city.

Critics warned the scheme could reduce public access to the playing fields.

The proposals were drawn up by the city council in conjunction with the Football Association, The Football Foundation and football clubs.

The planning application for the King George V Playing Fields included 3G pitches as well as changing facilities, offices, a cafe and an extended car park, according to the Local



Democracy Reporting Service.

City councillor Matt Atkins, who represents the Cosham ward, said there were concerns the development would make the playing fields less accessible.

He said: "This is effectively an application to turn the site into an FA centre of excellence. It will become more expensive [to use], it will become more for the exclusive use of people who take their football very seriously."

"This is potentially putting the good of youth football above the good of Cosham residents."

SAGE registration open

Visitor registration for SAGE 2022 event is now open

The UK's largest outdoor sports and grounds maintenance tradeshow, SAGE is taking place on 6th & 7th July at The Three Counties Showground in Malvern. Registration has now opened for visitors, so if you would like to book your free place at this much-anticipated event, register on the website now.

There will be people from a wide range of industries exhibiting products, providing live demonstrations and even the opportunity to take a free training course.

The venue has been selected to provide a safe outdoor environment and The Three Counties Showground has been awarded the VisitEngland 'We're Good to Go' industry charter mark. This means that the showground meets the Government and public health guidance on COVID-19 health and safety processes.

Discover industry trends and top priorities

Due to restrictions over the last two years, everyone is looking forward to the opportunity to network with people from across their industry. As well as being able to build up industry connections, attending the event enables people to find out about new products or trends that can improve the way that they work.

The main priority of SAGE is that visitors get to see the industry products in action, in an environment that has ample space to accommodate the largest kit on sale. Amongst our exhibitors there are businesses who supply

turfcare products and equipment, playground equipment and landscaping equipment.

Focus on sustainability

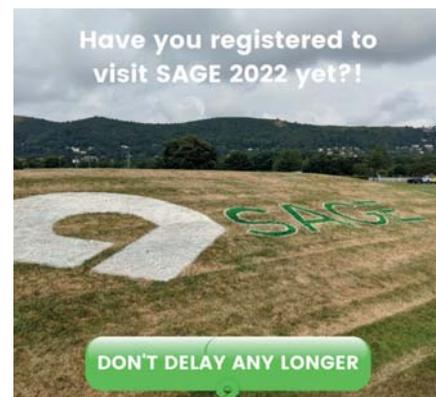
This year, sustainability has become an even more prominent priority across all industries and SAGE is proud to be hosting the first sustainability summit, which will take place on Wednesday 6th July at SAGE 2022, in partnership with Bio-Circle. The summit will be led by experts across the industry, and will provide guidance and support on how sustainable solutions can be achieved by businesses across the sports and grounds maintenance industry. The panel along with their colleagues will be on hand to deliver tailored options for those looking to adopt processes that are more environmentally friendly.

With the Government's carbon net zero targets to comply with, more businesses have started to explore the different ways that they can reduce carbon emissions. The summit will target this topic head on and help to drive a better understanding of the priorities and solutions for the sports and grounds maintenance industry regarding their responsibilities for reducing carbon emissions.

Other activities to look forward to

There will be taster courses on offer, as well as talks from the leading experts across the industry.

Everyone is welcome to attend SAGE 2022. Visitors from last year included educational



institutions, local authorities and councils, contractors, construction managers and estates.

SAGE invites all visitors to join us at the networking event on the Wednesday evening, sponsored by Fleet Line Markers, where everyone will get the opportunity to meet fellow industry professionals at the stunning showground, with a few extras as well.

To register for SAGE 2022. Please visit: www.sportsandgrounds.events.



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CEO wants support

BIGGA CEO appeals for greater support for greenkeepers and golf club staff following BTME 2022

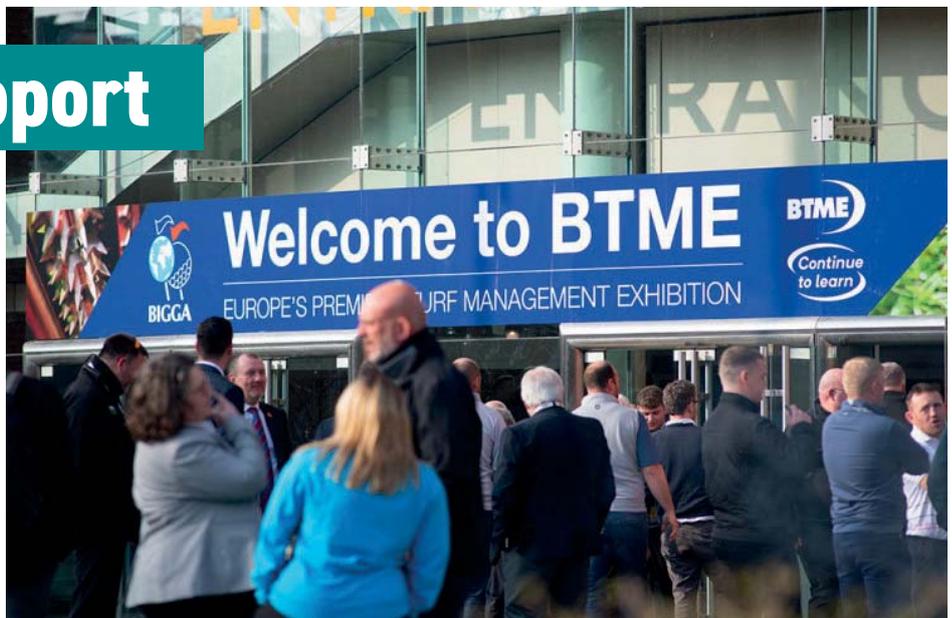
As the UK golfing industry prepares itself for another bumper summer, the chief executive of the UK's greenkeepers' association, has issued a rallying cry for the game to reinvest in golf club staff who make the game possible.

Speaking following the BIGGA Turf Management Exhibition (BTME), BIGGA CEO Jim Croxton said that, with golf participation and membership booming, the time has come for the leading bodies in the game to make a priority of the workforce in golf clubs that facilitate our great sport.

BTME was unable to take place in 2021 due to the COVID-19 pandemic but saw a successful return this year, albeit delayed due to concerns regarding the Omicron variant last winter. BTME 2022 saw 2,577 unique visitors attend the trade show, which represents a drop of around 40% on 2020. Over 70% of the visitors to the show were in senior 'decision making' roles, such as course managers and head greenkeepers.

Although numbers were down, the event was enjoyed by those in attendance with many exhibitors reporting valuable business done as the Harrogate Convention Centre's exhibition halls buzzed with the greenkeeping industry reconvening properly for the first time in over two years. A common topic of discussion in the halls, conferences and social interactions was the challenges currently facing the industry.

Jim said: "When the pandemic hit, the industry came together to form a 'wartime cabinet' that supported the game through extremis. With fewer high-profile crises facing the sport, the emergency footing has abated. However, there remain a number of serious challenges, such as the supply chain issues for machinery and equipment and the cost and availability of water, fuel and raw materials such as fertilisers and sands. The labour crisis is another major issue that we simply must address to keep the sport healthy."



"For many years the main focus of the game has been growing the number of people playing golf. The pandemic effectively gave us two million extra golfers in the UK and that has brought significant additional revenue into the game. It's now time for clubs to focus on the importance of their workforce, without whom the sport would wither on the vine."

Among key areas of concern for Jim and the BIGGA team are the conditions that greenkeepers are expected to work in. Whilst some forward-thinking clubs now provided modern, clean and comfortable facilities for their greenkeeping teams, many still force their team to use outdated facilities that are no longer fit for purpose.

Other significant areas of concern are salaries, particularly for entry level staff and those making their way through the ranks. Additionally, the incredibly-high expectations placed upon greenkeepers to present golf courses despite the often limited resources made available to them, which can cause significant stress and mental health problems.

BIGGA is an active participant in the Committee for Golf Club Salaries (CGCS), which this year issued a recommendation to increase salaries for golf club staff by five percent to help with the rising cost of living, as well as an increased awareness of the vital role staff play in the success of a facility. However, the guidelines

are recommendations that not all clubs adhere to.

Jim added: "I was at a gathering of golf club leaders last autumn and asked the attendees to put their hands up if they would be prepared to work in the facilities they provide for their greenkeepers. Only a minority raised their hands and that shows an awareness of how we aren't looking after the staff who play such a critical role in the success of golf businesses and the wider sport. It is also, of course, important to point out the challenges that club managers and other staff are facing in a rapidly changing and demanding industry. Golf is a sport that is delivered by people at facility level; every club is autonomous and this leads to huge variations in pay, conditions and welfare for the staff members in those facilities."

"Greenkeeping is a wonderful profession with many physical and mental health benefits and a wide range of career opportunities. It is time for golf clubs to put their staff first, invest in their wellbeing and for a framework to be put in place that ensures every facility in the country treats their staff in a respectful and appropriate manner."

For more information about the British & International Golf Greenkeepers Association, visit www.bigga.org

Excellence in Communications Awards

BIGGA and Campey Turf Care Systems have revealed the winners of the BIGGA Excellence in Communications Awards.

Whether using digital and social media, community outreach or by producing an article for the monthly journal of BIGGA, *Greenkeeper International*, the awards recognise those greenkeepers who have embraced communication as a vital tool available to the modern turf professional, helping to improve understanding and appreciation of the greenkeeping industry among the public or sharing ideas and best practice for the turf management community.

Three awards categories were up for grabs. The Innovation and Thought Leadership Award is given to the BIGGA member who has written the most thought-provoking article for

Greenkeeper International in the previous calendar year. The judges selected as the winner a feature written by Prestonfield Golf Club's Course Manager Shaun Cunningham. Included within the February 2021 edition of the magazine, Shaun discussed the topic of out-of-play areas and whether a golfer's enjoyment of a golf course depended as much upon the wider environment and landscape as it did the playing surfaces.

The New Media Award was given to a BIGGA member who embraced the possibilities of digital media to raise understanding of what goes on behind-the-scenes at a golf course. This year's New Media Award winner was John Rowbottom, greenkeeper at Woolley Park Golf Club in Barnsley.

The winner of this year's Outreach award was



Shaun Cunningham (left) was presented with the Innovation and Thought Leadership Award by Lee Morgado of Campey Turf Care Systems

John Milne, head greenkeeper at Garmouth & Kingston Golf Club. John has presented in schools and at careers events to raise awareness of life at the golf club. He also invites students to the golf course to show how golf facilities can be beneficial for the natural environment.

Ian's walk for charity

Ian's 'World Cup Walk' aims to raise £50,000 for charity

Cambridge United's stadium manager is aiming to raise £50k for mental health charities by walking the equivalent of the distance from London to Qatar ahead of the 2022 World Cup.

Ian Darler's gruelling 3,229 mile challenge has already brought in £10,000 - just a few days after he embarked on the epic fundraising effort. Kind-hearted Ian is no stranger to charity missions, recently raising £12,075 for mental health helpline Shout through his Million Steps Challenge.

He has spoken out about his experiences with depression and PTSD and said he is eager to continue spreading awareness and raising money for charities focusing on mental health.

He said: "After hitting rock bottom some years ago, I am now thankfully in a much better place and have come through one of the most challenging periods in my life. It is so important to discuss our mental health and to not allow each other to suffer in silence - like I did - which is why I now want to keep the conversation and the fundraising going."

"The statistics surrounding depression, anxiety, loneliness, self-harm and suicide are absolutely frightening. We still have such a long way to go, which is why I would implore everyone who can to play their part and make a donation."

"The Million Steps challenge was a real challenge, but also a very humbling experience



Cambridge United stadium manager and head groundsman Ian Darler and manager Mark Bonner (Image: Cambridge United)

and I expect nothing less this time around."

Victoria Hornby, CEO of charity Mental Health Innovations, which powers Shout 85258, said, "We are incredibly grateful to Ian for undertaking such an epic fundraising challenge for Shout by walking to the Qatar World Cup. Every day, we are currently taking 2,400 conversations with children and adults across the UK who are struggling to cope with suicidal thoughts,

depression, anxiety, stress, loneliness and much more."

"Every penny raised will enable us to take conversations that could save lives. Thank you Ian and good luck, I can't wait to join you somewhere along the way!"

To donate towards Ian's campaign, visit his fundraising page.

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PELLENC

Increased funding

Premier League announces increased funding for non-league and women's clubs

The Premier League has announced increased financial support for clubs throughout the football pyramid to make improvements to their stadiums.

Grants totalling £16 million are being made available to clubs in the National League System and women's football pyramid between now and the end of next season. This is more than double the existing annual investment provided by the Premier League to support ground improvements for lower-league clubs.

Premier League Stadium Fund grants will enable clubs to invest in projects to develop many aspects of their grounds, including the ongoing improvements required for stadiums to meet the requirements of the league that clubs play in.

The Premier League will also provide specific support for clubs in their recovery from the impact of COVID-19, helping them to enhance links with their local communities. These grants will allow clubs to develop areas such as clubhouses, hospitality areas, catering and other facilities to benefit fans and increase revenue streams to build larger, more sustainable clubs. Applications for this club development fund will open on Wednesday 6th April, with more information on all Premier League Stadium Fund grants available at premierleague.com/stadiumfund.

Premier League Chief Executive Richard Masters said: "The strength of our football pyramid is unique in world football and the Premier League has a long-standing commitment to provide funding for clubs at all levels."

"With our increased financial support, we are helping clubs plan for the future and improve their long-term sustainability. This is particularly important as they recover from the financial impact of the COVID-19 pandemic."



Newcastle United player Dan Burn returns to non-league Blyth Spartans supported by the Premier League

"We know how important it is for the Premier League to support all levels of the game. Football clubs are vital to local communities and we hope this funding will help them develop multi-use facilities to support football for the whole community."

The new Premier League Stadium Fund is part of the £1.6 billion the Premier League will invest between 2022 and 2025 to support communities and the wider game.

The announcement follows this year's Non-League Day, which the Premier League and its clubs supported in a number of ways. Visit premierleague.com for new content, including Newcastle United's Dan Burn visiting his hometown club Blyth Spartans, who are one of more than 3,000 teams to have benefitted from Premier League funding at lower-league stadiums over the last two decades.

The National League North club has improved numerous facilities thanks to Premier League funding over the years. This includes a new stand, turnstiles, pitch barriers and a viewing area for disabled fans. They also benefitted from the Premier League-financed Matchday Support Fund, which provided £5.5 million of grants to help more than 1,000 clubs during the

pandemic.

Blyth Spartans Chairman Tony Platten said: "When I inherited the club back in 2000, there was almost no infrastructure here at Croft Park and we were in danger of being chucked out of the league because the ground wasn't up to standard."

"Funding from the Premier League has allowed us to develop the ground to the standard it's at now, which we think is one of the better grounds in our league."

Premier League Stadium Fund

Clubs that play at Step 1 to 6 of the National League System and Tiers 1 to 4 of the Women's Football Pyramid are eligible to apply for grants through the Premier League Stadium Fund.

The Football Foundation will manage the administration of the grants to clubs. Applications to the Premier League Stadium Fund for the usual stadium improvements and developments (those previously available through the Football Stadia Improvement Fund) opened on Wednesday 30th March and clubs can begin the process by visiting premierleague.com/stadiumfund

JMG Amenity wins top UK spraying award

Jason Garlick of JMG Amenity has won the prestigious overall title of Amenity Sprayer Operator of the Year (ASOY). The Award was presented by TV personality Naga Munchetty and Amenity Forum Chairman, Professor John Moverley, at a BTME ceremony in Harrogate.

The Leicestershire-based JMG Amenity provides turf care and weed solutions across the east midlands and had previously won the ASOY category for sports turf application.

"Winning Amenity Sprayer Operator of the Year is a testament to the commitment and professionalism of all the team involved," said Jason.

"Protecting the environment, our operators, customers and the public is the highest priority for our business," he emphasised. "That is why we place strong emphasis on maintaining the

highest possible standards and use only the most up to date equipment."

"It ensures minimal impact on the environment and assures the desired high levels of customer satisfaction."

Quality is paramount at JMG Amenity. All personnel are fully trained and qualified in the correct handling and application of chemicals with all the equipment used.

The business offers agronomy and application services for public and private sector, including golf and all sports venues, leisure facilities, local government, utilities, schools, universities, industrial areas, forestry and other areas requiring vegetation management.

Winners of the ASOY category for Landscape & Industrial applications and overall runners-up in the industry-leading awards were



Bournemouth-based Southern Horticulture, with the prize accepted by director, Tony Robinson.

The Amenity Sprayer of the Year awards are organised by the Amenity Forum, sponsored by ICL and Syngenta and supported by BASIS.



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Plant a Tree for BTME

BIGGA has launched a new scheme that will see exhibitors at its annual trade show and education conference encouraged to 'Plant a Tree for BTME'

The 2022 edition of the BIGGA Turf Management Exhibition (BTME) was held from 22 to 24 March at the Harrogate Convention Centre, but is anticipated to return to its regular January date in 2023. Exhibitors who sign up to attend the 2023 event will be given the option of purchasing a tree, to be planted at a nominated golf course.

It is hoped that over the years sufficient trees will be planted to create a network of 'BTME community woodlands' around the UK, with Harrogate Golf Club the first club to participate in the scheme.

With individual trees capturing up to one tonne of carbon dioxide from our air over its lifetime, the scheme will raise awareness of the carbon footprint generated by major events such as BTME and be a flagship initiative as BIGGA seeks to improve its sustainable practices, as is echoed at forward-thinking golf facilities everywhere.

BIGGA Membership Services Manager for Sustainability James Hutchinson said: "The idea of planting trees as a means of offsetting carbon generated by people travelling to attend BTME



BIGGA's Membership Services Manager for Ecology James Hutchinson (left) and Head of Business Development Lauren Frazer (right) with Harrogate Golf Club Course Manager Ken Ward

was first proposed by a BIGGA member a couple of months ago and it is something that struck me as making a lot of sense. Those who know me know that I'm a dendrophile - I love trees - and as we explored the possibility further we uncovered schemes such as the National Trust's pledge to plant twenty million trees by 2030, so it just made a lot of sense to get involved."

"It is always important to take great care when selecting what trees to plant on a golf course as not all species are appropriate or will generate the desired result but, by working with courses that are eager to create areas of woodland for the wider community, we believe this scheme will help to raise awareness of the good work that golf courses are doing to protect the natural environment."

Harrogate Golf Club's course manager, Ken Ward, said: "An old employer of mine once told me, 'we're just custodians of this land'. That rang true with me. We're not here for that long but we want to leave it in a better place than we found it. This is an opportunity to get our members and two local primary schools involved with a project on the golf course, which is a fantastic thing."

Plant a Tree for BTME is just one of a number of initiatives that BIGGA has undertaken to reduce the carbon footprint of BTME.

BTME returns from 24 to 26 January 2023 at the Harrogate Convention Centre. The event is free to attend and for more information visit www.btme.org.uk

The GMA Awards relaunch for 2022

Following the launch of the Grounds Management Association's Hall of Fame, the association relaunches the GMA Awards (previously IOG Awards) with the ceremony taking place this November at The Vox, Birmingham.

Last year, the awards were on hold due to the Coronavirus pandemic, which gave GMA members and the industry the opportunity to focus on challenging maintenance diaries. In 2022, the GMA Awards hosts 19 categories to cover the broad spectrum of its members, including the Volunteer Sports Grounds Team/Individual of the Year Award, the Best Environmental and Sustainability Impact Award and the renowned Alex R Millar Award.

With turf care quickly growing its media presence and public interest, the GMA has also

looked at ways to make the awards more accessible to those at all levels of grounds care or turf management, from grassroots to professional stadiums. This includes, for the first time, applicants having the option to submit a short video to the set questions and criteria, instead of completing a written form.

Commenting on the return of the GMA Awards, GMA CEO Geoff Webb says: "Last year, we recognised that entering the GMA Awards was not a priority for many grounds staff and volunteers but, with growing post-COVID-19 optimism, we warmly welcome everyone back to celebrate their achievements in 2022. Both paid groundstaff and volunteers are the backbone of sport and physical activity, and our new award categories aim to make the applications more inclusive and easier to enter."



Award nominations will open on Tuesday 3rd May. Nominees will receive an award application, which they can complete in written or video format. These will then be judged by an independent panel of experts which will be announced later this year.

Deadline for nominations is Friday 29th July 2022, and the deadline for applications is Monday 8th August.

For more information, please visit <https://thegma.org.uk/awards>.

To confirm or purchase sponsorship packages for the GMA Awards, please email csunningham@thegma.org.uk.

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Arboga Golfklubb

Meet the new Banchef

Arboga Golfklubb lies approximately 120 kilometres due west of Sweden's capital, Stockholm. It is here that Head Greenkeeper **Reece Harvey** - or to give him his correct title, 'Banchef' - has recently made his home. In this question and answer session, he charts his career to date



My dream was to always travel around and I think I was always looking from the minute I found out that it was possible through the job we do. It was a very spontaneous decision and I really didn't have to think about it too much



Looking down the 15th fairway

Reece Harvey, the recently installed Banchef (Head Greenkeeper) at Arboga Golfklubb in Sweden has just completed his first year at the club. In this Q&A, he discusses his career to date and how he ended up working in this delightful country.

Pitchcare: How did you get into the industry and where did you work prior to your current position?

Reece Harvey: I first worked in the industry when I started my apprenticeship at age sixteen at The Grove in Hertfordshire (2012-2017). After over four years there, I moved onto Sandy Lodge Golf Club in Hertfordshire. I spent just over one year there and I left the country to work for the first time (2017-2018). I went to Ingarö Golfklubb, Stockholm, Sweden. I spent five months there as a seasonal (2018). Then went onto be a seasonal at Jacks Point Golf Club, Queenstown, New Zealand for six months (2018-2019). After this, I went back to Ingarö Golfklubb as Foreman (2019-2021). I then moved onto my first Head Greenkeeper position at Arboga Golfklubb, Sweden (2021-Present) which is where I am to date.

What training and education did you undertake?

I have achieved my level 2 and 3 NVQ in greenkeeping. All spray certificates (PA 1, 2 and 3). Lots of in-house training, forklift license; chainsaw licence is the next thing.

Was there one person who inspired you?

I don't think I can just pinpoint one person, I had so much help, especially in the beginning. So I would say the people that had the biggest impact for me to be where I am today were the people who went out of their way to help me.

Are you responsible for budgets or do you report to someone else - for example a greens chairman or committee?

I work with the treasurer and general manager off the base of last year's budget and what I would like to maybe change or add, we will then settle on a figure and then present this to the board and they would then either say 'yes' or the more common, 'why are we spending more on this?'. They are very understanding and we would talk about it and come to an agreement.

What inspired you to make the move abroad?

My dream was to always travel around and I think I was always looking from the minute I found out that it was possible through the job we do. It was a very spontaneous decision and I really didn't have to think about it too much.

What aspect of the UK do you miss most?

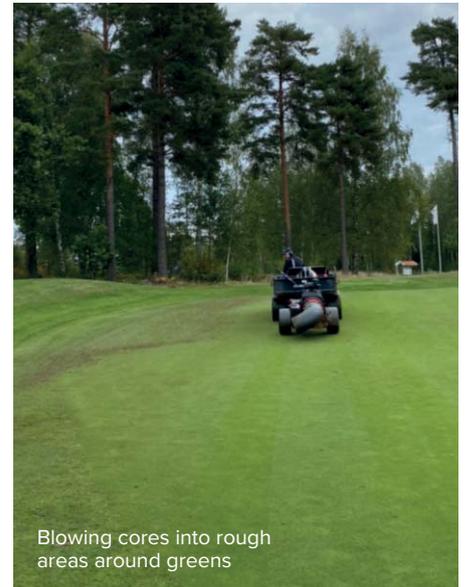
Not the weather. Although I didn't really pick the best country for that either, as I'm sat here waiting for the ice/snow to melt on the greens. The obvious one is family and friends, but I think having things like Facetime helps with that a lot.



Over here it is really all about keeping your greens alive going into the next season, it certainly is nerve-racking but you have to trust your gut and hope it is right



Brushing after dressing



Blowing cores into rough areas around greens

What do you think is the biggest difference in course management between the UK and overseas?

The different cultures are sometimes a challenge for sure. Over here it is really all about keeping your greens alive going into the next season, it certainly is nerve-racking but you have to trust your gut and hope it is right.

What type of course is Arboga?

The club was founded in 1988 and used to be farmland. I would describe it as parkland, with some beautiful backdrops of forest.

How many courses and what size?

One 18-hole golf course - 5880m par 72 - with a 6-hole par 3 training course. The total area, including all forest areas, is around 80 hectares.

Greens = 1.2 hectares

Tees = 0.5 hectares

Approaches = 0.7 hectares

Fairways = 7 hectares

The rest is made up of rough, lakes and forests.

What additional staff do you have?

As the seasons are very short and we are closed from around early November to around early/mid April, we employ mostly seasonal staff. This is difficult as you normally have some different people each year.

We have a newly starting mechanic called Tomas who has a background in farming.

We will then normally have someone for nine months and then two for six months, we also have a junior or two work with us for the holidays.

Do you employ a workshop technician?

Yes we do, we have just had our long time mechanic retire, but he still helps out and will show the new mechanic the tips and tricks.

Is servicing and machinery maintenance carried out in-house or outsourced?

We service our machines in-house, mostly straight after the season before winter. We



Banchef Reece Harvey



We service our machines in-house, mostly straight after the season before winter. We do not have our own grinders here so whenever we need it we will take them to a local golf club and they will do it - for a price of course



A 100 pin rake used for fairways (replacement for verticutting units)



Cutting fairways after rake



We do not use any PGR and will only cut on average four times per week in the summer - and we roll the other days. We maintain a good 10-11 on the stimp meter on a daily basis

do not have our own grinders here so whenever we need it we will take them to a local golf club and they will do it - for a price of course.

What additional help do you get (part time, consultants, agronomists, contractors etc.)?

We try to get some of our junior section to work on the course during the holidays and you never know they might love it and want to become a greenkeeper full time.

We try to do everything in-house to save a substantial amount of money.

How would you describe the soil profile generally?

Mostly clay all over the course, some areas have more topsoil than others, but not much.

How were the greens and tees constructed?

Greens are USGA spec, tees are generally drainage if needed and depending on how much topsoil we need.

Do they require any special maintenance techniques?

Greens are velvet bent grass so they really do not need much in the way of fertiliser, it will become very thatchy very quickly. We do not use any PGR and will only cut on average four times per week in the summer - and we roll the other days. We maintain a good 10-11 on the stimp meter on a daily basis, I am interested to see what we can do with the velvet bent grass this year.

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Presentation is very important, I feel like the first thing a golfer sees is that. First impressions play on the mind from the very beginning



Dressing after hollow tining



Rolling after brushing

Do you have any additional equipment/systems at your disposal - for example, drainage, irrigation, covers?

We have a full irrigation system with recently replaced pumps in 2019. There are green covers for us to use but, due to the green type, we do not use them very much at all.

Does the course suffer from any regular natural occurrences such as flooding, high winds, excessive snowfall/frosts, drought etc?

Where we are located is known as the ice belt of Sweden, we can have severe amounts of snowfall which will then turn into the more dangerous ice. Since I have been here, it has got down to -25 Celsius and can get colder so you really need that protective layer over snow if it is going to be that cold. The worst thing is when the temperature fluctuates and you get melting and freezing.

How do you cope with this?

Sometimes it is hope for the best. We monitor how long it has been under ice for and, if we have to, we will break it up and push it off.

Are there any issues with shade and air flow?

We have taken lots of trees down around one of the problem greens to attempt to help. It seems like we have some cold pockets around the course where the ice will stay a lot longer too.

Do you use temporary greens?

The course closes for winter, greens and tees are not used. We do set out a winter course for people who want to brave the freezing temps; not my idea of fun.

Do you have a driving range/practice facility?

Yes we have a driving range, big putting green and a smaller chipping green. We also have a studio for simulator golf and club fittings.

Are there any other facilities available to

members for example tennis courts, croquet lawns – and who is responsible for their maintenance?

There currently is a studio for simulator golf in the winter, a lot of golf clubs in Sweden are getting in on the 'paddle' craze in Europe. I do have to say it's a lot fun.

Do you have specific tasks for specific staff or is it an 'all hands to the pump' approach?

We try to split the jobs up so it doesn't get repetitive, trying to keep everyone engaged. I will do most of the fertilising.

Where does presentation rank?

Presentation is very important, I feel like the first thing a golfer sees is that. First impressions play on the mind from the very beginning.

What end of season and ongoing renovations do you undertake?

Our tees are very uneven, so we are undertaking a tee renovation where we are doing the worst tees first. We are planning

on doing this over three or four years by just stripping the tops and levelling it off, and moving the sprinklers from the middle of the tees to the outside to give us more area to place the tee markers. We also are looking at drainage in some of the problem areas.

Are renovations affected by budgets?

I think most clubs have to deal with budget restrictions, we try to do everything in house if it is possible.

How have changing weather patterns affected what you do?

I feel like we seem to get more severe weather. This winter has been an exception so far but, if we get rain, it seems to be torrential or, if it is hot, it will be super dry for an extended period of time.

Do you take regular soil samples to ascertain what work is required?

Yes we do, we will have samples taken at the beginning and about two-thirds of the way through the season to see what progress we have made and what we can do to prepare better for winter.





Groomers down before 5mm hollow core



2nd fairway from tee



I started an Instagram account 'ArbogaGreenkeeper' and we send out emails to all members with some important information when it is needed

How do you interact with your club members - for example, social media, regular newsletters, notice board or course walks?

I started an Instagram account 'ArbogaGreenkeeper' and we send out emails to all members with some important information when it is needed.

Are you working on any special projects at the moment?

We are levelling tees at the moment; its a long term plan. We also have some problems with a European spruce beetle attacking our forests so we have to keep an eye on that.

What projects have been undertaken in recent years?

I think the main one was the new pumphouse, which every club realised it was super important after the summer of 2018.

Do you have any additional areas to maintain - for example, woodland, heathland, gardens?

We have a lot of forest between holes and around the course. We also have an electric fence to keep out the wild pigs.

Do you source additional help or is the work done in-house?

We have a lot of help from the last Head Greenkeeper who retired in 2020, he has all

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The club prefers to buy things outright. We look for good deals in the second-hand market of course, sometimes you find gems out there



Taking soil samples in spring



Trees after felling

the equipment to help with the forest. This is incredible to have.

How were you/your club affected by Covid-19?

I wasn't affected too much by Covid apart from not really being allowed back to see family as often as I would like.

Golf in Sweden went boom! Every club experienced a massive increase in play, which then meant an increase in wear and tear on the golf course but also an increase in incoming money.

Were you or your staff furloughed at any stage?

No, the only restrictions we had on golf were no competitions in 2020 and some of 2021 but, apart from that, golf was on full go.

How did this affect you, both personally and at work?

On the contrary to most places, our work doubled. It certainly took its toll as we were not prepared for that to happen.

Anything else you would like to cover regarding the pandemic situation?

I don't think it affected us here as much as it did in the UK.

How do you purchase machinery and whom do you purchase from?

The club prefers to buy things outright. We look for good deals in the secondhand market of course, sometimes you find gems out there.

We buy mostly from the local dealers as they are the ones with all the traded in machines from people who purchase new.

Are you loyal to one manufacturer, where possible?

Each of the manufacturers have their pros and cons; we will buy from what is best and not because it's the easiest.

Are there any new pieces of kit that have significantly helped to improve your playing surfaces?

Having a newly purchased roller and Toro Pro Force blower has dramatically improved the playing surfaces for sure.

Do you hire in any machinery (inc. operator if applicable) for specific tasks?

We are looking to hire some machines in this year. One is the Air2G2. This machine is awesome for over here because the season is so short, any sort of disruption to the playing surface is seen as a huge negative, so the Air2G2 is something that you can get the best of everything. Another machine is something to cut and collect the native rough to try and thin out these areas.

Do you have a wash down area that is compliant with current legislation?

Yes, we have just recently put in an oil separator and we will change/clean the filters when necessary.

What would your wish list include?

Toro ProCore 648 and a 5 tonne digger. I believe these are the two things that can really make a difference to smaller clubs.

Are you and your staff compliant with current legislation?

Yes, we try to keep up to date with all legislation changes as soon as we can. We

What's in the shed?

John Deere triplex mowers x 4
 Toro 5610D Reelmasters x 2
 Toro 4000-D Groundsmasters x 2
 Toro 4700-D Groundsmaster
 Toro Pro Force blower
 Tru Turf roller
 Redexim Verti-Drain
 Dakota Topdresser
 John Deere tractor
 Volvo front loader
 Valmet big tractor
 Cushman utility vehicles x 2
 Club Cars x 2
 We are currently in the market for a new sprayer





Pines before planting



Pines after planting



We have taken lots of trees down around one of the problem greens to attempt to help. It seems like we have some cold pockets around the course where the ice will stay a lot longer too

have introduction booklets and are looking into a new system that should make it easier for both employer and employee.

Do you offer ongoing training to your staff?

We offer what we feel is needed and then ask for any recommendation of what each employee would like.

Are you considering employing or do you currently employ apprentices?

Apprenticeships don't really exist in Sweden, not that I have found anyway. I would love to employ apprentices as it is how I started.

It is difficult to find employees over here full stop for golf course work as it is very seasonal, people do not want a job for 7/8 months. It is also difficult to employ people when there is no money coming in.

Do you employ a health and safety officer?

We are working on bringing in a system that

will aid us with this but currently we do not.

Who is responsible for first aid?

We have a few first aiders in the team.

How do you undertake pest and weed control?

Pest control is tough over here. We have an electric fence around the entire golf course that is mainly to keep out the wild boar, but the deer and moose cannot be kept away. We also cannot spray any pesticides.

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Getting Personal

Reece Harvey - whatever did happen at the British Masters I wonder?

Who are you? Reece Harvey, Banchef (Head Greenkeeper) at Arboga Golfklubb, Sweden.

Family status? Single.

Who's your hero and why? I don't have one specific person. but I would say my family as a whole, everyone of them has had a huge impact on me to this day. I moved away from them four years ago and have seen them sporadically due to work and Covid too and I think this makes me appreciate them even more than I did.

What's been the highlight of your grounds career so far? Getting to work in some amazing countries and on some incredible golf courses. The people you meet will be friends for life regardless of the country you live in.

If your younger self saw you now, what would he think? Wow I got even fatter. On a serious note, I think he would be pretty proud. I never really set any targets for myself and I like to think I go with the flow.

Which famous people wind you up? Most of them, they know nothing of the real world but preach from their ivory towers.

What job would you love, other than your own? The job that I wanted to go into before I started greenkeeping was forensic science so I guess that one for realism. The other one would be football manager as I am not bad at it on the computer.

What was the most embarrassing moment in your life? There have been plenty, it isn't easy to narrow it down. I think it would have to be a small interview thing I did during the British Masters in 2016. We will leave that one there.

What is your favourite film? There is a few that I like; Interstellar, Secretariat, Happy Gilmore, Harry Potter (all of them). To be fair I could go on and on.

What scares you? Doing the same thing over and over again everyday, which is why I love the job I do.

What would your autobiography be called... and who would play you in the film? I don't have the imagination to come up with a title but I would love to say Channing Tatum would play me in a film, but probably James Corden with a beard.

What is your favourite sport? It's a toss up between football and golf.

What would you cast into Room 101? Lifetime Politicians.

Which historical time and place would you most like to visit? I would love to see the Vikings and how they lived.

Do you have a lifetime ambition? Try not to have any regrets.



Which three people, living or dead, would you invite to a dinner party? Ricky Gervais, Amelia Earhart and Nikola Tesla. We would have a good time and maybe learn some stuff.

What's the best advice you have ever been given? Sometimes you have to look after number one (yourself).

What's your favourite piece of trivia? A banana is a berry and a strawberry is not.

What's your favourite smell? Freshly cut grass. Or bacon cooking.

Which three albums would you take to a desert island? Chris Stapleton - Traveller; Ed Sheeran - X and Zac Brown Band - The Comeback.

What's the daftest work-related question you have ever been asked? Why are we cutting greens again, we just cut them yesterday. It's difficult to explain but funny.

What's your favourite piece of kit? Air2G2, I think its awesome.

What three words would you use to describe yourself? Driven, Loving and Ignorant. The last one is probably about what is happening in the world, as they say 'ignorance is bliss'.

What is the single most useful thing you could tell a 16-year-old groundsperson/greenkeeper? Just stick to it, it isn't easy but you'll get there. Also travel because it's almost the perfect job to do it with and you can always go back home.

What talent would you like to have? To be able to play the guitar and sing.

What law/legislation would you like to see introduced? Everyone across the world has to learn sign language in school from the first year. With video calls, anyone can communicate no matter where you are from.

I am trying to find a local farmer that will blanket spray our fairways and roughs for next year with a selective herbicide.

Does your course suffer from specific disease outbreaks?

On greens, it is very uncommon on the velvet bentgrass to have any disease. When coming out of winter here it is very difficult to have no snow mould on fairways, approaches and tees unless you have a big enough budget to spray them all.

The biggest problems we have are with either deer, moose or wild boar... or golfers of course LOL.

How important do you consider the local flora and fauna?

I think it is super important, I am looking at possible wildflower areas and maybe a bee hive area for the future.

There are also things we can do like going organic and not spraying any fungicides which is a goal of mine as I think in three to five years time we will have no choice.

Also trying to go electric with mowers and hand tools is also something we can do as a club. We already have a substantial solar panel system in place so it would make sense for us to go with more electric powered things, especially with rising fuel prices.

We do not currently have an environmental policy in place, but we do work with the local council for some things regarding the course.

We have previously placed bird boxes on certain areas of the course and all of our drains eventually lead to the irrigation lake.

What would you consider to be the state of our industry?

Tough question, I have been given an opportunity here in Sweden that I would never have been given in the UK. I do believe it is a mix of both my age and the level of competition for jobs.

I think making younger people realise you can make a career and travel the world is really important for the future of greenkeeping.

Are we undervalued?

I believe we are, but I also believe that many of us are at fault for this. The fact that all greenkeepers do not want to make a bridge between them and the members is a big factor over the years. It is much easier now with social media to explain what we do and why we do things to a larger group of the members at once.

How would you raise our profile?

I think the tours, pros and people with a big following in golf can really make a difference, just by putting out a small post with why it is important to punch holes in greens and things like this. We are doing a good job of growing the game; the challenge now is can we grow the interest in how to make the game possible?



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Woking Golf Club

Rewilding the heathland



Woking Golf Club lies in the heart of rural Surrey and sits on the region's typical heathland. Phil Helms MG paid a visit to meet with the club's Course Manager, **Andy Ewence** who is working on a rewilding programme to return the heathland characteristics to the course alongside rejuvenating tired and out of date bunkers

Woking Golf Club was founded in 1893 and financed by a group of London barristers who leased the land from the Necropolis Company. Located one hour south of London, Woking is in fact the first heathland course ever built, well before any of the other classically Surrey heathland courses were imagined. Tom Dunn was the original architect; however, he was not known for his bunkering or imaginative green complexes.

Although little of his work remains untouched at Woking (or throughout the United Kingdom for that matter), Dunn does in fact deserve the primary credit for today's

hole routing. However, the changes undertaken by member Stuart Paton over nearly a forty year period are what make Woking appealing. Woking is very much in the tradition of English golf clubs and retains its old character. The course has been lengthened in recent years and is now more than 6,500 yards from the back tees, however the real challenge of the course is the complexity of its undulating greens.

Woking is renowned for being greater than the sum of its parts in many respects, with no single standout golf hole. Instead, it has 18 fantastic holes that all flow well together in a routing that allows the golfer to play from different elevations and see all aspects of the course without being too



Woking Golf Club sits on typical Surrey heathland



Andy Ewence

taxing on the legs. That's important, because, at Woking, the club celebrates quick golf, and many of the club members, when asked about the current course record, simply reply "2 hours 28 minutes"! As a constant reminder, the clock (that sits proudly atop the clubhouse as well as being the club's iconic logo) is there to remind golfers coming through the 14th hole how they are faring against the Woking equivalent to 'par'!

Andy Ewence and his team have been working even harder to reduce 'Time par' - more on that later! Woking is currently ranked 17th in the list of the top 100 courses in England as set out in the March 2019 issue of *Golf World* but, if I were a betting man, I'd be tempted to say this should only improve with the vast amount of work the club and team have completed recently.

Andy started as an apprentice at Pyrford Golf Club after leaving school. During his eight years, he worked his way up through the ranks to claim the deputy's position. During his tenure at Pyrford, he studied and attained both his NVQ 1 and 2 in greenkeeping and completed his spraying PA1, 2 and 6 levels certification.

From there, Andy moved to the prestigious Queenwood course as first assistant; a momentary drop in rank but gaining the Queenwood experience was

extremely beneficial in understanding the importance of quality. Andy continued his learning by achieving both his HNC and chainsaw courses during his five years at the Surrey club. Following a short tenure at Burhill as deputy, Andy landed the prestigious role as course manager at The Buckinghamshire Golf Club where he was asked to raise the bar on the current course conditions.

Andy tells the story; "I proposed a redesign of the course and installation of a new Toro irrigation system. They sent me to Japan to meet with the directors of the Asahi where I had to present my proposal (which was going to cost £2.5 million). It must have gone well because they agreed to everything!" Andy explained. "I project managed the whole works working alongside Tim Lobb, who redesigned the alterations. We used the skills of four different contractor companies to complete irrigation, new bunkers all lined with blinder, reshaping of mounds and fairways, new concrete pathways and new sleeper edged lake banks."

I discovered that, even during that extremely busy time, Andy also managed to pass his CDM co-ordinators exam which allowed him to oversee all health and safety issues. Andy was, quite rightly, so very proud to tell me one of his greatest achievements once the course

'Turned' out nice

Only a Profihopper has two



- Mow
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- Collect
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Groundkeeper

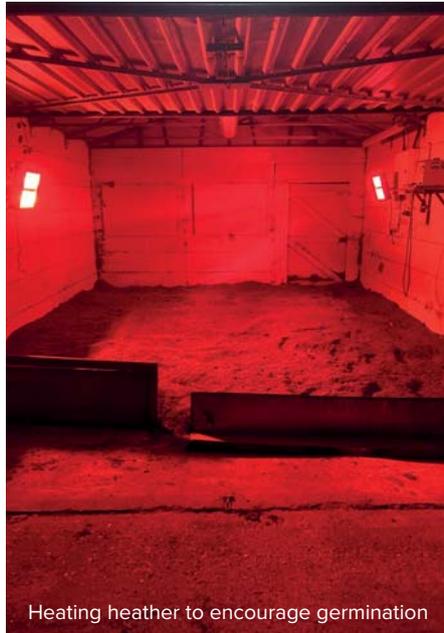
HorseHopper

Profihopper 1250

Profihopper 1500



Heather seed preparation



Heating heather to encourage germination



We have also tried heating the seed and adding micronizing to improve germination speed; with trials still ongoing, it is looking promising

was completed, that he and his team successfully hosted four Ladies European Masters on Sky Sports Golf, two Ladies US Open Qualifiers and three Regional Open qualifiers. Impressive stats. I'm sure you agree!

Following the success of his achievements at The Buckinghamshire club, Andy successfully landed the lead role at

Woking Golf Club. With his ever-present drive and determination, and his dedicated team, he got the club through to the final of the environmental awards for all the amazing work he and his team had achieved with their heather regeneration programme.

This quick success is no mean feat as Andy describes, "with heather, it can take years to germinate and, me being very

impatient, I wanted us to look at ways of speeding up the process." Andy continued; "Instead of just spreading brushings (a combination of seed and vegetative matter) over our areas, we decided to sieve the brushings leaving almost pure seed pods. This allowed us to slit the ground to a depth of 2cm and drop seed directly into the ground which was far more beneficial than

again augers to maximise work rates



The two augers provide blockage-free collection and maximum compaction

Wet or dry grass, long or short, collect or mulch, the PH 1250 and PH 1500 models take it all in their stride.

And it's that flexibility that sets the Profihopper apart from the crowd.

The sharpened wing blades on the horizontal SmartCut rotor cleanly cut and shred the grass before conveying it via the cross auger on to that unique second vertical auger to be packed into the collection hopper - meaning less time emptying and more time mowing. To add to that versatility, the sward is rolled after cutting and scarifying comes as standard.

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AMAZONE



This has allowed us to renovate all our bunkers and add large swathes of heather areas to landscaped areas of our course creating amazing, instant visual impact



Heather collection working with Surrey Wildlife Trust

simply spreading seed on the surface. Adding to this process we then sealed the area and found that, within three months, we had sprigs germinating in the lines.” Not content with this successful process, Andy went on to experiment further. “We have also tried heating the seed and adding micronizing to improve germination speed; with trials still ongoing, it is looking promising.”

Andy has a history of working alongside the Surrey Wildlife Trust (whilst working at Queenwood), and he reached out to them again to see if they could work together again. “I got back in touch and suggested we turf cut areas on their heathland sites to encourage more tiger beetle and sand lizards and, in return, we would be allowed to transplant all the heather we strip and transplant to the course. This has allowed us to renovate all our bunkers and add large swathes of heather areas to landscaped areas of our course creating amazing,

instant visual impact.”

As most course managers will testify, heather establishment/maintenance relies heavily on great woodland management. At Woking, heather was in decline due, in the main, to this issue. “With the number of oak and deciduous trees that have grown up over time, I quickly realised that one of my first projects needed to focus on their removal. To that end, we have already reduced the number by a few hundred trees to open areas which now allows sunlight and air movement through six holes. We are now looking at removing substantially more over the next two years to further improve our heathland environments which, in turn, will improve heather characteristics to the course which were historically lost over previous years.”

Heather rejuvenation features heavily alongside Woking’s bunker remodelling scheme. “When I first started at Woking, the greenside bunkers were not in keeping with

our heathland characteristic fairway bunkers. Most of our greensides were just round circles so, as a club, we brought in architect Tim Lobb to help us over a four-year period to transform these back into proper heathland bunkering. We shape and carry out all the work in-house, adding heather transplanted from our Surrey wildlife partner areas to give an instant impact.”

With Tim Lobb onboard, the club used his skills to address the ever-present issue of making golf more accessible to more people, from beginners who want to get into golf and members who enjoy their game but, as they get older, can’t keep up with longer holes and longer playing times.

“We wanted to retain our members and, having a high proportion of them in their later years, we felt it was needed to shorten the course to improve their enjoyment of the game and encourage new members into the game,” Andy explained.

“Many clubs over the past decade have



Most of our greenside bunkers were just round circles so, as a club, we brought in architect Tim Lobb to help us over a four-year period to transform these back into proper heathland bunkering



Left-to-right: Course Manager Andy Ewence, Mike Collyer, Mechanic Sam Dark, Gavin Yeoman, First Assistant Pat Redmond, Steve Davey, Joe Hobden, Jack Wyatt, Steve Walker and Deputy Course Manager David Warner



Heather in the yard

//

We also have SPIIO soil sensors in some greens to allow us to measure moisture, temperature and salinity levels throughout the day, which helps decision making on irrigation inputs

begun extending the length of their courses, but very few have appreciated the industry trends and begun shortened them.

Personally, I feel it's needed to allow golf for all ages. Having carries of heather up to 120 yards to the fairway, it's become so difficult for juniors or any new golfers to learn how to play as the course has become unplayable."

The club took the bold and inspirational move to construct new shorter length blue tees, and instructed Tim to draft up a four-year plan which will give all members the chance to enjoy the course with only carries of up to sixty yards. So far, Andy and his team have completed eight new blue tees in conjunction with a new visually pleasing path network. The members are delighted

so far with the results, helping many members achieve personal best scores 'to par' (2 hours 28 minutes)!

Andy has also overseen a new comprehensive Rain Bird irrigation system. Incorporating greens, tees, aprons and fairways. Having overseen the instillation of a completely new Toro system at The Buckinghamshire, Andy was best placed to project manage the new instillation at Woking. "The membership we have here at the club are very special, this was highlighted to me when the members were asked for donations or interest free loan notes to help pay for the system. Within five months, we had the required amount which allowed us to push on and start installing the

new system that same year, which has transformed the surfaces."

When talking to Andy, one of the things that impressed me the most was his dedication to data gathering. Andy has this down to a fine art! Personally, I've had to learn the hard way that, without data, it is far harder to achieve what you are trying to achieve, even more difficult to convince directors/members that your plans are the way forward.

Andy explained to me; "I've always understood the importance of collecting data and have improved my data gathering year on year. Making sure that it's relevant to what we are trying to achieve and understanding in our daily programmes is



Getting Personal

Andy Ewence - we like his new legislation - but there wouldn't be enough air time!

Who are you? Andy Ewence. Course Manager at Woking Golf Club.

Family status: Married with two children.

Who's your hero and why? My mum and dad who've always been there for me.

What's been the highlight of your career so far? Two things. The grow-in of The Buckingham golf course and then hosting four ladies' European Masters there.

If your younger self saw you now, what would he think? Well done, I'd be happy where I've reached.

Which famous people wind you up? So-called second-rate celebrity influencers!

What job would you love, other than your own? Any job that involved working outdoors!

What was the most embarrassing moment in your life? Turning up to an interview with a black eye (in my younger days I was a keen amateur boxer).

What is your favourite film? Goodfellas.

What scares you? Water! I'm not a great swimmer so anything to do with the sea/lakes etc. I'm not good with!

What would your autobiography be called...and who would play you in the film? Straight talking played by Jason Stratham.

What is your favourite sport? Football (Arsenal fan).

What would you cast into room 101? Mushroom soup! (Very quickly answered!)

Which historical time and place would you most like to visit? The time when the Vikings first invaded Britain in AD 793 up to the last invasion around AD 1066

Do you have a lifetime ambition? To try and be the best I can be (to be a good all-rounder).

What's your favourite smell? Freshly baked bread.



Which three people, living or dead, would you invite to a dinner party? David Attenborough, Tom Hanks and Chris Eubank!

What's the best advice you have ever been given? Get into a trade early and stick at it.

What's your favourite piece of trivia? The one and only mammal which lays eggs is called a Duck Billed Platypus!

What's your favourite piece of kit? Toro ProCore.

Which three albums would you take to a desert island? Foo Fighters - Essential, Lenny Kravitz - Greatest hits plus any 90s dance or rave compilation album.

What's the daftest work-related question you have ever been asked? Why can't we have the same underfloor heating in the greens as I have in my new kitchen?

What three words best describes yourself? Firm but fair.

What is the single most useful thing you could tell a 16-year-old greenkeeper? Greenkeeping allows you to travel the globe so take as much advantage of that as possible.

What talent would you like to have? I'd like to learn how to play the drums better.

What law/legislation would you like to see introduced? Politicians who are found to have lied must confess live on TV and answer to the public!



New blue tee construction

vital. The team take it in turns to collect the data from three greens on the course during morning set up. This data only takes five minutes to collect, so doesn't impact on our man-hours. The data gives us all the readings we need to improve performance such as spraying programmes, aeration, topdressing, moisture and speed levels."

Andy believes in the use of his 'Pogo' to collect and add other valuable data like clip yield. "We also have SPIIO soil sensors in some greens to allow us to measure moisture, temperature and salinity levels throughout the day, which helps decision making on irrigation inputs. These sensors are placed a couple of inches below the soil. We have annual meadow grass (poa) greens

and I need the readings to be relevant to the root system we have. All this data comes back to my phone and computer system which I then input onto my own data spread sheet. To have all this data available on my phone daily gives myself and the team extra support and helps in decision making if I'm away and anyone is unsure on what to do."

Personally, I'd just like to conclude how impressed I was with Andy and his team's dedication and professionalism. They are truly a credit to our industry, and it was a real privilege to visit them and get an insight into what professional greenkeeping teams can achieve.

Thanks guys!



What's in the shed?

Toro Flex 21 hand mowers (1 electric) x 5

Toro Greensmaster 1600 x 3

John Deere 220B hand mowers x 4

Toro Reelmaster 3555 x 2

Toro Multi Pro sprayer

Toro ProCore 648

Toro ProCore 1298

Toro Groundsmaster 3500

Toro Propass 180

Toro Groundsmaster 4000

Toro Pro Force blower

Tru Turf roller

Wiedenmann Terra Spike 2m

Wiedenmann Terra Spike GXI 8

John Deere 2500A x 2

John Deere 5410 tractor

John Deere 3520 tractor

John Deere 4066R tractor

John Deere Gators x 4 (petrol)

John Deere Gator (diesel)

John Deere Pro Gators x 2

Toro Workman

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Cardigan Golf Club

It's no pullover!

Founded in 1895 and listed as one of the top twenty courses to play in Wales, Cardigan Golf Club has seen considerable improvements in recent years. Projects continue under the watchful eye of Course Manager and Head Greenkeeper **Stuart Lee Adams** and he met with Kerry Haywood to tell us more



Stuart Adams during the Singapore Open 2020

After several transformations over the last 125 years, the upland links course now features 18 holes measuring 6,455 yards off the back white tees, a chipping and putting green plus a 6-bay undercover driving range in the process of completion. The soil profile is predominantly a well-draining sandy loam texture with good structure, although thin in places on top of bedrock.

Stuart commented: "As a place of natural beauty, with every hole featuring a view of the sea, the course is located three miles outside of Cardigan town on the cliffs of

the Afon Teifi estuary. This means we are a very exposed site and tend to suffer from summer burn offs. Three days of warm dry air blown from the Irish sea sees the course yellow (with the exception of irrigated areas of play)."

"I deal with this through a species exchange to fescue, through a good overseeding plan and low feeding/watering regimes, plus a good wetting agent programme. In addition, a strong winter nutrition plan with plenty of aeration hardens the fescue to go into dormancy, until the rains return the colour and growth."

"We regularly undertake thatch level

samples and measure P and K inputs. We also take photo profiles annually in order to spot any visual changes from last year. I am also a big advocate for greenkeeper's original scenes; look, smell and touch. As we are all dealing more and more with extreme weather, thinking on your feet and altering plans is now more essential than ever! My ethos is to have a Plan A, but do not be frightened to alter it - even last minute and this is passed on to my trusted team."

They comprise: Deputy Head Jac Emanuel (24) - Level 3 qualified; Assistants Craig Thompson (56) - over eight years' service, Paul Legg (34) - just under two





years' service, Henry Malloy (29) - four years service and Max Lodder Rhodda (18), plus Casey Walters (29) who helps with weekend work.

"I would ideally like all staff to be capable of doing all jobs, but reality is for a team to function and work to their individual strengths. My favourite quote is that 'Goalkeepers rarely score goals'. We are very flexible with all the team and have just taken on a part time 18-year-old, who will hopefully look toward greenkeeping in mind for a future career."

"We also have a few outside sources for information and advice and a special

mention must go to Peter Lacy of Aquatrols Ltd," Stuart continued. "He's a good guy to pass ideas with and always on hand for advice. I also have a great working relationship with Ray Hunt at Agrovista Amenity and Zak Thackary of Tour Best Europe Ltd - both of these reps are always on hand and I hold them in high esteem. We also have a local irrigation technician contracted in (if and when needed) - Paul Williams (Pumpaul Ltd) and a local mechanic who we use occasionally - Andrew Repton (T.C.R Mechanical). We utilise Andrew for any major repair work, however, all general servicing and maintenance of equipment is



One thing that will always be great within the industry is the real family feel and the willingness to help people along the way. Long may it continue



Deputy Head, Jac Emanuel



Assistant Craig Thompson



Assistant Paul Legg



Assistant Henry Malloy



Assistant Max Lodder Rodda



Signature hole 16th. Par 3 infinity undulating green

carried out by myself and Jac.”

“We recently purchased a new Toro 3250D greensmower and Tru Turf roller which have had a big impact, but not all major improvements have to be at big cost. The Charterhouse Speedbrush has seen real improvements for the fine fescue areas and the addition of the Massey Ferguson backhoe has now allowed us to construct in-house for winter projects. We also purchased a moisture meter and the ability to hone in on low levels of moisture has been a huge benefit for both the quality of fine turf and the reduction of water resources.”

“For the past two years, we have also been fortunate to hire in the Air2G2 from Ashburnham Golf Club and we are very thankful. We strive to put as little weight as

possible over the greens and this has made a huge difference to all surfaces.”

Stuart has been at the club for just over four years and feels it has taken that time to install solid basic greenkeeping methods onto the course. “I was keen to get the basics right first. Only now do I feel we are really honing in on presentation and finesse. I run a very lean programme and have decreased Nitrogen inputs on greens to 45kg in the last few years (this includes hidden nitrogen after wading through data sheets after data sheets). We also run very lean with water moisture levels at 6-9% and we have been fungicide free since I started in October 2017.”

“Our maintenance regimes are as follows: Greens are cut at 4-6mm when growth demands (from daily in summer to once a





Irrigation installed to chipping green



With less qualified and experienced greenkeepers in the industry, hopefully the perfect storm has passed and the ones that survived and stayed can really flourish for a new generation to gain the experience from

week in winter) with liquid feeds on a little and often approach. In summer, we apply seaweed, Attain and Qualibra wetter with Premium N and a low annual application of Nitrogen inputs (including hidden) 45kg/per annum.”

“During winter, we apply Ferrosol, Premium K, Bullet turf hardener and phosphites with dispatch and adjust the mounts to suit the conditions. We have low

water inputs between 6 and 9% on moisture meter and run with 8mm tines monthly throughout late autumn/winter and early spring. With thatch running at only 3%, we tend to only scarify in order to clean out winter growth, but brush and groom regularly. No intention of hollow coring with low thatch levels. In early spring and autumn, we overseed with various fescue cultivars with the Vredo. We

predominantly use Aquatrols products, with the additional support and various products from Agrovista Amenity and Tour Best, although I’m very willing to trial products in search for perfection.”

“Tees are cut at 10-12 mm when growth demands, which ranges from once or twice a week to once per month. We apply granular slow-release feeds from the Polyon range (max 60kg per annum) plus a lawn sand in



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The last couple of years has shown that it is these times we are thankful for industry friends and the support of our clubs. I cannot praise the Cardigan highly enough for their handling of the Covid-19 situation



December for winter strength, moss, worm control and colour. Fairways are cut at 16-18mm once a week throughout summer, then if and when during winter.”

Stuart continued: “With regard to pests and disease on the course, my mantra has always been exactly what I was taught when I gained my HNC/HND qualifications; cultural, biological and then chemical as a last resort, which has gained fantastic results for disease suppression.”

“I have often joked that it took twenty years to gain good experience with spraying and the next twenty years learning not to spray.”

“Weed control is undertaken in spring with good growth and greens are predominantly hand weeded. We spray both Holster and Prem N, but found this weakened the

Yorkshire Fog and Pearlwort - which was historically a problem within the sward.”

“Leatherjackets have become a real hardened annual issue and we are currently trialling Asylaprin on greens. Last year, a few fairways got real hammered by crow pecks, but we simply overseeded and toppedressed and they are back stronger than ever. We are trying to strengthen the sward for resistance and bounce back through strong aeration and nutritional programmes (including a potassium programme during winter to increase root mass).”

Stuart’s experience and knowledge stems right back to when he was thirteen years of age, when he used to rake bunkers at weekends at his local course; Bells Golf Club in the Forest of Dean. He would later go on to become the head greenkeeper at twenty-

two years old. Following a relocation to West Wales, Stuart worked through the ranks as assistant at Tenby Golf Club, Greenkeeper at Trefloyne Manor Golf Club and Deputy Head at Haverfordwest Golf Club, before accepting his current position.

“There are two people who have inspired my greenkeeping journey; Chris Jenkins, Head Greenkeeper of Tenby Golf Club - for his depth of knowledge and passion for the trade. He was a great boss and mentor, but he sadly passed away in 2014. Also, Greenkeeper Ian Duff at Trefloyne Golf Club for his unbelievable work ethic and high standards. I still have the fond memories of working with them both. Yet, my biggest inspiration are the nine other guys that I was fortunate to be grouped with in the Bernhards delegation trip to America. Very close friends and my first port of call in a storm.”

“The last couple of years has shown that it is these times we are thankful for industry friends and the support of our clubs. I cannot praise the Cardigan highly enough for their handling of the Covid-19 situation. We worked throughout lockdowns, following



New bunker installed on the chipping green



I deeply feel we’ve lost some real talented greenkeepers in the last decade as clubs/courses became mismanaged. Due to a lack of understanding of the depth of knowledge and skill set expected for such a poor rewarded career



I have often joked that it took twenty years to gain good experience with spraying and the next twenty years learning not to spray

simple guidelines and were fortunate to avoid some real horror stories that I have read about. The clubhouse closed and staff were furloughed, but location played in our favour as the chain went across the entrance. As soon as restrictions were lifted, the club put strict contingencies in place and everyone was able to play safely and responsibly.

“With all the legislation and restrictions in the world, personal responsibility has been a major key to getting us through these odd times. I must pay homage to my team, as

they have always gone above and beyond in all aspects throughout the pandemic. What feels safe for one member of the team, does not necessarily mean another feels safe. Good communication and flexibility allowed us to manoeuvre around this worldwide issue safely.”

“It is so nice to be out the other side and we have many projects we are currently working on, including: year four of retvetting all thirty-three bunkers, levelling uneven tees, installing drainage (year two of five-year plan), gorse regeneration, which

is an annual ongoing project, irrigation installation and practice bunker to the chipping green, path improvements by installing rubber mats to save washouts, plus the narrowing of fairways and cut and collection of heavy rough.”

“We communicate all our ongoing and future projects within a quarterly newsletter run by our lady secretary with a greenkeeper Facebook page in conjunction with club social media (Facebook/Twitter and Instagram). However, on the whole, I promote an open-door policy... anyone





What's in the shed

Toro Greensmaster 3250-D
greensmower x 3

Toro Reelmaster 3100-D Sidewinder
cylinder mower x 2

Toro Workman 3300-D utility vehicle
(2 w/d)

John Deere Gator™ HPX utility vehicle
(4 w/d)

John Deere 8700D fairway mower
Toro Reelmaster 5610-D fairway
mower

Toro Groundsmaster 3500D
semi-rough rotary mower

Toro® Multi Pro 5700-D sprayer

John Deere Aercore 800

Massey Ferguson 4345 tractor (60hp)

Iseki TG5390 compact tractor (30hp)

Massey Ferguson 1230 loader-
backhoe (26hp)

Attachments

Agricultural 2 + 3 tonne trailers x 2

Vredo overseeder

Tru Turf greens iron

Ransomes fairway slitter

Quickie loader attachment for Massey
Ferguson 4345

SISIS multitiner

Ryan turf cutter

Trilo 1502 scarifier collector

Toro topdresser

Wessex brush

Lely spring rake

GreenTek Thatch-Away verticutter

Multiple trimmers and blowers

Stihl chainsaw

Long handle hedgecutter

Pressure washer

Knapsack sprayers x 2

Mantis BunkerMaster

wishing to understand why we are doing any operation is welcome to visit our compound. Again, a favourite quote "If I can't explain why I am doing an operation, I probably shouldn't be doing it."

Stuart concludes: "Pre-covid, I would say the state of our industry was very different than today. The health benefits that outdoor exercise offers, along with the restrictions on other outdoor sports, has brought on significantly increased membership numbers and green fees - in some cases, this has financially saved clubs and jobs. One thing that will always be great within the industry is the real family feel and the willingness to help people along the way. Long may it continue."

"Having said that, I deeply feel we've lost some real talented greenkeepers in the last decade as clubs/courses became mismanaged. A lack of understanding of the depth of knowledge and skill set expected for such a poor rewarded career, along with the lack of opportunities to progress, has seen many experienced team members

leave for new career avenues."

"With less qualified and experienced greenkeepers in the industry, hopefully the perfect storm has passed and the ones that survived and stayed can really flourish for a new generation to gain the experience from."

"I have regularly attended BTME, various seminars and course walks over the years to further my own CPD. I will continue to encourage my team and committee to do so. Unfortunately, with BTME moving to March this year, it clashed with club priorities and fixtures, so this may not be an option moving forward if it opts to stay at this time of year. I was fortunate to be involved with the Bernhards delegation to San Antonio GIS America in 2018, with

some real special greenkeepers that changed my outlook on greenkeeping forever."

"If you want to progress, go out and find a way! It won't always present itself to you, but there will be a way! Thank you #still10 and #FTMI16 for that great advice as I continue my greenkeeping career."



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As top class football training facilities go, Marbella Football Center is up there with some of the best in the world. Regularly used by elite teams from the UK and Europe, along with national sides, the pitches have to be in the best condition at all times. **Salvador Lomeña Santos** is the man in overall charge of all things agronomic

Marbella Football Center (MFC) has top quality natural grass football pitches, changing rooms adapted for elite teams, high performance gyms, spa area, massage area and press room.

The facilities were created to meet the highest demands of professional football, adapting to all the needs that an elite team needs during a pre-season or training camp. It ranks as one of the most exclusive sports complexes in Europe.

Elite clubs such as Liverpool, Manchester United and Borussia Dortmund regularly use the facilities, as do the national teams of England and Denmark. Jurgen Klopp

recently commented; "Excellent facilities at the Marbella Football Center, especially the state of the natural grass, the organisation, the weather, the proximity to the hotel and cycling to training sessions."

Salvador Lomeña Santos is the Head Groundsman at the MFC and, in this article, he charts his career to date and discusses the requirements of this top class facility.

"My interest in grass was piqued when I was studying EGB (Educación General Básica - the formal Spanish education system) - in Istán, my hometown. I travelled from Istán to Marbella to work in the City's gardens, although I hadn't considered it my vocation as I was only fifteen years old and not aware of what life would offer me.

Without knowing what I was looking for, in 2000, my father told me that Juan Villalba, who at that time was the Head Greenkeeper at Aloha Golf Marbella, one of the best golf courses in the area, needed a guy for the driving range, primarily to pick up the practice balls. At that time, I had been working on the grounds of a hotel in my home town and, without giving it much thought, I went to work with Juan Villalba at Aloha.

I transformed the small area next to the driving range, which impressed Juan so that, three months after starting, the management transferred me to the maintenance of the club's gardens and grounds. That didn't last long though; only nine months. My curiosity

to learn was so great and I realised that I liked the world of grass more and more.

In 2004, I studied for a Masters in Greenkeeping at EADE University of Malaga, which was then a two year course. After completing it, I continued working at Aloha until August 2007; the greenkeeper at this time was Angel Chacón. He was the one who told me that Santa Clara Golf Marbella needed an assistant greenkeeper.

I interviewed for the position with Ramón Ramiro, who was the Head Greenkeeper at that time, and he immediately told me that the position was mine. I was an assistant for two years until Ramón was fired and they offered me the position of Head greenkeeper, until December 2019 when, not reaching an agreement with the club, I decided to leave.

During this period of time, I decided to continue learning and train in another branch of turfcare and did the Master of Landscape Architecture. Whilst studying for this Masters, my partner from Los Naranjos golf, Jose Antonio Lobato, called me to say he had told Andrés Roldán, owner of Marbella Football Center, about me and, after an interview with him, I started working for Marbella Football Center in May 2021. The football pitches were a very interesting challenge, both work-wise and training.

The most curious question during the interview was; Do you like football?, to which I answered honestly; "I don't like football but



The most curious question during the interview was; Do you like football?, to which I answered honestly; “I don't like football but I do love working with grass”

I do love working with grass”. Maybe I risked my position there, but that's what I thought.

Marbella Football Center (MFC)

MFC is a company specialised in the management of pre-seasons for professional football teams. Since its inception in 2005, it has created sports packages designed for elite clubs (accommodation + sports facilities + matches).

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has become the most important agency in this sector.

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Marbella Football Center



MFC is a company specialised in the management of pre-seasons for professional football teams. Since its inception in 2005, it has created sports packages designed for elite clubs



La Quinta



Elite grass requires exquisite care, being the first thing that professional clubs value and something that we take care of to the millimetre so that teams can train in the best conditions in the world

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- One tennis court (20m x 15m)

Atalaya comprises:

- One full size football pitch (105m x 68m)
- One seven-a-side football pitch (60m x 40m)

40m)

- Two tennis courts (20m x 15m)

Melia Villaitana Football Center comprises:

- Two full size football pitches (105m x 68m)
- Two seven-a-side football pitches (60 x 40m)

Grass quality is the most important aspect of our service.

Elite grass requires exquisite care, being the first thing that professional clubs value and something that we take care of to the millimetre so that teams can train in the best conditions in the world.

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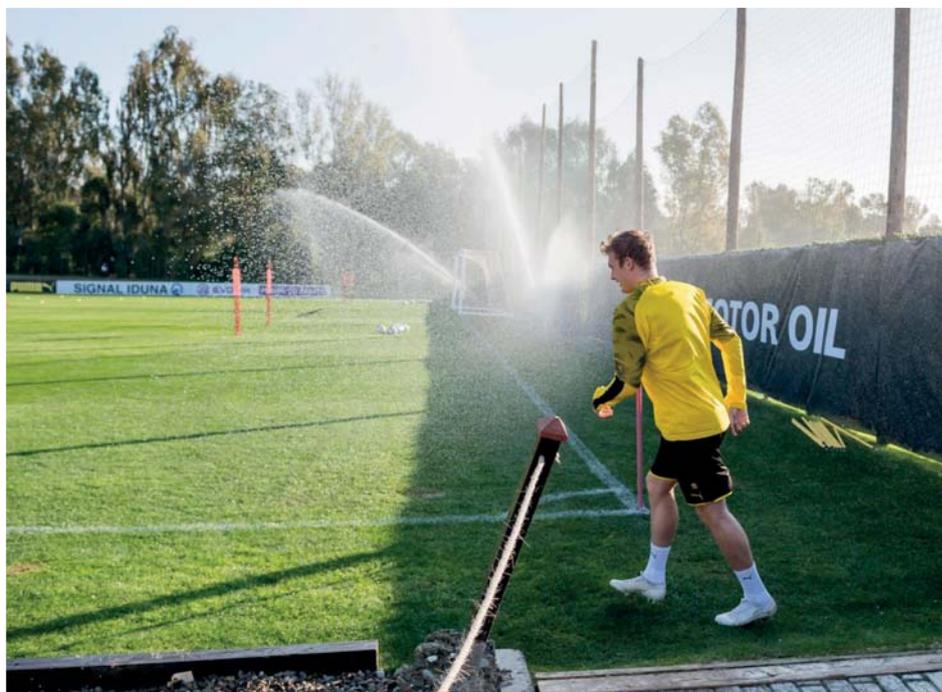


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The climate is very different on the coast, compared to the ones that are tucked away in the interior. Each one needs special attention in regard to environmental factors and soils



professional clubs.

These are the pitches that we have throughout the year, along with the La Balona de la Línea football stadium, the Coín Stadium and the Alahurin Hotel football pitch.

In high season (January-February-March) the polo fields of Santamaría in Sotogrande, Doña Julia and the pitches of the La Cala Resort Hotel are used.

With the large number of centres that I have to manage, each one is built differently - old courses with a lot of tradition and pitches just a year of construction - it is a daily challenge to keep them in optimum condition for the high-level teams.

The pitches do not have the same orientation. The climate is very different on the coast, compared to the ones that are tucked away in the interior. Each one needs special attention in regard to environmental factors and soils. The base grass in all of them is Bermuda, but different varieties have been planted depending on the location where the pitches are situated.

The varieties that have done best for us are Bermuda Ibiza, Monaco and Riu. The transition is made with Raygras Silver Dollar and Greenland mixed in the same

proportion. We have shaded areas in which we also incorporate fescue because that it is the only variety that tolerates more shade.

The biggest problem that I have found is the very high humidity that exists in the pitches that are close to the rivers, due to the high humidity and the sudden changes in temperatures. Diseases such as the Dollar Spot (*Sclerotinia Homeocarpa*), Rizoctonia Solani, Pytium, (*Magnaporthe grisea*) Pyricularia and Fusarium can occur. These are the main diseases that I have encountered since I started at MFC.

All this means that we have to be very quick to react, or even prevent, before the situation gets too complicated.

Another problem that we have is with the irrigation water, which is taken from the recycled network. It is of poor quality and, this year, with the storms of Levante, there have been leaks of seawater into the pipes and it therefore arrived with a high conductivity.

We have to fertilise with slow release or calcic fertilisers and do deep irrigation

together with the aeration that has to be done every fifteen days so as not to have too many problems with the concentration of salt. I apply it according to the soil and leaf analytics that I do every three months, as I observe their evolution and responses.

I usually pass the TDR every two weeks and at the same time I take water samples, with this important information I see the state of the soil and irrigation water.

The field maintenance staff consists of twelve operators, a mechanic and a crane driver for the transfer of the machines. When the season is busy, extra personnel are hired as cover and support for the maintenance of the facilities.

All operators are trained, and refresher courses are held every year to be prepared for any unforeseen situation."

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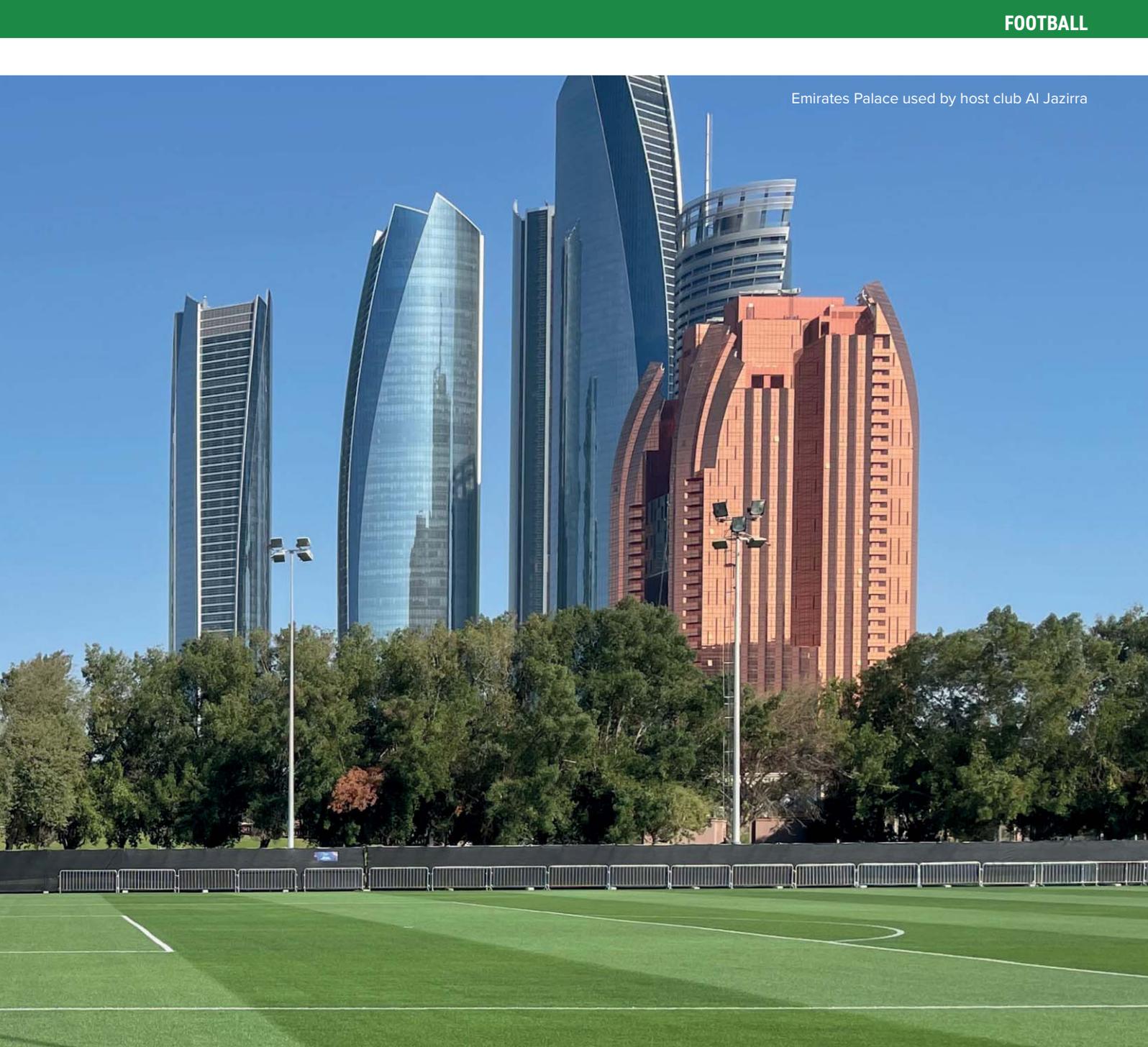
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FIFA Update

Levelling the playing field

2022 marks the start of the men's World Cup year for the FIFA pitch team. Qatar's final installations, training and touches are being made, but as preparations continue for the wintertime showpiece event, **Alan Ferguson** and his team have been at work delivering three other tournaments. Report by Blair Ferguson



Emirates Palace used by host club Al Jazirra

Shortly before the beginning of the African Cup of Nations in Cameroon, the Confederation for African Football (CAF) requested the assistance of FIFA, including advice on the pitches. This tournament, coupled with the Club World Cup in Abu Dhabi and Arab Cup in Qatar, highlighted the disparity in resources in the work that still needs to be done in levelling the playing field for the member associations.

Alan explains: "The three tournaments delivered showed how different football pitches are facilitated around the world and how not all member associations are on the same level playing field when it comes to available pitch resources, staff training and equipment."

"On joining FIFA back in 2018, one of my key deliverables was to improve pitch provision and raise training for grounds teams across all FIFA Tournaments played

worldwide. Of course, I was not naïve enough to think that the high standard of pitches we have in the UK and most of Europe would be the norm around the globe, but I did not expect the gulf between 211 member associations in the six confederations to be as big as it is."

"That said, we have a plan in place to bridge that gulf, and I am happy to say that plan is being rolled out now and starting to deliver through our Global Pitch Management Framework."

1st December 2021 saw the FIFA Arab Cup played in Doha, Qatar. The tournament was first played in 1963 in Lebanon and is now being reintroduced to the international calendar. It was also used as a test event for the World Cup to be played later this year in Qatar. Six of the eight stadiums and sixteen of thirty-two training sites were tested ahead of the main event.

For Alan and the FIFA pitch team, it

provided the ideal opportunity to test all the new technologies installed into the pitches and, more importantly, test the operational delivery for the World Cup.

"After nearly four hard years of planning, it was an amazing feeling to be pitch-side in Al Bayt for the opening game and seeing the pitch host its first full international game," Alan said. "The match schedule was set to replicate the World Cup schedule, which sees four matches per day being played in the group phase. You have to take your hat off to the Qatar government and the Emir on what the country has produced to date."

"I have been going to Doha since October 2018 and, each time I visit, the advancement in infrastructure that has been made takes your breath away. We have eight state of the art stadiums, which are all themed in the Arabic culture and are futuristic. They are fabulous football stadiums and would grace any World Cup."



You know you have a challenge on your hands when domestic rotary mowers were doing the mowing in some stadiums, and these were the only pieces of equipment they had



Alan Ferguson



Small stone being hand picked from the surface

The grounds teams were set up as they will be for the tournament in December when the 611 strong team that make up the pitch crews will work around the clock in two twelve hour shifts. The group stage will be really tough for the grounds teams, with games coming every forty-eight hours to each of the eight venues. However, the thought of having to work in such long stints will be eased by having all the latest turf equipment to hand to ensure a top-quality delivery.

“It is not until you work abroad that you really appreciate the turf industry back home. Unfortunately, Qatar is very much the exception, not the rule, but it’s great to see what can be achieved when all the latest technology is assembled in one place. Without a doubt, the group of pitches that have been prepared will be among the best to ever host a World Cup.”

Following the Arab Cup in Qatar, which finished on the 18th December, the team had two weeks back with their families for the

Christmas holidays before heading out to Cameroon as part of a FIFA support programme for the 2021 AFCON tournament.

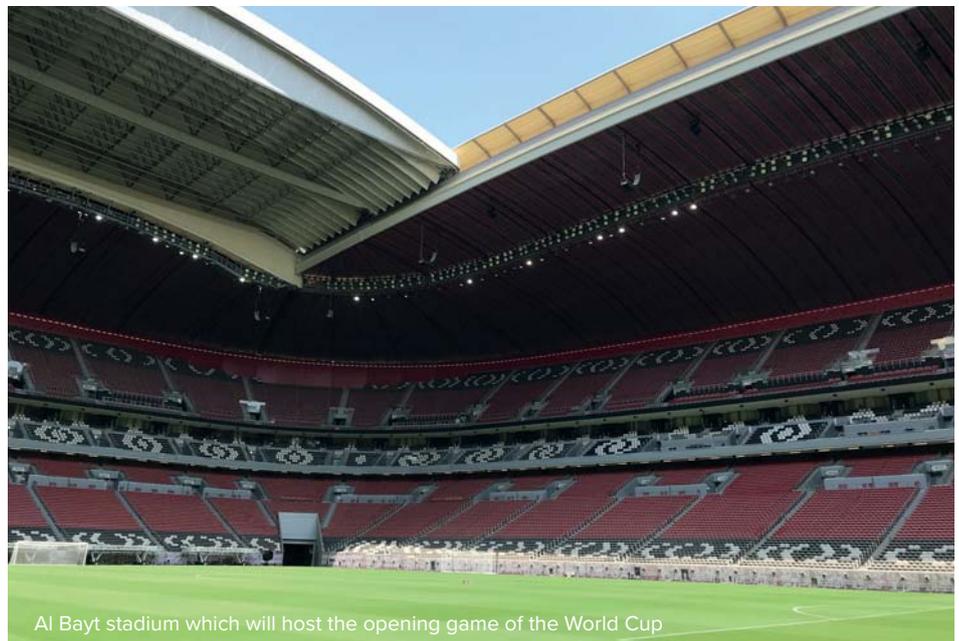
Alan touched on his early experience of AFCON in his last update but, since then, with the tournament completed, he has had the time to reflect on the experience.

“CAF asked FIFA for support in raising the quality of delivery of the continent’s flagship tournament,” Alan explains. “Following two visits to Cameroon to inspect the stadiums and training sites, it was never going to be straightforward. While it is the aim to deliver top-quality pitches for all the tournaments we get involved with, you have to be realistic and set goals that can be achieved.”

“When the FIFA team visited Cameroon for the first time in August 2021, we were taken to the stadiums and training sites in the five cities selected to host the tournament. Whilst there was a basic infrastructure to build from in the stadiums, it was a different story in the training sites. It



Qatar is very much the exception, not the rule, but it’s great to see what can be achieved when all the latest technology is assembled in one place



Al Bayt stadium which will host the opening game of the World Cup



Ritz Carlton used by tournament winners Chelsea with the magnificent Grand Mosque in the background

was like stepping back several years in time. Therefore, out the box thinking and a bit of creativity was the order of the day.”

“You know you have a challenge on your hands when domestic rotary mowers were doing the mowing in some stadiums, and these were the only pieces of equipment they had. It was a stark reminder of how easy it is to take what we have to work within the UK and Qatar for granted.”

“To bring improvement to difficult projects is no easy task, and you have to do it in

stages. CAF and the AFCON will very much be a journey, but every journey has to start somewhere. Following the inspections to the pitches, we set out the immediate objectives for the 2021 AFCON that were achievable. We set out a short-term objective, a medium-term objective and a long term objective.”

People talk about five-year plans. It will take every day of the next five years to bridge the gap to match the pitches delivered at other tournaments and begin to

level the playing field between confederations like CAF and UEFA or the Asian Football Confederation (AFC), where Qatar are a member association.”

FIFA pitch management scores their pitches from 1 to 5, with 1 being a fail and 5 meeting international standard. Alan and the team thought taking the pitches in Cameroon into the tournament on a 3 would be a good start. The issues around the lack of equipment, education and support required for the contractors in Cameroon



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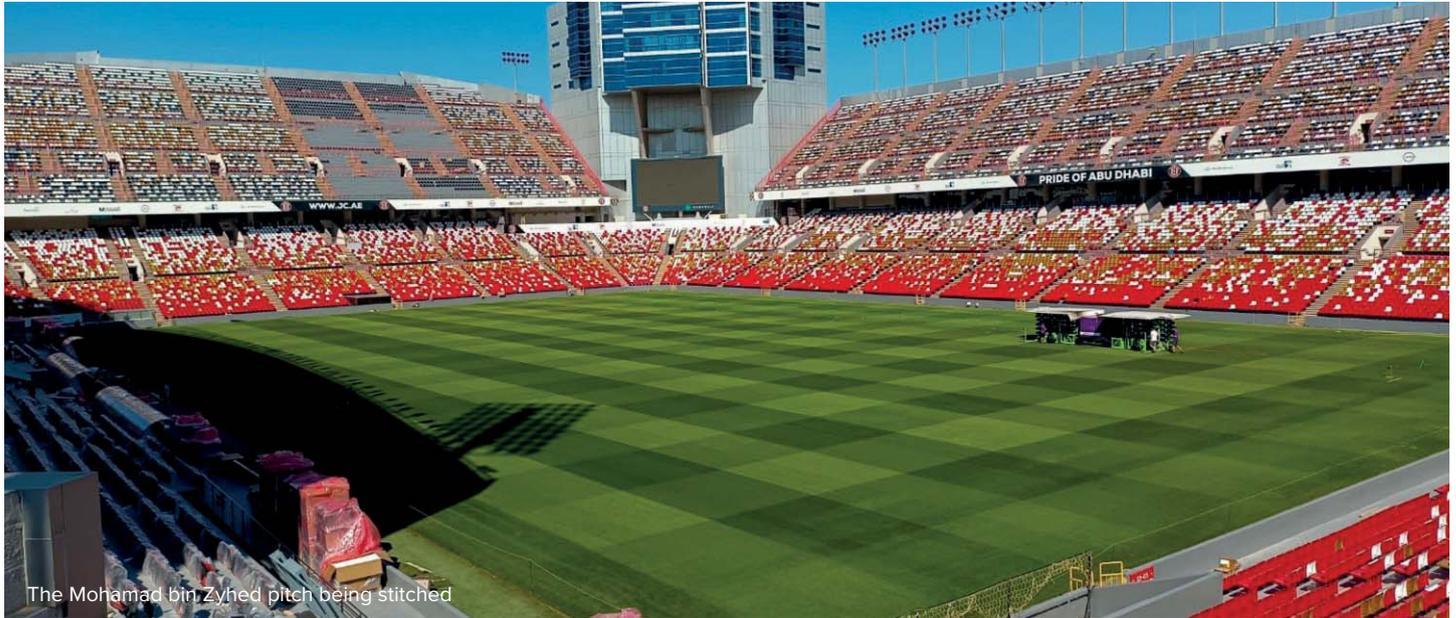
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The Mohamad bin Zayed pitch being stitched

were among the other issues that needed to be addressed.

To build a pitch project for a major tournament like the AFCON, Alan estimates you need a minimum of two years. By the time the first inspection was made, the team had just under six months. After that, FIFA agreed to set up the purchase of pedestrian mowers and supply line marking kits. Whilst it was a big first step in the right direction, Alan explains that it barely scratched the surface.

“At least we now had something to work with, and the workshops could be set up,” Alan begins.

“The tournament was delivered in six stadiums across five cities, and one of the most important parts of any pitch project build-up is the educational workshops. It is normal practice to select one of the tournament venues as the venue for the

workshop. Then all the other grounds teams meet at that venue for a couple of days of presentations and practical clinics. The issue the team had in Cameroon was that many of the grounds teams did not have the means to travel. When I was made aware of this, it became an easy decision that we would have to take the workshop to all five cities.”

“I was supported in Cameroon by Jorge Palma, a consultant from Seville, who works with iTurf and Oliver Edmond, who leads the grounds team in the Stade de France. Cameroon is a French-speaking country, and we were advised to have as many French speakers with us as possible.”

“I have considered learning a language, and some people might say I struggle enough with English. But, really, the issue is what one to concentrate on because the tournaments are so spread out. On occasions like this, being able to get the

information across myself would be hugely beneficial, but luckily we are able to use other professionals from the industry.”

The consultants within the FIFA Global Pitch Management Framework are drawn from around the world. FIFA have two appointed consultancies, with iTurf and Labo Sport supporting the main part of the tournament deliveries. Through his travels, Alan comes into contact with other consultants with specific specialities in turf management who can add value to the framework team. By adding these specialists to the team, they can look to move projects like CAF forward and begin the process to bring the quality of pitches and pitch management up.

“With the new equipment delivered to the stadiums, we had the base to start with. We also sent Jorge back to Cameroon to work with each venue and training site to provide



With the new equipment delivered to the stadiums, we had the base to start with. We also sent Jorge back to Cameroon to work with each venue and training site to provide additional one-to-one training



The latest Dennis electric mower in action in Al Janoub. The hybrid pitches will be maintained by the latest equipment available



Each World Cup stadium is equipped with three aeration options

additional one-to-one training. Whilst we knew it was not as much as we would have liked to deliver, it was better than what had been in place before we started.”

“The team’s other issue with the main stadium pitches in Olembe and Douala was that the pitches were 100% natural with no growing aids like grow lights or hybrid stitching. I knew from the off the pitch delivery in these stadiums would be a

difficult one. The stadiums are wrap-around, but the turf is weak, with no help for the grass. An added issue for the National Stadium in Olembe was the opening and closing ceremony, which added huge pressure to the turf that was already struggling from the rehearsals going into the tournament.”

“Having state of the art hybrid pitches in other tournaments is a huge advantage, the

benefit of which cannot be underestimated. Obviously, there are significant time, money, and infrastructure issues to consider in this case.”

“We can’t install hybrid pitches wherever we want because it is not sustainable, and there needs to be processes that ensure the longevity of an investment like that.”

The AFCON had difficulties from start to finish for the team but, whilst the pitches



We can't install hybrid pitches wherever we want because it is not sustainable, and there needs to be processes that ensure the longevity of an investment like that

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To date, this has been successful and, in August, the sixteen team Women's U20 World Cup to be played in Costa Rica will see the thirty-two match programme hosted in two stadiums



Discussing the operations of a Dennis G860

were better than in previous AFCONs, Alan is the first to admit they were a long, long way from being good pitches. The tournament has certainly shown him what they need to focus on for the next addition to be played in the Ivory Coast in 2023. The first inspection for this has already been carried out, which should pave the way for the start of the sixteen-month build-up.

From Cameroon, it was on to the Club World Cup in the UAE. Again the contrast in the level of provisions was there for all to see and demonstrated just how far apart the football world is when it comes to pitch quality on a global scale.

The FIFA Club World Cup is the smallest of all the FIFA World Cups in its current form. Due to the pandemic, the 2021 tournament was being played in February 2022, just a couple of months late. Significant here was the fact this was the first tournament not to be played in a Bio Bubble, although Covid screening was carried out every seventy-two hours on the entire workforce.

For Alan, it was a return to the city of Abu Dhabi, where he delivered his first FIFA

tournament, which was also the Club World Cup in 2018. This edition was played in two stadiums with both pitches stitched, and eight training sites were also in use.

The two stadiums used were the Mohamad bin Zyhed and Al Nayhan. Having the stadiums just an eight-minute drive apart was ideal, with no training ground more than twenty minutes away from the main tournament HQ hotel.

"FIFA has been experimenting in reducing the number of stadiums used in tournaments by embracing the latest pitch technology. To date, this has been successful and, in August, the sixteen team Women's U20 World Cup to be played in Costa Rica will see the thirty-two match programme hosted in two stadiums."

"There can be no doubt that good in-country infrastructure and available budget make quite a difference. The skillset through the contracting teams delivering the pitches is much higher than elsewhere, but the range of the equipment available to them is also much better and in line with what you expect to find. Good examples of

tournament set-up such as those in Qatar and the UAE need to become the models for others to follow. But we also need to work on a financially sustainable way of doing it because few countries possess the wealth of the Arab nations."

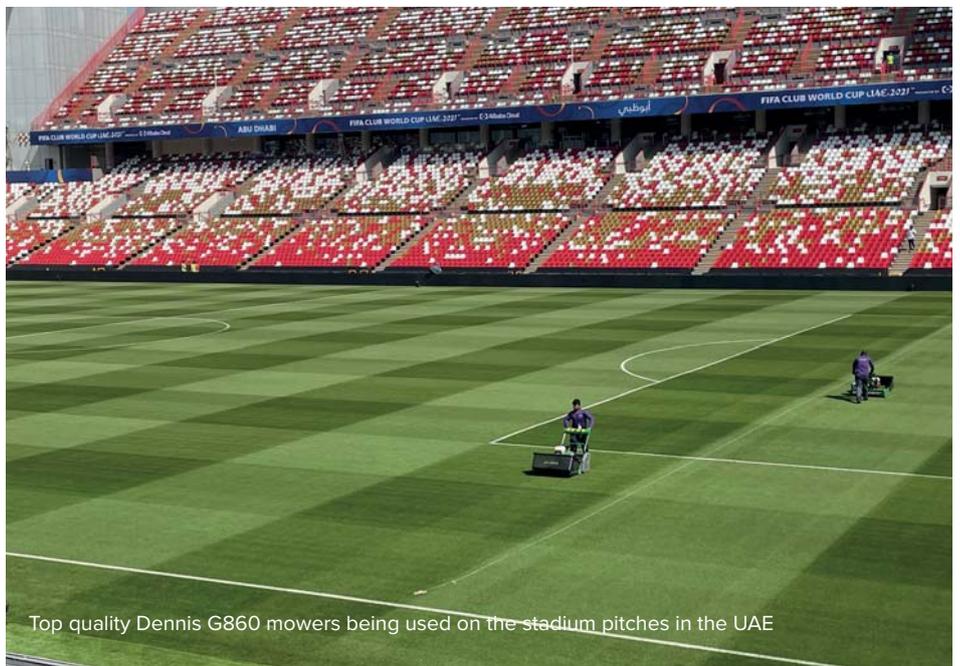
At the time this interview took place in March, it was a case of three down and three to go for Alan. Next up is the Women's U20 World Cup in Costa Rica in August, followed by the Women's U17 World Cup in India in October, before the main event in Qatar in November and December.

In between the tournaments, there will be ongoing inspections for the 2023 tournaments, including the Women's World Cup in Australia and New Zealand and the Men's U20 World Cup in Indonesia.

Work to level the playing field will go on.



The skillset through the contracting teams delivering the pitches is much higher than elsewhere, but the range of the equipment available to them is also much better



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Ipswich Town FC

Let there be light!

March 2022 is a positive time in the long and proud history of Ipswich Town Football Club. Ten months on from the estimated forty-million-pound takeover by the American based Gamechanger 20 Group, optimism has returned to the Suffolk club. A positive Grounds Manager, **Ben Connell**, explains all to Blair Ferguson

On the day myself and Grounds Manager Ben Connell sit down at Ipswich's Playford Road Training Centre, the team are within touching distance of the League One play-offs after the arrival of new manager and former Manchester United first team coach Kieran McKenna. Like many who work and support the club, Ben has been buoyed by the changes and developments new investment has brought and is looking forward to a bright future.

Ben joined Ipswich almost eleven years ago when the club were firmly in their record-breaking run of seventeen straight years in The Championship. During that time, he's had investment in the pitches scuppered by failed play-off campaigns and staff and budget reductions due to relegation in 2018/19.

During the interview, Ben is open, honest and considered. Clearly, there have been frustrations both for himself and his exceptionally hard-working team, who until now have had to make the best of what they had. However, now is the time for him to put his stamp on Ipswich Town after a decade of firefighting, starting this summer when work begins at Portman Road to accommodate the club's first major pitch reconstruction since the 1930s.

"Now that we've got the opportunity to start putting some plans forward and do what we want, it's almost like I've got a list of

ten or fifteen and which one do we want to do first. So, you really have to take a step back and think about it and think about what is going to make the biggest impact first, what do we need to do to make the best improvement we can initially."

"It's still an old-fashioned pitch at Portman Road and hasn't really moved a lot since the 1930s," Ben explains. "I gather there was something done in the 1970s, but not much, and then minor improvements being made as you go with annual renovations and extra sand added in. So really, in the last ten years, we've probably added in and taken off with koroing somewhere around 800 tonnes of sand."

"So we have diluted it down a lot, but coming with all the adding of sand and such, we haven't got any reinforcement in there. So you do lose some stability. Some players prefer it because it's a slightly softer pitch, but it really can show itself during the depths of the winter."

"I feel we can produce good pitches for three of the four seasons, but there is usually a ten-week period where it is a bit of a struggle if the weather is against us."

"During the summer, as the club was being bought, we were already doing end of season renovations. We had koroed and dressed sand in and did our normal renovation on there, and it was starting to grow in."

"I immediately put reports into the new Chief Executive, Mark Ashton, laying out





Grounds Manager Ben Connell



As soon as we put the lights on, the pitch picked up straightaway and, within two weeks, we'd started to grow some grass again



where we needed to head with the pitch, and the recommendation was to go for a full construction with a stitched hybrid and also to purchase as many lights as they could afford," Ben jokes.

"We were lucky enough to get passed on the lights immediately, and we placed an order with SGL for three LU440s which cover about 1,600sqm of light on there with the six lights that we have, and it's made a massive difference."

"With a slightly kinder winter this year, we have got through it. The lights arrived at the beginning of December 2021, and we had taken quite a hit on the pitch beforehand because we'd had double the rainfall in November than expected. We had about six fixtures in the month before in twelve days and, coming out of the back of that, we were not doing great considering it is a natural soil-based pitch."

"But, as soon as we put the lights on, the pitch picked up straightaway and, within two weeks, we'd started to grow some grass again. We'd overseeded the pitch completely after the FA Cup second round tie because being in League One, and we've also got the extra EFL games, the first and second round of the FA Cup, which we got drawn at home in. So we were struggling towards the end of November beginning of December, and it was looking more like a February pitch than a beginning of December pitch."

"We were willing these lights to turn up as

soon as they could, and once they were on, we made dramatic improvements straight away. Then, it started germinating, and soil temperatures picked up, and we effectively grew a new pitch back in with the lights."

"The next step is to have a new pitch constructed, which is planned for the summer of 2023. The planning is underway with that, and we'll be looking at putting in a full hybrid stitched pitch with undersoil heating. It will be the first time we have had undersoil heating, and I think it will make a big difference for the team in terms of time saving against putting a pitch cover out."

"We have some works to the stadium that need to be done before we can reconstruct. The access isn't great because it's an old stadium, so we need to develop that."

"It was a case of not doing too much too quickly. There are some developments where new dugouts are being built, and a corner is being opened up to allow better access in and out, which will help with the pitch build and future concerts and events because, nowadays, we can't just be a football stadium, it needs to be multiuse."

"All of those bits are being sorted out now. We were going to try and do it this summer, but it got a bit complicated, and we didn't want anything to go wrong, so we delayed. We've proved the purchase of the lights have really helped with the pitch an awful lot, even though we will always be looking to improve, and there will be a better playing surface as we go forward."



Some developments will help with the pitch build and future concerts and events because, nowadays, we can't just be a football stadium, it needs to be multiuse

The process of developing things his way is already underway with grow-lights and construction plans, and it allows Ben to do what he has done twice already in his career.

Starting out as the Head Groundsman at Felixstowe Lawn Tennis Club at just eighteen years old gave Ben a lot of on the job experience. It was also his first experience of professional sport, with the LTA hosting a tournament every summer at the club during his time there.

However, his ambition was to work in his favoured sport of cricket. Both he and his brother represented Suffolk up to under nineteen level, and moving to a school was Ben's way of keeping in the sport. At St. Joseph's College, Ipswich, his immediate impact and progress over four years got noticed by then Ipswich Head Groundsman, Alan Ferguson, who actively persuaded Ben to replace him in the role.

At the time, Ben joined a club that had weathered administration and had halted

phases two and three of their training ground development. Now, two decades on, plans are already well into development to upgrade the pitches.

"For us this year, it was lights, and then it's getting a pitch in. We're also turning our attention to the training ground as well because, although twenty years ago, it was opened as state of the art. It was still on phase one of three, and the club went into administration in the early 2000s, and all work halted."




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Ben Connell and Andrew Cubitt



We try and do different pitches with different seeds, so we are keeping an eye on the latest developments and what works for us



“So it’s been very much a waiting game for a long time up here. We’re now starting to think about getting into the 21st century. Where everyone else has moved on with Premier League money we just haven’t had that finance.”

“So, initially for the summer, we’re looking at developing one of the fields. We’re looking at moving the first team out of one field into an academy area, but we’re looking to develop the three pitches. We’re on natural soil pitches, which was farmland turned over to sports fields, and then Ipswich bought them. So they have their restrictions and limitations during the winter, but during the summer, they play well, and they are good in autumn and spring, but if you get some bad weather in the winter, we know about it.”

“Here, drainage rates aren’t great, so we’re looking at having a company come in, starting in the springtime, to initially do some sand carpet pitches with a progression to stitched pitches as the club progress in the next year or so.”

“With a view that we can upgrade pitch six next summer from what’s done this year to a stitched pitch, we’d probably have the same done. So 2023 stadium hybrid construction, and then we’d maybe have something similar up here. It may not be a full construction here, it may be the upper rootzone and stitch, and we initially wouldn’t have undersoil heating with the lower rootzone and gravel carpet. But we’ve got to

look at the weather in East Anglia as well, and it’s not quite what it is in the North West, and we have quite low rainfall in general.”

Away from the major project side of developments, close attention is also being paid to what is used on the pitches. Ben has almost completely reduced fungicide use and is concentrating on plant health. He uses the training pitches to trial different fertilisers and has recently found a winning formula with Barenbrug that is in use at the training ground and stadium.

“We have been looking at Barenbrug seed over the last five or six years. We try and do different pitches with different seeds, so we are keeping an eye on the latest developments and what works for us.”

“We like to try it on-site in real case scenarios, and we will try Barenbrug, Rigby Taylor and Johnsons to see how they work. We swayed heavily towards the Barenbrug in the last couple of years because the mixes have worked really well for us and have been successful in the pitch trials here.”

“We will still have pitches of different companies in, and we’re looking at tetraploids and what benefits they can bring us, especially for the earlier pitches and quicker establishment in lower temperatures. I think they could be really beneficial to us, bearing in mind we’re renovating in April to get pitches back in play for June.”

“But, we’re excited with the new varieties



Training ground

coming out, and Barenbrug is proving what they are saying they can do. The company is based in Suffolk, and a lot of the grass is grown in East Anglia, which is good because we don't have massive air miles on it, and I like the idea of supporting local companies."

"We're using ICL, Ransomes Jacobsen, Barenbrug and MH Goals as well and, for us, we are in a great position really because, as a proud Suffolk club, we want to use local companies. So we are very fortunate to have some of the world's best here on our doorstep."

The mention of reducing air miles on products sparks a separate conversation on Ben's passion for the environment. Like many, he juggles treating the land as well as he can with the demands of professional football. His biostimulant, seaweed and nutritional programmes go some way to addressing this, but his new machinery plan aims to take things further.

The two sides of Ipswich's training ground are separated by a road and almost

completely surrounded by houses. A new machinery plan allows Ben to ease any early morning tension with neighbours whilst addressing his environmental concerns and showing his staff the club is willing to invest in them.

"We're putting in a machinery plan to the club to improve machinery. We are looking at new machines on a case of user comfort, health and safety and environmental factors both for the neighbours and all of us. So we're looking at battery-powered equipment like mowers and hand tools."

"We are looking at electric pedestrian mowers and the Jacobsen Eclipse 360 ELiTE to cut before training. We need to cut early in the morning before training and, with us being so close to houses, we need to consider things like that. It's something we need to do, and it's good for air pollution as well as noise, and we don't want to be a nuisance to our neighbours."

"Because we were taken over last May, a lot of the stuff is still waiting to feed in. We



We are looking at new machines on a case of user comfort, health and safety and environmental factors both for the neighbours and all of us

have had some new machinery over the last year. We've had a new verti-drain, two new Dennis G860s and a new sprayer."

"That's not to say we haven't invested in machinery before now. We bought our Vredo in 2018 because our previous seeder wasn't doing what we needed when trying to establish on sand pitches. It broke down during our renovations, and a contractor turned up with a Vredo, and we had one hundred percent germination. There were no patches that it didn't grow in, and it made life a lot less stressful during the renovation period."

"We're three passes over, eleven o'clock, twelve o'clock and one o'clock pass, and we're playing football on it in five or six weeks. It absolutely revolutionised what we were doing and the confidence to get pitches back in successfully."

For a long time, Ipswich has been a club where decisions have been concentrated on saving money and working with what they have. This includes renovating all of their



A contractor turned up with a Vredo and we had one hundred percent germination. There were no patches that it didn't grow in, and it made life a lot less stressful during the renovation period





When we were relegated, we had to change the way we managed things here, and the budgets were also reduced, so we didn't renovate all of the pitches

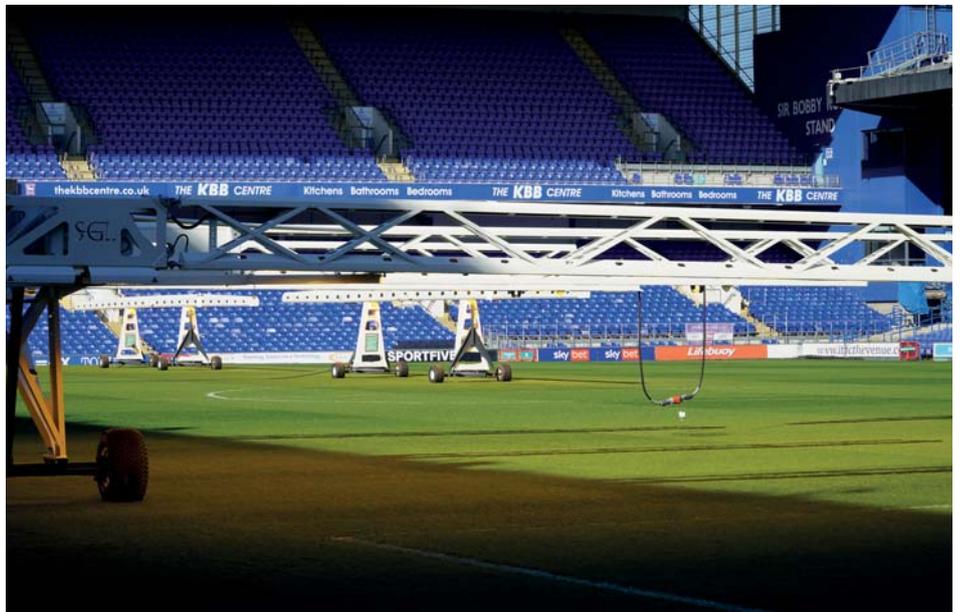
pitches themselves and completing other projects. Regularly throughout the interview, Ben circles back to his team's hard work, past and present. In his view, their dedication has played a significant part in keeping the pitches at a high quality but, like himself, their mindset will now have to change.

"It will be like a new job for me. We are having to change our mindset from how cheaply can we get away with doing this to how good can we make it. And that is something that is changing."

"When we were relegated, we had to change the way we managed things here, and the budgets were also reduced, so we didn't renovate all of the pitches. We aimed at making sure the first team pitches were looked after, and we did the best job we could on them, but the academy suffered off of the back of that, both in staffing and budget."

"We knew our route out of the situation would be to make sure that the first team had whatever we could do for them, and it was the academy that suffered."

"I gather that we lost nine million straight away from TV money, and that has got to



impact budgets, and it did. We had to compromise on that, and we had to change our feeding programmes, change staff numbers and generally change the way we do things."

"We've had a lot of things on the back burner for many years, and I think a lot of companies are probably fed up with me phoning them and saying can you give a quote for this because we're looking at doing that. And then the quote comes through, and then it doesn't happen, and it gets a bit awkward after a while when you're going back to the same people."

"Pitch construction companies and lighting companies are watching how teams are getting on in the league, and they know if the teams that have the quotes in get promoted, the deal might go through, and if they miss out, that might say goodbye to that. But that's part of the fun of being involved in football or professional sport. It's all on a game of football, and that is the exciting thing."

"On a Saturday afternoon, you're cheering the team on not just because you want them to win but because you know you're more likely to get what you've just put in for, and

that is the way it goes."

"Over the years, there has been careful consideration into where we want to go, where we want to head as a grounds department and the development of the pitches. Now it's starting to come to fruition, and it's good to start putting things in place."

"But we mustn't forget that we're still in League One and, although our ambition is very high, this will pan out over a number of years."

"Really, it's been patience. Waiting for the opportunity and waiting for the club to have some investment. The previous owner, Marcus Evans, kept us afloat for many years, and I think a lot of people need to be grateful to him for that."

"Okay, we didn't have mega-millions ploughed into it, but he did keep the club going rather than buying a five-million-pound striker. That wasn't happening, and it was a case of being patient and waiting for our time and now it looks like Ipswich's time is coming around, and we want to make sure that we make the most of it on and off the field."



Okay, we didn't have mega-millions ploughed into it, but he did keep the club going rather than buying a five-million-pound striker



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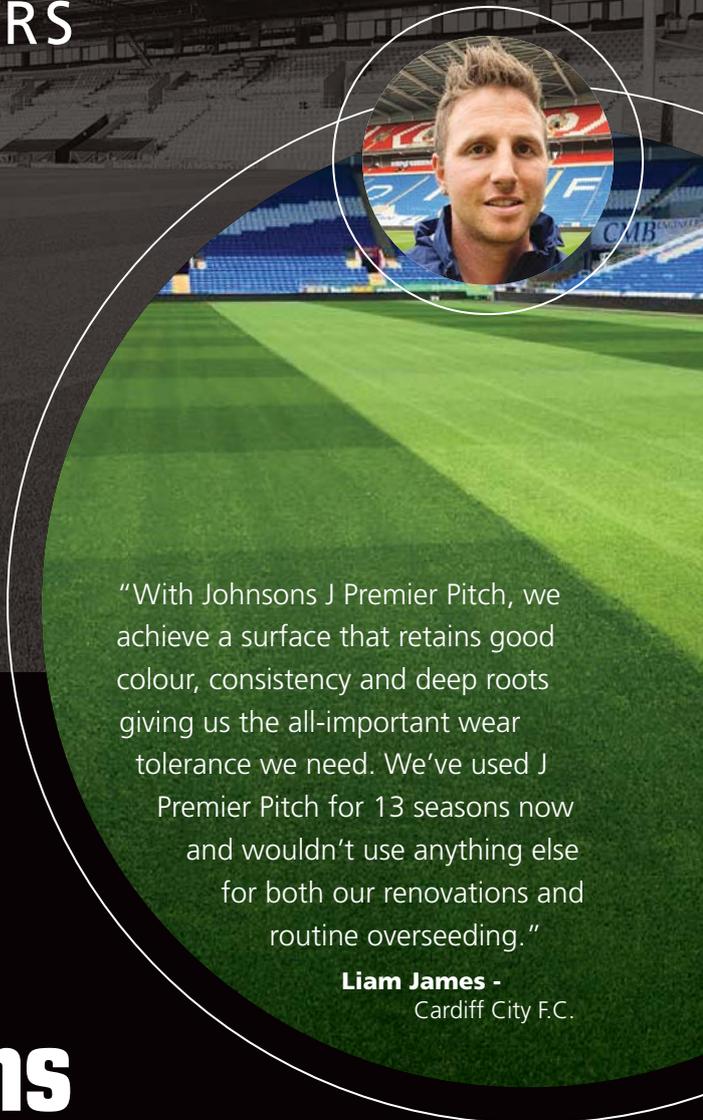
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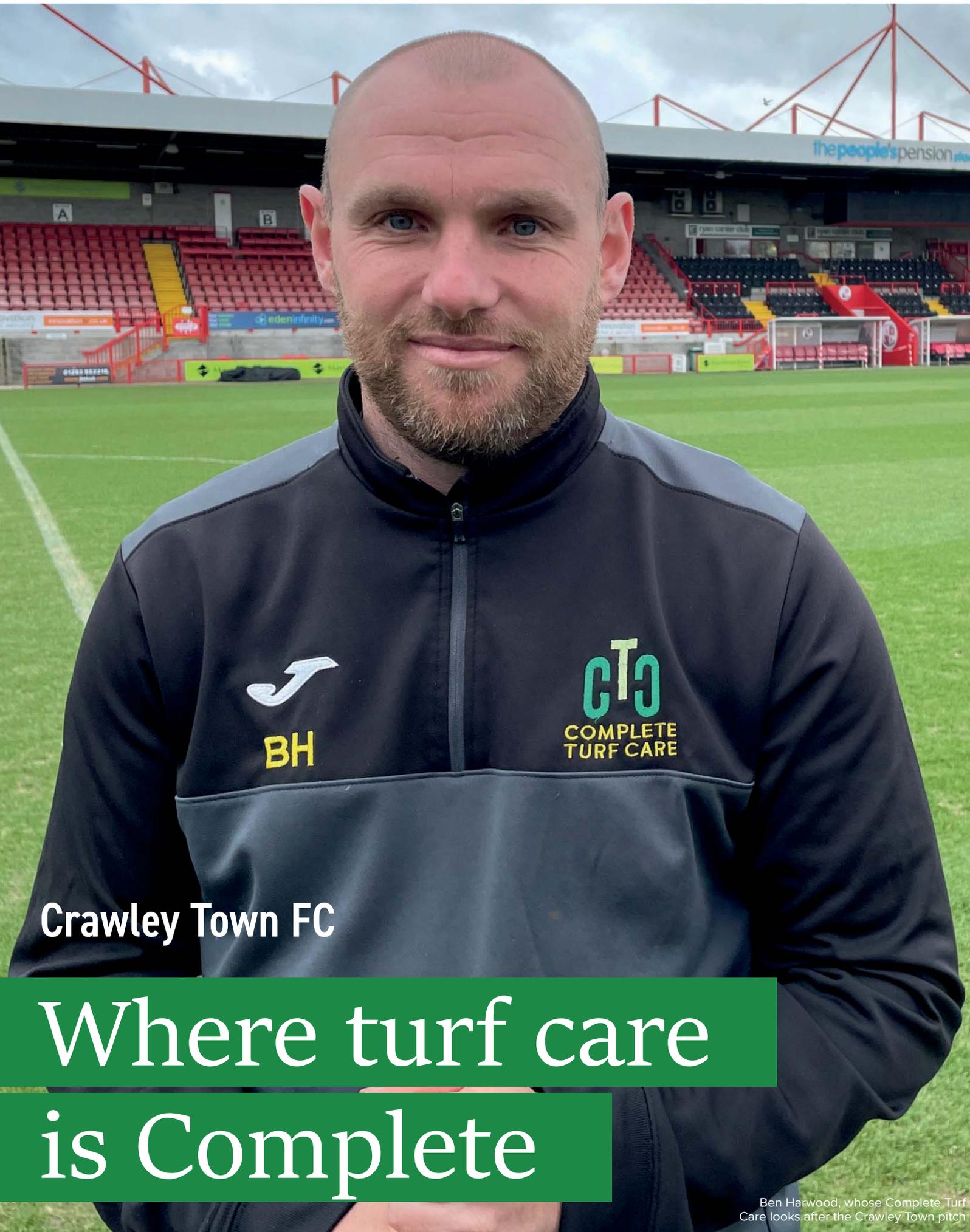
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Crawley Town FC

Where turf care is Complete

Ben Harwood, whose Complete Turf Care looks after the Crawley Town pitch



Nothing like old-fashioned hands on

Not one of the traditional names perhaps in English football, but Crawley Town is well established and, for the eleventh year in a row, assured of EFL status next season, sitting comfortably mid-table in League Two. **Neville Johnson** went to its People's Pension Stadium to talk to the contractor who looks after the pitch and discovers he and his team are very much part of the club's family

Crawley Town Football Club was first formed in 1896, but only adopted professional status in 1962 when it joined the then Southern League. In 1997, it moved to its current home, the Borough Council owned Broadfield Stadium which, with naming rights, soon became the Checkatrade Stadium and, more recently, The People's Pension Stadium after a naming rights deal was signed with the Crawley-based company in 2018.

Over the last couple of decades, it could be said fortunes on and off the field have been chequered. Twice it even entered Administration, and was very close to extinction on one occasion during its years in the Football Conference. At the end of the 2010-2011 season however, the club climbed

into the Football League for the first time with a record 105 points at that level, setting another record with a thirty match unbeaten run at the end of the campaign.

As an EFL club, many a big name has taken charge of Crawley teams, among them England Internationals Chelsea's John Hollins and Manchester United's Steve Coppell, and Wales International Dean Saunders. It was Coppell, who was Director of Football when the second successive promotion took place in 2012, after just one season in League Two, who took the club into League One where it stayed for three seasons.

It has been FA Cup runs that have caught the eye and roused the fans in recent times. The visit of Stoke City for a fifth-round clash in 2011 was the first time the ground had

hosted competitive Premiership opposition, but it was the third round game there against Leeds United last season that will be forever etched in the club's history. Crawley's 3-0 drubbing of the Premiership giants shown live on BBC Television, albeit without fans in the stadium because of Covid restrictions, is surely the club's most celebrated day.

At the moment, the stadium pitch is natural soil based. It is the same one installed when the stadium was built twenty-five years ago. In late February - in the wake of a succession of Atlantic storms - the latest, Storm Franklyn having dropped two inches of rain in a day - it looks terrific and invitingly playable.

In the early days, however, maintenance may not have been all it should have. Black layer, probably as a result of over-watering and insufficient aeration, was a particular issue apparently.

According to Ben Harwood, who was the club's head groundsman there when it first entered the EFL and now looks after it as a contractor with his business, Complete Turf Care, a type of Mott reinforcing system was used at the time of installation. Now and again he says small sections of Netlon mesh or waffles come to the surface. Ben reckons



The Complete Turf Care Team, left to right: Evan Ridler, Ben Harwood, Daniel Gibb, and Tom Martin, who like Ben was also a Crawley groundsmen

this was an early-stage attempt at reinforcement or stabilisation if you like, a precursor to today's Desso, SIS and hybrid carpet systems.

Ben does not think switching to a hybrid surface represents sensible spending for the club. Prior to Covid, he recommended that changing to Fibresand was both viable and affordable and in the best interests of Crawley Town. This may yet happen, but the quality of the pitch so deep into the season and, after such batterings, is testament to the work of Ben and his team in getting the best out of the existing structure of the pitch.

Ben was just twenty-five when he took charge of Crawley's Broadfield Stadium and, at the time, was then one of the country's youngest full-time professional football groundsmen.

"Football was always a kind of calling, though I came to Crawley after a spell as a greenkeeper at Worthing Golf Club, where I gained NVQ level two," he said.

"When I left school, I got a job with a national contractor and did work at Watford and QPR. I suppose it actually started when I was about eight, helping my dad at Brighton's old Goldstone Road Ground, where he was stadium manager. That Brighton link has carried on here."

Ben explained his last remark in more detail. "The club, as stadium leaseholders, entered into an agreement with Brighton & Hove Albion, allowing them to host their Women's First Team fixtures at the Stadium," he said.

"This income source has brought a number of benefits in the maintenance of the stadium's playing surface, which goes some way to offsetting the enormous fixture

pressure. Crawley mostly play on Saturdays and Tuesdays, with Brighton Women's First Team on Sundays, often meaning the Complete Turf Care team has to prepare four playing surfaces in ten days."

Ongoing advice provided from STRI's Senior Turfgrass Agronomist, Stella Rixon is one significant benefit courtesy of the relationship Crawley Town have with Brighton and Hove Albion and, four seasons back, it was the south coast club that helped fund the installation of primary and

secondary drainage, which Ben acknowledges has undoubtedly improved pitch performance and virtually eliminated match postponements.

In October, the two goalmouths and the linesmen's runs were stitched to 90mm by SIS Grass and the stabilising effect of this could clearly be seen, even at the shaded southern end. It was a worthwhile measure indeed, again thanks to the funding.

As far as the Women's Super League is concerned, the Crawley Town pitch is one of



Pitch cutting ahead of the Forest Green Rovers game



Aerial view of the People's Pension Stadium



It would be true to say there is little communication between the EFL and the WSL regarding fixtures, which does not assist those of us responsible for pitch preparation

only two natural grass surfaces - the other is Barnet, where Tottenham women play. Ben says Crawley's pitch, even though it is seldom used for training because Town does this on Horsham FC's artificial surface, has one of the heaviest usage among League Two clubs.

"Three of Brighton's WSL matches have been televised this season. If needs be, WSL will fund the use of rain covers. It also pays

for a PSD agronomist to do three pitch tests a year for each venue," Ben adds.

Ben is critical of the EFL. He says it does not offer support to groundsmen, yet the WSL does provide pitch testing to its clubs which is an obvious help to the groundsman.

WSL and Brighton and Hove Albion both fund pitch testing here, not the EFL. In that regard we are lucky at Crawley," he said.

"EFL don't put any kind of pressure on

clubs to invest in maintenance. You can have the best groundsman going, but if he is not backed by investment, pitches will not thrive. Lewis Hamilton would not get very far if asked to drive a family car."

"It would be true to say there is little communication between the EFL and the WSL regarding fixtures, which does not assist those of us responsible for pitch preparation."

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At these levels, clubs ought not to be concerned about purchasing and maintaining equipment. I believe it is one reason why we could see a growth in regular contractor pitch maintenance beyond just specialist tasks

“The link with Brighton is very strong though and works well for all concerned at Crawley Town.”

The Complete Turf Care team were hard at work getting the stadium pitch ready for the home clash the following Saturday with table-toppers Forest Green Rovers, which incidentally went Crawley’s way 2-1. It was the preceding Tuesday and Ben’s team had cut the pitch lengthways using Dennis G860s. They planned next day to spray with magnesium and calcium and apply half rate liquid feed in conjunction with use of light rigs, leased courtesy of the Brighton club. Ben says he tends to spray every couple of weeks to counteract a leaching tendency.

Talking to Ben he clearly has a fine and long established relationship with Crawley Town. He’s quite a fan of the team too, having so far only missed two away games this season.

Complete Turf Care is now five years ‘down the road’. It is a tight team of four. Ben set out to be a contractor with a difference; one that helps clubs spend wisely and provide them with sound advice. Besides Crawley Town, it carries out pitch work for a number of other local teams like Three Bridges, East Grinstead, and Burgess Hill.

“Our philosophy is a simple one. We will always do things properly. No corner cutting,” Ben emphasises.

“I much prefer working as part of a team like ours, rather than in-house. We have a broad variety of sports surface knowledge between us. The club benefits from guaranteed cover should anything go awry. We can all do each other’s jobs.”

You get a clear impression that this is a

contractor very much at home in the stadium and the way the set up functions, part of the Crawley Town family if you like.

“We’re treated like members of staff, not outsiders providing a service,” said Ben.

“This is partly to do with my history as the former club groundsman, but I also like to think it’s because everyone at the club cares about what we do and it shows in the way we go about things.”

Crawley Town FC, like all of CTC’s clients, pays a fixed monthly fee for pitch maintenance. “We are absolutely not a ‘50 cut’ service,” said Ben.

“We aim to do everything necessary in an annual care programme. Feeding, fungicide, aeration, everything is included. Only end of season renovation work is outside of contract.”

Crawley Town contract out any major renovation projects subject to budgetary and agronomist approval.

All of the equipment they use for weekly maintenance, they own, though Ben admits that a little upgrading here and there is not far away. “Everything we do here is with our own kit and that’s a real bonus to the club,” said Ben.

“At these levels, clubs ought not to be concerned about purchasing and maintaining equipment. I believe it is one reason why we could see a growth in regular contractor pitch maintenance beyond just specialist tasks.

CTC also look after Sussex County Croquet Club at Shoreham on Sea, just west of Brighton where the last Croquet World Championships were held in 2019.

“I’m excited to say that we shall be seeing



The contractor's Toro ProCore helps keep the natural grass surface well drained

the 2022 Golf Croquet Federation World Championships at Shoreham again in July this year.”

Ben is actually quite an accomplished golf croquet player himself and last year played in the British Open Doubles.

Genial and professional in equal measures, Ben is anything but a grumpy groundsman. He does however admit to a couple of areas that sometimes irk him.

He is not generally a fan of football referees. When there’s doubt about a pitch’s suitability or otherwise for play, groundsmen are rarely listened to, he maintains, and gave a for instance that had stuck in his mind.

“Two years back on Boxing Day, heavy rain was coming in and due to cease around 1.00pm. The referee for the game here that afternoon was at the ground mid-morning and asked me to fork the pitch. I knew that was unnecessary because there were already thousands of holes spiked ready for this rain event and I refused. A confrontation involving the referee and the club’s general manager ensued, but I stood firm. I knew that, come kick-off and assuming the rain had stopped a couple of hours before, there would be no surface water at all, which is



Primary drainage being installed in 2018 by Premier Pitches along with secondary Koro top drain bands



Stitching being added to high wear areas last October



Crawley's Nadesan scores for the home side in the 2-1 beating of League Two leaders Forest Green Rovers



I knew that, come kick-off and assuming the rain had stopped a couple of hours before, there would be no surface water at all, which is what happened

what happened. Afterwards the ref just said 'oh, so you do know your pitch then'. We all do, and certainly a lot better than match officials. The refs give us a mark each game: we don't get to mark them."

Some coaches can be 'blame the pitch' merchants, he's found.

'If a team wins: nothing is said. If they lose: somebody looks to the pitch as a cause. I tend to cut a little longer in summer for

matches. A team coach commented to me one day after a defeat that the grass was too long. Next time they visited I told the same coach during the warm up that I'd cut it shorter, although I hadn't. They won, and afterwards said they could tell it was shorter."

Ben says he is worried about the lack of respect for groundstaff by those in football who should know better. He thinks it is one

reason why some groundsmen leave the industry.

A busy game period was looming large - another four games in ten days. The pitch would be put to the test and, thanks to Crawley's Complete Turf Care team, it would come through with flying colours.



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Bath Cricket Club

A green oasis in the city centre

Bath Cricket Club's ground sits in the heart of the historic city, just a short walk from its centre. In this article, **Gordon Gill**, the club's Head Groundsman for close on twenty years, charts his career to date and talks about practices that will be familiar to many cricket groundsman the length and breadth of the UK

What a last couple of years, never known anything quite like it, but that's in the past now, we hope. Onwards and upwards.

I started as a part time volunteer at my local recreational cricket club in the autumn of 1980. Old boy groundsman finished after many years leaving no one to do the job. Someone had to do it, so I had a go. End of season renovations were almost unheard of at my club in those days, so I had a look around, threw a little seed and some soil I found hanging around into the ends, found a bag of what I thought was selective weedkiller, threw that around where the weeds were and went home. A few days later, I had another look and some of the grass was yellowing; strange I thought. A week later and lots of the grass was obviously dying, leaving straggly ribbons of green grass all across the square. I had applied a total weedkiller!

So my introduction into turf care was rather a disappointing one for both me and the club. I think we played the whole of the next season on about five pitches before there was an attempt made in the following autumn to correct things.

About three years later, the council actually bought the ground from the MOD and great plans were put into place to totally redevelop the ground and build a new sports hall to include changing rooms for outdoor sports and a bar area, great.

The downside was that the council took

over the maintenance of the ground, including the newly laid and repositioned cricket square. This was when my hunger to learn more drove me on.

I attended whatever IOG courses I could, all funded by myself, learnt what I could off the council boys and offered to help them. Within a couple of years, I was managing the show and the council would introduce new workers to me. It actually worked out well for many years.

During this time, I was employed as a class one lorry driver with Tesco; best job I ever had, that was until February 1999 when the depot closed and I was made redundant. In 1998, with redundancy in mind, I attended day release and completed my NVQ2 at Hartpury College, much to the surprise of the young boys. It was at this time that I first met the now legendary Matt Gresty of Limagrain. This time also coincided with the council putting many services out to tender. As I was intending to set myself up as a sports ground contractor, I applied to tender to manage my own sportsfield and got the job. One or two other clubs had heard what I was about and another couple of jobs came along and I was up and running.

It was during the late summer of 2002 that I was made aware of a vacancy for a full-time groundsman at Bath Cricket Club. I got the job, at the third time of trying mind. I first applied in 1994 when redundancy was first mooted; I was unsuccessful. The second time was in 2001, and I never even got an interview, so I was a little surprised that I was

successful in 2002. I did learn later that Phil Frost (former Head Groundsman at the County Ground, Taunton) had been offered the post before me but that he eventually turned it down.

Going back to the year 2000, I was offered the opportunity to become a pitch advisor for the Wiltshire Cricket Board. The week-long course was to be held in Kent during October 2000. I couldn't get there fast enough. My cricket experience took off.

I met many very influential first-class groundsman and turf professionals on that course and many are still friends and associates today. People like the ECB's Chris Wood, Len Smith at Glamorgan, Roy McLaren from Worcester, Durham's Tom Flintoft, now sadly deceased, Simon Tremlin at Wormsley, Jonathan Smith at JMS, David Bates from total play, Alan Lewis (top man), Peter Drury, now deceased, and Professor Bill Adams. Apologies to those I have missed out/forgotten, but it was one of the most informative weeks of my life.

Enough of the name dropping, apart from one man, Martin Townsend. I was first introduced to Martin in the early 90s. At this time, he was a sales rep for Avoncrop Amenity and he alone gave me the confidence to get on with it and do my thing. I could ring him whenever I liked and he was always there to support me with advice, which was invaluable, priceless. Thank you Martin.

So, back to 2002, and I was in a full-time job looking after a top recreational cricket



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Anybody who knows the Bath ground will know that it is all but within the city centre, a green oasis with trains high up passing one side, the open deck tour buses high up passing along another side



ground. Not too many jobs like that around here. Anybody who knows the Bath ground will know that it is all but within the city centre, a green oasis with trains high up passing one side, the open deck tour buses high up passing along another side. The car park is where many park up and jump out of their cars with camera in hand to photograph the magnificent St John's Church spire against the blue sky, I think visitors to the city think it's the abbey. The ground sits in a bowl with the world looking down on it, so presentation is everything. Lovely dark and light shades with sharp crisp straight lines.

Bath Cricket Club was formed in 1859 and plays at North Parade. In about 1999, a lease was signed to also play cricket at the Brownsword ground, owned by the greeting cards guru Andrew Brownsword. This is next door to the landmark known as Beckford's Tower, high up on the outskirts of the city. A mile along the road is the famous Bath Racecourse, the highest jumps racecourse

in the country.

This second ground is approximately 238m higher than the ground at North Parade and has evolved over time. The square consists of ten pitches with approximately 40mm of Boughton County loam on top of the indigenous soil. Two are used for junior pitches with all adult cricket played on the other eight. So there are two totally different ground characteristics to manage.

Between 2006 and 2009 the square was completely relaid at North Parade providing sixteen pitches. The middle pitches now have approximately 125mm of Boughton County loam, with the outer ones varying to between 50mm to 100mm of Boughton County. The middle eleven pitches are used for senior cricket with the outer ones being a mixture of youth and practice pitches. We also have two grass net blocks in the outfield consisting of twelve 6ft practice pitches.

The cricket outfields have very little spent



In about 1999, a lease was signed to also play cricket at the Brownsword ground, owned by the greeting cards guru Andrew Brownsword





For the first time ever, we have hired the outfield to a local youth football team, to be used up to the age of twelve. This is certainly reducing the thatch level and, on the actual pitches, there is very little sign of any moss

on them other than mowing, we really don't have a problem with the outfield at the Brownsword ground, affectionally known as the theatre of dreams, other than it is quite thatchy and grows a lot of moss during the winter. So, for the first time ever, we have hired the outfield to a local youth football team, to be used up to the age of twelve. This is certainly reducing the thatch level and, on the actual pitches, there is very little

sign of any moss. The revenue raised will pay for a little overseeding to be done, along with a little fertilising. This has never been done before, and should also cover the cost of servicing the machinery dedicated to that ground, so win win.

The outfield at North Parade is a different animal; very nice in the summer but becomes very difficult during the winter. It lies quite wet with a soil profile of roughly

45% sand, 45% silt and 10% clay over a heavy clay. This is compounded by worm activity and their casts!!! I am sure our outfield is a worm factory. We used to spray with carbendazim until its use was banned.

During the winter months, we try to brush the casts when the ground and weather conditions allow, but this operation still smears badly and we do lose some grass cover because of it.

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The next day it looked like the Somme but, at the time of writing this in early March, we have the outfield back under control and only yesterday was complimented twice on how nice the ground looks again. Result



During the middle of February, for the first time ever, we applied a particular soil conditioner to the outfield - expensive, but it had to be done. The next day it looked like the Somme but, at the time of writing this in early March, we have the outfield back under control and only yesterday was complimented twice on how nice the ground looks again. Result.

During the heatwave of 2018 (remember it?) our outfield, like many others, was destroyed. It also highlighted the levels of thatch we had, so something had to be done. We scarified hard with both an Amazone Profihopper, which took the surface right away in places, and a Graden. We could have gone on for ever but we filled a roll on roll off skip and some. The chairman was not happy with the £1k bill for disposal.

We then applied about ten or twelve bags of seed via a hired in disc seeder and fertilised. Now, each autumn, we will run the Graden through the outfield in one direction

and my team have to shovel the arisings onto the club truck and dispose of the arisings at our second ground. They are not impressed, it took two to three weeks, albeit carrying out other tasks at the same time. I will have to discuss this with my line manager during this summer.

During the autumn, and again sometime in March, I will hollow core the outfield with our tractor mounted Groundsman fitted with half inch hollow tines. This allows air in, takes a little thatch out and provides free topdressing that we dragmat and dragbrush in.

During the summer months, when we have a window of opportunity, we will hollow core to about an inch which, again, lets air in, reduces the thatch and keeps the surface open, allowing summer rainfall into the profile as opposed to sitting on top. Each summer, the grass sward appears to thicken up again without general overseeding although the odd handful does go down in any localised problem areas.



During the autumn, and again sometime in March, I will hollow core the outfield with our tractor mounted Groundsman fitted with half inch hollow tines. This allows air in, takes a little thatch out and provides free topdressing that we dragmat and dragbrush in





During the summer, the outfield at North Parade will be mown at least five times a week, whereas the outfield at the Brownsword will be mown three times a week

The outfield is more akin to a golf fairway with its own slopes and undulations, allowing water to hold in some of the hollows. Over the last three winters we have taken it upon ourselves, in-house, to lay drains from these hollows and link them into the ring drain that we have around the square. As each year goes by, we find less and less ponding in the outfield, perhaps a

couple more next year, we will have to wait and see.

During the summer, the outfield at North Parade will be mown at least five times a week, whereas the outfield at the Brownsword will be mown three times a week.

Bath Cricket Club is an extremely busy club, the main ground will regularly play 90

to 100 games or days of cricket, while the second ground will stage around 90 days.

North Parade will stage youth games every Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday evenings between April and July. Thursday will be senior men's training night, when two outfield practice pitches and one centre wicket pitch will be required, and Friday night is ladies training night.

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We have had international ladies training days - South Africa and New Zealand - and were very proud to host both Pakistan and the West Indies for T20 World Cup training in 2019



The 'Universe Boss' Chris Gayle using Gordon's nets

Whilst games are being played other training takes place on our three artificial pitches located on the side of the ground. The University 1st XI will usually play half a dozen mid-week games between April and June. Often the youth teams walk out to start their games as the university teams walk off having finished theirs. We barely have time to take the stumps from one pitch and place youth stumps in the other.

The Brownsword ground is almost as busy, with youth games Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday, as well as a handful of University 2nd XI games, leaving Thursday and Friday free for any home youth cup games.

I am informed that we have eleven youth sides - under 11s to under 15s to include girls youth, four senior men's weekend teams and two ladies elevens. Our head youth coach is also very active in the community and he has two community coaches at his disposal. This can create more games so we have created a partnership with a local private school, King Edward's, where we can play overspill games.

Along the way we have also provided pre-

season grass practice facilities for Gloucestershire CCC during March. Most seasons we stage County 2nd XI games, both T20 and three day stuff, as well as County youth three day games. We have had international ladies training days - South Africa and New Zealand - and were very proud to host both Pakistan and the West Indies for T20 World Cup training in 2019.

My proudest moment has to be when we hosted England Ladies for two T20 matches against New Zealand in 2007 and again in 2008 when we hosted England Ladies against India in a 50 over one day international. Great moments for me and the club.

The playing season is full on pitch prep - watering, rolling, verti cutting, combi raking/brushing etc. I start pitch prep ten to twelve twelve days out; probably a verticut and watering. Watering might happen two or three days on the trot depending on the weather; if it has rained enough, possibly no watering at all. Depending on how I feel, the finished height of cut will usually be between 4mm and 6mm, with half an hour's rolling probably every other day - which is



My proudest moment has to be when we hosted England Ladies for two T20 matches against New Zealand in 2007 and again in 2008 when we hosted England Ladies against India in a 50 over one day international



England v New Zealand Women's International T20 15th August 2007



possibly still too much - with a light raking or verticutting on alternate days.

I always look to mark the pitches out on a Thursday and usually mow the square three times a week at between 12mm and 15mm. Once the pitch is finished with it will be flooded down, once the excess moisture has soaked in, might be same day might be next day, we will either overseed using the Vari Seeder or the Groundsman with cluster heads. We have a break at about 20mm, so

we then solid tine spike using 9mm tines in the Groundsman before applying two to three bags of loam and dragmatting in. In time, I am hoping this will pin the break together. Early signs are that we are having some success. This pitch will sometimes be covered with a flat sheet and we normally see good germination within four to five days, sometimes three if we have pre-germinated the seed first. This pitch will often be used again within about six to eight

weeks.

Then we get to September. During this time, we will carry out a lot of verticutting on the square prior to mowing to about 4mm to 5mm when a local contractor is called in (myself!). I/we will scarify hard in three directions with a Graden, hoping to achieve at least 8mm with the final pass, hopefully more. The arisings will be swept up using a Sisis Litamina. Four bags of Limagrain MM50 grass seed will be applied.



We will scarify hard in three directions with a Graden, hoping to achieve at least 8mm with the final pass, hopefully more. The arisings will be swept up using a Sisis Litamina

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What's in the shed?

North Parade

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2 x wheelbarrows + various hand tools
Sisis Lawnman

Brownsword ground

John Deere 2653b triple with grass boxes
Ransomes Super Bowl
Powerroll 12
Sisis Combi Rake
Wheelbarrow + hand tools
Wheel to wheel line marker

The club also owns a truck, a Mitsubishi Canter with a beavertail bed, to commute between the two grounds. Hence machinery is often shared.

Each ground has a set of roll on roll off covers with North Parade also having several flat sheets, along with 4 x Bowdrys.



On average, six bags of loam per pitch will be applied through a tractor drawn hydraulically operated drop topdresser. This will be dragmatted in. Once dragmatted we will then put a long straight edge - an aluminium ladder - across the ends to level them. This will take any loam off high areas leaving us to add any more to any remaining low areas. This will sometimes put the number of loam bags used up to seven per pitch. Finally, we apply two 20kg bags of pre seed fertiliser. During the next two weeks this may be watered if required, with mowing often taking place again after two and a half to three weeks.

Machinery is always a sore subject, though compared to most I do quite well, but never well enough. Replacing old machines can be difficult because we keep them well maintained, meaning a mower that might be twenty-five years old, still does a job and only looks five years old. Adding machinery is always difficult; the extra cost always brings the question 'what do you want it for?'

You've managed up to now.' However, with concentrated discussion over a period of time, sometimes a year or two, we occasionally succeed. I am not one for buying just for the sake of it, but it is/would be nice to stay up to date.

With cost in mind, I have started introducing some basic servicing in house. Ever since I started at Bath, I have used the excellent service of Dave Philips for everything servicing and repair, but I feel, to justify full time employment status, my staff should undertake the very basic servicing of machines and minor repairs, just as we take on more DIY jobs around the club - save money and create a culture of 'how would we manage without you?'

Prior to being a lorry driver, I was a lorry mechanic so I am teaching my staff the basics of minor repairs and servicing, whilst unmanageable jobs and regrinds etc. will still go to Dave Philips.

During the writing of this article I have, on occasions, referred to my team. This





Left to right: Alex Woodward, Gordon Gill and Darren Ball

comprises myself, Darren Ball and Alex Woodward. I'm now old hat and my time is reluctantly coming towards its end; sad I know. Darren is my number two, 49, and a family man living in Bath and, in the past, was the Head Groundsman at the Bath Rugby Club, where he would also assist Phil Frost when Somerset County Cricket Club staged their annual festival at The Rec. So, he has some knowledge of cricket. Alex is 44, also a family man with absolutely no knowledge of cricket ground maintenance but is an enthusiastic member of a local pub team, in fact I think he nearly runs it, and, guess what, they use our second cricket ground to play their Sunday fixtures, so he is under the microscope as that is the ground where he spends most of his time - no pressure then.

I have to say that I could not wish for two more conscientious lads; their work ethics and timekeeping are exemplary. My job now is to train both of them to a level where they both understand the club's needs and have

the ability to prepare pitches and maintain the grounds to the standards that I have set and that the club now expects.

Darren started part time around his furlough, when I was left single-handed the minute we were allowed to start playing cricket again. He maintained the ground so well in the little time he had that the club decided to offer him a full-time job before the end of that summer. He had experience using machinery, got by with the cricket and everybody was over the moon.

Alex started last April. I had never met him but Darren recommended him, so the club interviewed him and took him on immediately. He knew nothing but I have never known anybody so willing to learn and he has come on leaps and bounds; well done Alex. The club is investing in their future and paying for both of them to do their NVQ 2. I really hope they do well.

Our summer schedule is full on. I have to rota the boys for evenings; the slightest chance of rain and some pitches will need to

//

My job now is to train both of them to a level where they both understand the club's needs and have the ability to prepare pitches and maintain the grounds to the standards that I have set and that the club now expects

be covered up. This season, I will cover Saturday first team and Sunday national knockout games. Darren will do Saturday second team games and will alternate Sunday cover with Alex. As you can tell, much overtime is done, though whoever is covering the evening does not start until 10.00am. Days off are difficult to fit in but we rally round as best we can. August suddenly feels like the season has come to an end as the evening cricket has finished, so we allow ourselves the luxury of each having a week off, which means the two left behind are still just as busy as ever, and so we roll on. I guess to cricket groundsman it all sounds rather familiar.



Bath Cricket Club
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Emirates Old Trafford

Every which way a winner





Turning round an international cricket square 90 degrees and absorbing ever busier sporting calendars have only served to further raise standards at Emirates Old Trafford, where Greg Rhodes caught up with multi-award winning Head Groundsman **Matt Merchant**

When someone has won three ECB Grounds Manager of the Year awards, we feel compelled to ask the recipient the secret of their success, which is why Pitchcare returned to Emirates Old Trafford pre-season to ask Head Groundsman Matt Merchant that very question.

Once again, he has been recognised and honoured for producing outstanding pitches for three- and four-day cricket but Matt knows the importance of the team dynamic in lifting those accolades.

“No-one is ever going to win such an award unless they have a quality team around them and I certainly have that here,” he states.

Well before Matt received the first of his three Bernard Flack trophies in 2009, you sensed something special was afoot at Lancashire Cricket and, by the time the transformative changes began to raise the club to new heights of provision and excellence, he had steeped himself in its culture and values.

“I’ve seen many changes to Emirates Old Trafford during my time here and plenty of hard work has gone into preparing these pitches over the years.”

Arriving as a 16-year-old in 1990, Matt served under industry doyen Peter Marron, working his way up to the top spot in 2009. His first award was bestowed just a year before the monumental feat of turning the Old Trafford square 90 degrees to aid batsmen’s visibility.

Four years later he notched up his second honour. After his most recent triumph, can he keep the trophy, akin to Brazil after they had won their third World Cup in 1970?

“No, you can retain it for a season before returning it to the ECB,” Matt explains. “I brought it into work and kept it in the brew room though so we could all see, as winning the trophy was really a team effort.”

Is he leading the field in terms of past winners of the mounted silver trophy? “Bill Gordon at Surrey won it five or six times I think, so I’ve a long way to go yet.”

In fact, Bert Flack was employed at Old Trafford for a few years, Matt continues.

“The Cricket secretary at the time got confused over names and took him on by mistake, instead of Bernard Flack.”

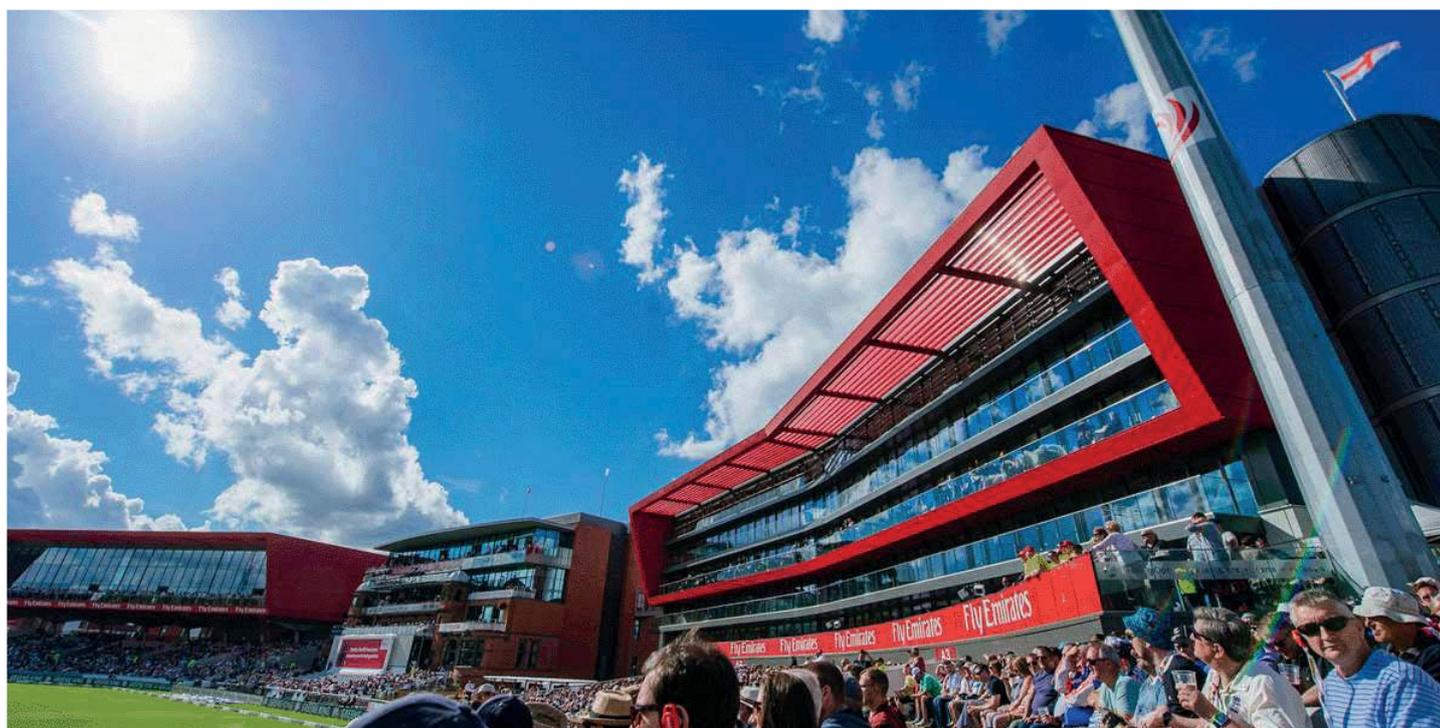
The turning of the square marked a turbulent and triumphant period in Lancashire’s fortunes. “We won the championship in 2010/2011, after we’d played in the strips, then a year later we were relegated, before bouncing back from the second division the next season.”

Lifting the ECB Grounds Manager of the Year award reflects not so much a high point in time as a level of pitch standard unequalled by one’s peers across an entire season.

“A match referee marks pitches for pace, bounce, carry, turn and quality at all the grounds throughout the season, and the highest scoring ground takes the honours,” Matt explains.

Emirates Old Trafford was not the only ground in the Lancashire Cricket ‘family’ to be singled out for pitch quality. Alex Kegg received a commendation for his work on the Chester Boughton Hall outground.

Covid impacted the ground as it has done





We've been together a long time now and she knows to prompt me to talk about the day, rather than keeping things under wraps. Debbie can tell if it's been a bad day. We are both good listeners and I'll ask her how her day has gone too



at so many venues over the last two years, although the grounds team were kept busy preparing pitches for matches held behind closed doors.

"Many of the staff weren't furloughed," Matt recalls. "In 2020, we hosted West Indies, who used the ground as a training camp for three weeks before their Test at the Ageas Bowl. Then we had back to back Tests with the Windies (two games), Pakistan (one game) - never been done before - plus three T20s against Pakistan and three ODIs against Australia.

Currently, the Emirates Old Trafford pitches comprise eighteen wickets, eleven for first class matches, five of which are TV strips, the remainder are used for practising on (the boundaries are too short).

The dearth of cricket during lockdown fostered strong grass cover on the square, Matt notes. "We had no-one in from April to May, so we just kept the square well-watered and groomed." Meanwhile the grounds team were temperature monitored every morning then lateral flow tested by the nurse every three days.

With mental wellbeing so prominent an issue, how does Matt manage the pressures of the job? "Talking helps a hell of a lot," he says. "My wife Debbie is a social worker - her job involves adults with learning disabilities. We've been together a long time now and she knows to prompt me to talk about the day, rather than keeping things under wraps."

"Debbie can tell if it's been a bad day. We are both good listeners and I'll ask her how her day has gone too."

Seldom do grounds teams stay static for long and that applies at Emirates Old Trafford too, with Harry Morton and Andrew McHale both recently turning full-time. "Harry has taken up from Colin Bury, who looked after the nets before retiring last year. Les Stephens is now full-time, after three years as a seasonal."

New apprentice Clifford Herd, 'CJ', is already a hit with the team. "Currently taking

Sportsturf Management at Myerscough College, he spends 80% of his time on the job and the rest as study days."

Sadly perhaps, the team's sole women member departed to pursue other opportunities. "Tracy lived in Cumbria and helped out for two seasons. She's a cricket umpire and follows the Barmy Army so travels a lot," Matt says. "She was in the West Indies recently, following England."

Hopes rose of a replacement when a

woman was set for interview for an apprenticeship - "but she never turned up!"

The rise of women's cricket and a wealth of formats, including the onset of the 100-ball game, creates added demand for staff, Matt maintains, and has sparked a shift in work patterns.

"Between mid-March and the end of September, no-one has a day off because of our workload. That's the way it's always been since my first day here. By the end of





Between mid-March and the end of September, no-one has a day off because of our workload. That's the way it's always been since my first day here. By the end of the season, we're all absolutely goosed. This is something we are looking to change

the season, we're all absolutely goosed. This is something we are looking to change with more staff to achieve a better work, life balance."

"Now the lads get three days to themselves, away from work pressures."

Matt is seeking to further strengthen the team, with two seasonal and an outground supervisor, which links us to Matt's most intriguing news - the prospect of a brand new ground.

Farmland in Farrington Moss, near Preston, is earmarked for the creation of a major facility that includes Lancashire Cricket's Academy, 12-wicket first team ground for men and women, 12-wicket recreational ground, pavilion in the middle of them, and a practice area and two artificial strips.

"We're in the planning stages now," Matt confirms, "and hope to get the go-ahead soon." If they do, the first spade could break soil for the squares in August, with first

games following in the 2024 season.

"Wicket construction will be the same as for those at Emirates Old Trafford," Matt adds. "The recreational ground's use is still under review - possibly for second elevens men and women and community games."

Which is where the outground supervisor position fits in. "The plan is for this person to become head of the grounds team at the new site, with me becoming grounds manager for the two centres."

Back to Emirates Old Trafford, where recent seasons have seen some turf developments. The Johnson Premier Wicket ryegrass mix trialled on the nets nearly a decade ago has proved its worth, Matt says - so much that it has outgrown its boundaries to set seed across the whole stadium.

"After Mallinsons Koroed the outfield three years ago, we sowed Premier Wicket throughout and four varieties in the mix have done the job for us."

After that kind of backing, you have to give it odds on for the new ground.

Like many a stadium with perimeter overhangs, Emirates Old Trafford has seasonal issues with grass growth. "For six months of the year, the outfield under the building housing the players' areas and media centre receives no sun, so we invested in two MU50 lighting rigs, previously across the road at Manchester United."

"We've been using the rigs throughout the winter to encourage better grass growth - and the cost of the electricity it uses is not a massive problem." Maybe by the time this article is out it will be with the energy price hike!

Deeply ironic as the club's reason for turning the square was too much glare for batsmen. "We must have been the only cricket ground where players went off because of sunlight," Matt jokes.

Under Lancashire Cricket's strategy of growth is construction of a new stand to replace the Red Rose suite, currently being demolished.





We'll be termed groundspersons, to reflect lack of gender bias and a policy of inclusivity. All part of the game's move to modernity across the board, you'd have to argue



"The stand should boost stadium capacity by around 5,000," Matt estimates, "and should be ready for our Ashes test in 2023 if the 18-month build programme runs to schedule."

With heightened interest around the change from diesel and petrol to electric, no surprise that Lancashire is moving ahead on this front. "We plan to change all existing machinery to electric within the next few years," Matt reveals, "and have already purchased two Infiniticut cylinder wicket mowers with groomers, and a Dennis ES-36 electric mower to replace our mighty machine, the 42in Allett Regal."

The move to silent service for machinery has been prompted from another source, however. "When Sky Sports film here, they ask us to stop mowing because of the sound of the motors. They say it's just for ten minutes, but usually they're filming for far longer than that, which means we lose a fair bit of work time. It's frustrating but we have to live with it at the moment."

Also new in the shed is a five cylinder Toro outfield mower and a new electric utility vehicle. The stadium's replacement pitch roller is a gleaming 2 tonne Autoguide Auto-Roller, replacing a smaller predecessor, soon to find a second home at the Southport outground.

Probably this season's biggest challenge will be coping with five concerts in a fortnight, slap bang in the middle of Lancashire's cricket calendar, from 11th to 25th June.

"Seven days after the last event, we host Warwickshire Bears," notes Matt, "after two weeks protecting the ground with a 25mm covering protecting the turf from audiences of up to 55,000." As they say, 'good luck with that one'.

There is a silver lining to consider as Matt points out. "Once the second ground is completed, the concerts might well be held there. "Only joking, no chance of that happening."

Communication with and among the team

is critical, of course, but the importance of a healthy working relationship with your line manager is just as key.

Matt's enjoyed a great rapport with Lancashire's head coach Glen Chapple over the years. Leaving aside the age-old discussion over home advantage, Matt says of his line manager: "Glen always wants us to prepare the best pitch we can in all formats, then says they'll try and do the rest."

It's all change though, as Matt now reports to new director of cricket Mark Chilton, whose predecessor and former Lancashire bowler Paul Allott retired last October.

"Mark was an opening bat for the club and was captain for a time. It's ironic that roles have reversed and Mark is now Glen's boss, when, eighteen months ago, Glen was Mark's."

The recent seismic upheaval that has shaken Yorkshire CCC to its foundations has sent shockwaves through every nook and cranny of cricket.

With its own eye on inclusivity, Lancashire



Seven days after the last event, we host Warwickshire Bears, after two weeks protecting the ground with a 25mm covering protecting the turf from audiences of up to 55,000





is set to introduce revised job title nomenclature across the club reportedly, as Matt explains. “We’ll be termed groundspersons, to reflect lack of gender bias and a policy of inclusivity,” he notes. All part of the game’s move to modernity across the board, you’d have to argue.”

As a parting shot, I ask Matt if, thirty-two years in, he sees himself moving to pastures

new. “You can never say never but I guess this is my forever job, for several reasons. I like it here, and am settled in the area, as is Debbie and our daughters Kara and Abby.”

And who would not wish to stick around with a brand new cricket ground on the horizon, if given the green light. Certainly the next era of an already illustrious career is beckoning for Matt Merchant.

Since our last visit

- Relaid two new wickets last year which were part of the outfield to accommodate more training sessions on the square
- Having to divert irrigation and drainage on the outfield
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The team

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- David Shortt, assistant
- Willie Gorst
- Andy McHale
- Clifford Herd, apprentice
- Harry Morton
- Les Stephens
- Andy Carney, gardener



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Edgbaston Priory Club

Growing opportunity

In September 2016, at the start of the academic year, the Edgbaston Priory Club began working with the Heart of Birmingham Vocational College (HBVC). HBVC is an independent specialist college for young people, generally aged 16 to 25, with special educational needs which may often include autism. Assistant Grounds Manager **John Lawrence** and Grounds Manager **Dave Lawrence** explain the journey so far



Earlier that year, we'd been contacted by a member of staff at the college who had previously done some summer work for us, to see if there was anything we could do to start working together. The initial contact was vague in terms of the scope of what we might be able to do, but after a couple of meetings and some discussion, we agreed to try and establish regular work placements for learners from the college.

These work placements have become the bread and butter of our relationship with HBVC. First and foremost, they are mutually beneficial. Working with the college allows us to be more productive as a department; many hands make light work! However, the more profound benefits are found when looking at what the learners get out of the experience.

For many attending the placements, this is their first foray into the world of work. It's an opportunity they need to be able to continue their education; accessing the community is a fundamental element of the curriculum delivered by the team at HBVC, and this includes accessing external work placements. However, it is also an opportunity that they deserve, and have a right to.

In general terms, disabled people face disproportionately high barriers when trying to access employment in the UK, whether through deliberate discrimination, or unconscious bias. Data gathered by the Office for National Statistics (ONS), and published in reports including a House of Commons Research Briefing published in April 2021 backs this up. The data shows quite clearly that disabled people are more likely to be unemployed.

The charity Scope estimates that there are approximately 14.1 million people in the UK living with a disability. Setting those labour market statistics, shown in the accompanying graph (overleaf), against the sheer number of disabled people in the UK, demonstrates that as a society, we need to do more to allow a

huge proportion of our national population to access employment.

It's also alarming to look at data for groups within the disabled community and, given our work with HBVC, we have a particular interest in autism. There is ONS data, published in 2021, that demonstrates that only 22% of adults living with autism in the UK are accessing any kind of employment. That figure is especially alarming when you consider that there are estimated to be around 700,000 people in the UK with autism. That means there are over half-a-million people in the autistic





Learners will need to undertake various horticultural tasks, such as taking plant cuttings, carrying out pruning, and other maintenance work



Full-time staff working alongside a supported intern on Centre Court

community alone who are unable to access employment.

We've therefore seen working with HBVC as a fantastic opportunity for us to try and open our industry up to an under-represented segment of our community. Unsurprisingly, we were also optimistic that when the then Institute of Groundsmanship (now Grounds Management Association, or GMA) commissioned research into diversity in the grounds care industry, that it would lead to positive change in our industry, and more opportunities for disabled people.

The outcome of this research, was the publishing of a report in 2019, titled 'Groundsmanship - Sports Vital Profession.' The report did outline a number of notable

findings, and we'd argue it should be applauded for a number of the issues it unearthed, including:

- 40% of the (grounds management) workforce is over the age of 50;
- Around 1% of grounds professionals and volunteers are non-white;
- Only 2% of grounds professionals and volunteers are female with 1% of head grounds staff being female.

Additionally, the researchers conducted interviews with various figures within the industry, where a theme emerged from responses, that painted a picture of a lack of diversity within the industry.

Ultimately, the report shone a light on the lack of diversity, and importantly a need for change. The GMA have since launched several initiatives to try and address some of the issues highlighted in the report, including targeted campaigns aimed at increasing the number of young people and women entering the industry. To be clear, the GMA should be praised for identifying these

issues and taking steps to address them.

There is, however, one huge omission from this report; disability. In a 26-page, 13,000-word report, looking at diversity, there isn't a single mention of disability.

This isn't meant to be controversial, or an opportunity to try and score points at the expense of the GMA. While the omission of disability from the report could be viewed as a bit of an own goal, the wider statistics previously referenced in this article demonstrate that the barriers to disabled employment are a wider societal issue. The issues with, or more specifically the omissions from, the GMA report are symptomatic of a wider problem in our society, they aren't the cause.

The charity Scope also estimates that of working age adults in the UK, 19% are disabled. This means that if the employed population was equally represented across the UK, around 1 in 5 people in work would have a disability. How many of us can say that for every 5 people who we know in the sports turf industry, 1 of them has a disability? Admittedly this is an un-scientific way to approach statistics, but it makes the

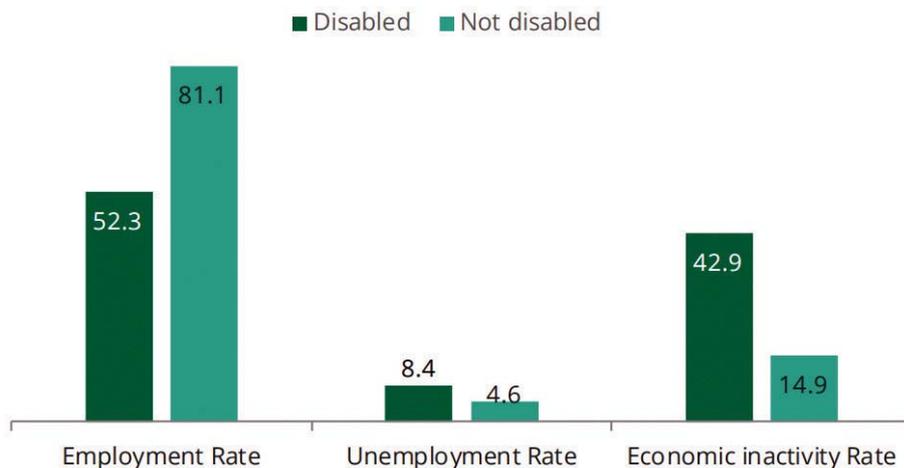


Above: Sharfin Hussain, former HBVC learner who now volunteers with us, posing with the 2022 Britain in Bloom Level 5 'Outstanding' certificate presented for the partnership work between HBVC & Edgbaston Priory

Right: House of Commons Briefing Paper, Number 7540, 24 May 2021

Key labour market statistics by disability status

Age 16-64, October-December 2020, %





Left: Placement learners assisting with autumn leaf clearing



As an industry, it means we need to move away from looking at the barriers that perceptions of disability create, and look at the opportunities that disability offers

point; disabled people are underrepresented in our industry.

If we go back to the GMA's 2019 report, they estimated that there were 37,000 people employed in the turf care sector. On those numbers, if the working population was equal representation amongst our workforce, there would be over 7,000 turf professionals with a disability. While we haven't spoken to all 37,000 people in the industry, we've a feeling that the true figure will be far, far lower.

Now at this point, we will admit, looking at workforce representation in the way we have so far, is a little bit disingenuous. It doesn't necessarily reflect real world conditions. Similarly, we could apply the same logic to statistics around females in the workplace, or minority ethnic groups, and arrive at similar, sensationalised conclusions. However, the point remains, we need to do more to encourage a more representative demographic into our industry. We need to get away from being

an industry of old, white, able-bodied males. We need to do more, to make the industry attractive to everyone.

For those who have made it this far through this article, you're probably starting to ask, 'well what are you going to do about it?' That is of course, a fair response. It would be wholly unfair for us to sit and point out the flaws in our industry, and then continue to work at the status quo. Well to start with, we do have a relatively young grounds team, including one member of the team who was

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In year one of the relationship between ourselves and HBVC, we will be purchasing resources like a polytunnel, to create additional covered space for practical sessions to take place



recruited as a teenage apprentice, and two more who joined in their twenties. In an industry where 40% of the workforce is made up of over 50's, the average age of our team is thirty-five. Additionally, we do have a female member of staff in our team. We'd argue that diversity and representation within our team is heading in the right direction!

However, we don't think it is fair for us to hide behind those arbitrary points; our team is made up of the best people who applied for the roles they are in, when they applied for their jobs. We haven't appointed a team to try and represent a wider demographic, it's just coincidence that the best people for the jobs applied for happened to mean we have some young people, and some female representation.

So, what are we actively doing?

Well, as already mentioned, we've worked with HBVC since 2016, offering opportunities to young people with learning disabilities including autism. We're passionate about creating an environment where learners from HBVC have the chance to hone and

demonstrate the skills they have. This isn't something that just applies to our grounds department either, it is an ethos which has become embedded across our whole business. In recent years, we've begun offering Supported Internships within different areas of the business, initially within the grounds team, and more recently moving into areas like Housekeeping and Hospitality. This has led to paid positions for HBVC learners, with the first joining the club as a fully-fledged member of Edgbaston Priory Club staff at the end of 2021, within the hospitality team.

This success though has given us drive to go further. For a number of years now, we've been keen to establish a more formal pathway into horticulture for learners from HBVC. In fact, our first conversations began prior to the Covid-19 pandemic, though understandably, they got put on hold while the club adjusted to the 'new-normal.' Fortunately though, during the pandemic, HBVC entered into a partnership which set the template for organisations like us to utilise too.

At the start of the 2021 academic year,

HBVC welcomed its first cohort of learners on a specialist Sport and Education pathway. The programme is being delivered at a satellite site, on the grounds at Redditch United Football Club. Learners participate in a variety of sports and activities, and gain knowledge about health-related fitness and exercise. Learners also have the opportunity to take part in work placements at Redditch United Football Club, and within the local community.

As HBVC say themselves, *'Learners will gain the underpinning skills in sport and knowledge of health-related fitness. These skills and knowledge can be taken with our learners on their lifelong journey beyond their time at HBVC. In partnership with Redditch United Football Club, HBVC will deliver a Sports and Education programme where learners work towards sport qualifications.'*

From a learner perspective, the programme is a huge success. It allows learners to access education in a real world, applied and practical environment. It also allows the learners to develop skills which will allow them to achieve realistic



We need to get better at diversity. Projects like this are, in our view, a start. They are just a start though!

Right: Ian White, who joined our hospitality team as a Supported Intern from HBVC, and is now an employed member of club staff





Learners from HBVC utilising facilities at Redditch United Football Club

aspirations, including employment in the sports sector, and more generally, engage in sport and exercise within the community.

Again, readers will likely be asking questions of us at this point, such as ‘what has this got to do with getting people with disabilities into grounds care and horticulture?’ Well, the significance of this first partnership between HBVC and Redditch United Football Club is huge. In essence, the working relationship formed between the two organisations has set the template for establishing further satellite provisions, including with ourselves at Edgbaston Priory.

At this point, it will be of value to know that one of our team, John Lawrence, is also a governor/director at HBVC. This relationship came about because of the work we were

doing in collaboration between ourselves and the college, to deliver work placements. As such, the college approached us to see if one of the team would be interested in joining the college’s governance team and John stepped forward.

The significance of this is that our thinking is often now skewed to enable mutual, collective benefit. In other words, having significant insight in to how both organisations work and what the calibration of success looks like, allows us to work together to identify ways of working which meet the needs of both entities.

From the perspective of HBVC, enabling growth of the provision is a major challenge. In less than ten years, the provision has grown from a portacabin with less than ten learners, to a multisite operation



Working with the college allows us to be more productive as a department; many hands make light work! However, the more profound benefits are found when looking at what the learners get out of the experience



Bulbs planted by HBVC learners in flower



Potting seeds



Wood chipping paths

based out of a main college campus which administers educational programmes to over 100 young people each year. This sort of growth indicates how successful and effective HBVC is. It is very good at delivering for its learners. However, the downside to this is it creates demand, and dealing with growth creates challenges.

The Redditch project, however, is becoming a watershed moment for the college. In the past, growing the college would likely have meant growing the main campus footprint. A good scenario, but maybe not, as it turns out, the absolute best one. Satellite provisions like Redditch have enabled the college to grow, but in smaller environments. By establishing satellites, the college never has to get, or feel, too big. More importantly though, it allows the college to diversify the portfolio of 'offer' for learners, to fit their aspirations.

In short, every learner who attends a specialist provision like HBVC has an Educational Health and Care Plan (EHCP). The EHCP is a legal document which sets out the specific educational, health and social needs of the individual. Importantly

in this context though, it also identifies what their aspirations might be, and as a result has a direct impact on the nature or type of educational programme that will be most appropriate for them.

The significance of this is that HBVC can review EHCP's and establish the aspirations of all its learners. This then guides where the curriculum needs to go to meet need, and as such, indicates what sort of satellite provisions will be most appropriate. Previously, specific aspirations within EHCP's might have needed to have been met through work placements and work experience, within an overarching curriculum. What the Redditch programme has demonstrated is that by having specialist satellite provisions, learners can be signposted to the appropriate satellite pathway, based on their aspirations. In other words, if they want to get in to coaching sport, they should attend the Sport and Education satellite at Redditch.

This doesn't replace the main college campus; this will always be the main hub of the college. However, the aim now is to create a portfolio of satellite sites, or



The GMA have launched several initiatives to try and address some of the issues highlighted in the report, including targeted campaigns aimed at increasing the number of young people and women entering the industry



Clubhouse in spring



Remember, for an industry of 37,000 people to have true disability representation we'd need to attract around 7,000 people with disabilities

'spokes,' off the main campus hub, to allow the college to deliver a wide array of educational pathways, which will enable learners to develop the skills they need to access employment in their chosen sector in the future.

This is where we, as Edgbaston Priory Club, come in. As we've mentioned previously, we've been looking for a number of years at how we can establish a more formal link with HBVC. We thoroughly enjoy delivering work placements and Supported Internships, and will continue to do so in the future. However, we've always felt like we could be doing more. The partnership between HBVC and Redditch has proven that we can, and importantly, shown us how.

The relationship between those two entities has set the template for how we can work with HBVC, and so from autumn 2022, we'll be welcoming the first cohort of learners from HBVC, to a horticulture pathway based at Edgbaston Priory Club.

The template, in simplistic terms, is that HBVC rents space off the business which it can use to deliver the theory elements of the curriculum, as well as space externally to

deliver practical sessions. At Redditch, this is access to the football facilities, and in our case will be access to the grounds generally.

It is important to note, that while the relationship generates an income for the host business, this income is used to cover the cost of hosting the satellite provision, with surplus then re-invested back into the relationship. For example, in year one of the relationship between ourselves and HBVC, we will be purchasing resources like a polytunnel, to create additional covered space for practical sessions to take place. On top of that we'll be purchasing additional tools, consumables like seeds, compost and fertiliser, and essentials like PPE. These

investments will continue throughout the working relationship, to continually improve the offering for HBVC and its learners. We plan to purchase potting sheds in future years, invest in hanging baskets and irrigation systems to broaden the scope of projects that learners can undertake, and as the provision grows, extend and further kit out the classroom provision on site.

Of course, these investments don't just benefit HBVC and the learners, they benefit us too. In a purely capital sense, the relationship allows us to expand our assets. Simplistically, we'll have, for example, a polytunnel on site which we wouldn't otherwise have had. However, this is just a



Wildlife area in spring



Shrub border in spring



Learners will gain the underpinning skills in sport and knowledge of health-related fitness. These skills and knowledge can be taken with our learners on their lifelong journey beyond their time at HBVC

simplistic view.

In order to achieve learning outcomes within the horticulture curriculum, learners will have to undertake a wide variety of horticultural activities. Looking at the polytunnel alone, this might mean growing plants from seed; as a site that buys in a considerable amount of bedding and shrub plants, this offers us the opportunity to have our planting schemes grown on site, rather than importing them. This offers a cost saving in terms of purchasing, and reduces our carbon footprint, by reducing reliance on transport. Additionally, though, in reducing cost and carbon footprint, learners from HBVC have the opportunity to undertake tasks which will enable them to develop skills and work towards qualifications.

Similarly, learners will need to undertake various horticultural tasks, such as taking plant cuttings, carrying out pruning, and other maintenance work. All these jobs need doing on site; indeed, many have been being done by learners attending site on our current work placements. The difference,

from later this year, is that learners undertaking those tasks will be gaining evidence for a qualification portfolio.

Additionally, the work of the HBVC learners on site will allow for a further enhancement of the horticultural value of our site. We've no doubt that the horticulture programme will produce more bedding and shrubbery than we currently utilise each year, so the overall output on site will be able to increase based on this level of production. We'll be able to start using hanging baskets around our buildings. We'll be able to install new beds and planting schemes. And importantly, all these developments will be tangible illustrations of the work that learners from HBVC have completed; they will be a visible advert and testament to the skill and knowledge that the learners will have gained and developed through the programme.

Another facet of the programme that really excites us and HBVC is opportunity to extend our links within the community. As part of the education programme HBVC offer, there is a need to give learners



HBVC football team



Learners working with Edgbaston Priory staff to plant a hedgerow



Autumn colour

opportunities to access external work placements. While we could offer these within the club, the reality is that a work placement within the grounds team on site with us wouldn't be vastly different to the day-to-day study programme the learners would already be experiencing. Instead, our collective aim is to develop a network of community partners, where learners can go out regularly in groups, to complete horticultural tasks in order to

achieve the work placement element of their curriculum. This might mean going to help tidy up the gardens at a local church, freshening up the borders at a hospice, or helping to green up a community garden or space. This will allow the learners to gain valuable work experience, but also enable HBVC, and ourselves, to extend the reach we have in the community.

This all sounds fantastic, but the benefits go further. This is an opportunity for us

to grow a workforce too. Admittedly, as a business, we won't be able to employ everyone who comes through the horticulture delivered by HBVC; we might not have any vacancies at all. However, as the host site, we have the opportunity to help shape the curriculum that the college delivers. Where there are specific skills, knowledge, and abilities that we feel learners would need to be employable within our business, we can communicate this to HBVC,

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Wildlife area in spring

and they can ensure they are worked into the curriculum. This means when we do have vacancies, we will have a conveyor belt of young people, ready and trained, to fit in to our place of work. To be clear, it also means that the curriculum won't necessarily just look at the 'gardening' aspect of horticulture. There will also be scope to include sports turf within the programme too.

However, we also have a unique opportunity to help young people graduating from the horticulture pathway. In year one, the programme will launch with one cohort of between 10 and 14 learners, growing to two cohorts in year two, and three cohorts in year three. Based on a 3-year programme, we should have 10-14 'graduates' coming through each year, and it is our aim to assist as many of these graduates as possible to find employment. This might mean we'll be

leaning on some of our colleagues within the industry for support!

This then is the point of the article, where we circle back to our original point; diversity in the industry. Bodies like the GMA have noted a lack of diversity in our industry, and whilst they might have overlooked this particular group which is under-represented, the point is that, as an industry, we need to get better at diversity. Projects like this are, in our view, a start. They are just a start though.

If we're successful, and hit a 100% rate of learners going on to employment after passing through programme HBVC will be delivering on our site, it's still just a drop in the ocean. Remember, for an industry of 37,000 people to have true disability representation, we'd need to attract around 7,000 people with disabilities into the

industry. At fourteen a year, we'd have to wait another 500 years to reach that target! This project can't just be the start then, it needs to be a call to arms.

As an industry, it means we need to move away from looking at the barriers that perceptions of disability create, and look at the opportunities that disability offers. Nine years ago, Deloitte published a report in diversity in the workplace, titled *'Waiter, is that inclusion in my soup? A new recipe to improve business performance.'* That report found that *'inclusive teams performed better than their peer groups by 80%.'* *Employers also found that their employees with disabilities were hardworking. Individual productivity and overall productivity increases in companies who provide accommodations for their employees.'*

In other words, businesses that don't embrace inclusivity, that don't make themselves accessible, and that aren't diverse, do not perform as well, and are less productive - it makes business sense to be inclusive!

We've always been vocal that autism doesn't need to be a disability; in fact, if managed well, it's an advantage. To borrow a stereotype, jobs that require extreme



Clearing tree brush



As managers we direct our staffing resources, in general, to ensure people are working to their strengths. This is no different when managing people with disabilities



Bird boxes built with HBVC learners, being positioned in trees



Where there are specific skills, knowledge, and abilities that we feel learners would need to be employable within our business, we can communicate this to HBVC, and they can ensure they are worked into the curriculum

concentration are challenging for those of us who don't have autism. Our minds can wander, we lose focus, and the quality of the job suffers as a result. Somebody with autism might actually be able to concentrate for extended periods of time far more easily.

Take weeding as an example. You could send the best member of your team out to weed an ornamental bed. The chances are they'll get bored very quickly, think it's a mundane job, start rushing, and miss bits as a result. Someone with autism, with an interest in horticulture, may well be able to focus much more effectively. Their autism may well be an advantage because that level of focus leads to perfection; it means they do a better job!

Disability is only a disadvantage if we as managers frame it as such! As managers, we direct our staffing resources, in general, to

ensure people are working to their strengths. This is no different when managing people with disabilities. They have strengths and weaknesses just like anybody else. If we look beyond the initial anxiety that we feel, and just look at the person, we can build very effective, inclusive teams, that more accurately represent the demographic of our society.

As a conclusion to this, hopefully those who have read this far are now wondering what you can do. Well, in the context of special education needs, it's quite easy. Contact local provisions; enquire about offering work placements; and start a relationship. The hardest part is taking the first step; from there it gets easier and easier.

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Clearing tree brush

Kineton Sports and Social Club

Local hero

Working to meet the demands of a growing interest in cricket, the one-man grounds team at Kineton Sports and Social Club channels a passion for the sport to maintain high standards. Jane Carley talks to sole groundsman **Andrew Cartledge** who is tasked with looking after the seventeen acre site



The bowling green, established in 1970, has seen an influx of earthworms, but sportsturf soil acidifier seems to be helping, as well as discouraging other pests



Andrew Cartledge - former chairman of the cricket club turned groundsman

On a beautiful spring morning, there's no finer place to be than the village cricket pitch, looking forward to the season ahead, especially when that pitch offers panoramic views of historic Edge Hill. And, at Kineton Sports and Social Club in Warwickshire, cricket is just part of the activities that this hub of village life offers.

A registered Community Amateur Sports Club, the seventeen acre site started out on a smaller plot of land off Bridge Street as Kineton Cricket Club in 1877, and the Verney family, whose nearby stately home of Compton Verney is now an art gallery, are mentioned in old documents as being supporters. The original pavilion remains close to the street, having been succeeded by a more modern building further along the

access road which will itself soon be replaced.

The first football pitch followed in the 1950s, home to Kineton United and Kineton Wasps, although the local sides apparently played at many different grounds and are recorded as holding meetings at several of the village's (then) numerous hostelrys. At some point, the main pitch has also been rotated to run east-west rather than north-south.

The clubhouse - given a major upgrade post-Covid - was built in 1968, the bowling green laid in 1970 and Kineton Sports and Social Club was formally born in 1976.

"It's a typical community facility, run by a committee and volunteers," explains groundsman Andrew Cartledge. "I was chairman of the cricket club for ten years

and started out by helping the then-groundsman, taking over when he retired. We've seen a strong growth in cricket in recent years, and the aim is to maintain high standards for cricket, bowls and football, whilst bearing in mind that the grounds are also used for many other community activities."

These include everything from an annual music festival to monthly classic car and bike rallies through the summer, a Civil War re-enactment and increasingly popular caravan rallies. The Queen's Platinum Jubilee will be celebrated with a number of activities.

Kineton Cricket Club plays in the Cotswold Hills League, with senior teams in the Premier and 5th divisions. In the Warwickshire Junior League, U10, U11, and U14 teams are represented, with the Girls



also playing softball. The club has seen an increase of 50% in cricket pitch use over the last ten years

"We have a ten strip square, which was extended from six, but the middle strips are better as one at the end slopes. With juniors playing mid-week and Sunday morning, plus the Arden League on a Sunday, there can be four or five matches a week, plus junior cricket training on a Thursday and Friday night, which puts a lot of pressure on the square."

"Topography is also slowly changing and I've noticed the cricket outfield becoming more undulating over the last thirty years."

He comments that while he would love to have the budget for a major renovation by fraise mowing the pitch, the reality is that he has to work within the bounds of what is

economically feasible.

"Club membership fees only go part way towards funding the work done, and I'm part-time so I'm conscious of the hours that I'm charging for. All of our equipment apart from one mower is second hand."

Attention is paid instead to continual renovation, Andrew applying 2-3 tonnes of topdressing by hand using a lute and drag mat.

Cricket square preparations involve regular cutting to gradually get down to 5-6mm and feeding with a granular fertiliser in spring.

"We have to be low input in the season as it's hard to find a window, although I will feed a track that is going out of use. I'm flexible on cut height once fixtures have started, depending on the conditions and

the ability of the players."

Time pressure leads to a five-day, rather than ten day match preparation.

"On Monday I'll cut, Tuesday roll, Wednesday cut down to 8mm and verticut, Thursday go down to 5mm and roll, with final preparations on Friday. If time allows, I may start preparing the strips for the following week, but some weeks I can be preparing strips for three different age groups at the same time. I try to make each strip last two or three weeks."

A grant from the ECB funded the purchase of nets, covers and screens, with the proposed new pavilion also offering a more practical and safer space for players - especially juniors - to gather further away from the access road.

"There are always improvements that can



At Kineton Sports and Social Club, machinery such as this Roberine triple is carefully purchased and even more carefully maintained by groundsman Andrew Cartledge



The square being prepared for the season ahead



A useful Atco cylinder mower, gifted to the club by a supporter

be made,” comments Andrew, “In an ideal world, as well as the fraise mowing, I’d like to add another track or two, and level out the ‘saddles’ where the ends have had more topdressing historically. We’ve got an artificial strip which is good for junior practice and synthetic grass in the nets, but there’s no maintenance equipment for it.”

Football is played by juniors and veterans, with other sides including neighbouring village Wellesbourne also using the pitches.

“The pitches are on clay, which is a particular issue on the back field - although it’s the highest point of the club, they are frequently waterlogged,” explains Andrew.

Football’s extended season squeezes the time window for renovation, so the focus is on feeding and seeding the pitches.

“Costs for the sixty tonnes of sports sand that would be needed are prohibitive, but I did manage to acquire some sharp sand from the builders who have recently completed a housing project on adjacent land, although I appreciate that it’s not an

ideal solution,” he comments.

Cooperation with the builders to provide them with a compound was also rewarded by them resurfacing the access road; a much-needed improvement.

In general, the football pitches command less of Andrew’s time than the cricket and bowls, mainly just marking out and cutting, with the occasional spiking. Slitting helps as the winter takes its toll, but he would also like to address some of the levels.

On the bowling green, where members play mid-week in the Kineton and District and the Perkins Leagues, Andrew cuts two or three times a week to 6-7mm. However, contractor Supergrass carries out autumn renovations, scarifying, overseeding and topdressing.

“The green has had a lot of sand in the past, which was not ideal. I aim to verticut it regularly, which has produced good results, and get a good end of season renovation. But we couldn’t justify purchasing the equipment for jobs that are done once a



One Dennis FT is twenty years old - it’s like a battleship and easily repairable - but I am conscious that as it’s used for both mowing and verticutting the square, I’m reliant on one engine, and if that goes down I’m in trouble



An artificial practice strip allows juniors to train even in poor weather



Nets and covers have been funded with ECB grant aid



Set in seventeen acres, the sports fields offer recreation and fresh air to the community

year, hence the use of a contractor," he points out.

Machinery is purchased carefully and maintained by Andrew with even greater care.

"We had an old grey Fergie and one day it hit a patch of rough ground and that was it. With a very small budget and the requirement for 25-30hp to pull a finishing mower, it was replaced with a second-hand Iseki TL2700. One Dennis FT is twenty years

old - it's like a battleship and easily repairable - but I am conscious that as it's used for both mowing and verticutting the square, I'm reliant on one engine, and if that goes down I'm in trouble."

The cricket outfield is cut with a Roberine triple cylinder mower dating back to when the company was part of John Deere; an Atco Royale walk behind cylinder was gifted to the club.

"We had a smart five gang fairway mower

which was stolen during a break in," he comments. "I'd love a new one but it's not in the plans. We get blades sharpened locally at Hunts Engineering as they now have their own grinder, which is a help."

Consumables are sourced from a range of suppliers, with general amenity seed used on the square alongside a pure bent from Supergrass.

Worms have proved a challenge over the last couple of years, due, Andrew suggests,

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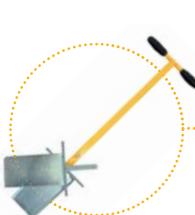
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Second and third pitches to the rear of the clubhouse - although this is the highest point on the ground it sees the most waterlogging



Football pitches take a battering, but Andrew slits and spikes to keep them going through the winter



The idea is that the more natural boundaries need little attention, but I do go through them and tidy around the trees from time to time



to the lack of use during the first lockdown. "We have lost active ingredients for worm control, which is understandable, but I've had some success with a sportsturf acidifier, which also seems to discourage leatherjackets."

Dry patch is another issue on the bowling green, tackled with Breaker Curative. "You do need to get on top of it before it shows," he comments.

Andrew is also responsible for general maintenance 'from rodding the drains to emptying the bins', plus some hedge and tree maintenance, although local agricultural contractor Forsyth Farmwork cuts the hedges including the long stretch of beech bordering the road.

A community orchard planted on the boundary between the ground and neighbouring farmland, through which a network of public footpaths access the club, is now starting to flourish. Over the winter, twenty more fruit trees have been planted by volunteers, alongside sixty copse trees sourced from the Woodland Trust's 'Trees

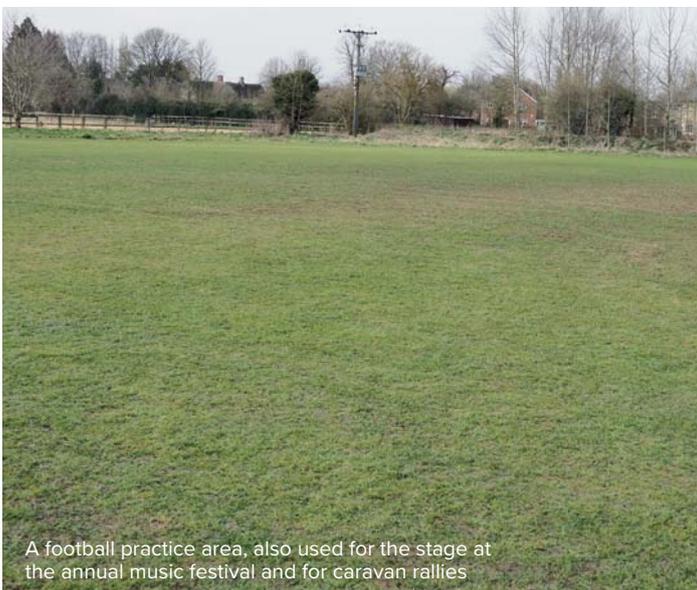
For Communities' initiative. A meadow area skirts the secondary pitches, whilst leaving the edges of the fields unstrimmed is another strand of a move to blend nature with sportsturf.

"The idea is that the more natural boundaries need little attention, but I do go through them and tidy around the trees from time to time."

With a burgeoning programme of fixtures, and a busy year for the clubhouse, it looks like Kineton Sports and Social Club will live up to its name in 2022 and continue to provide a valuable resource for the community.



The cricket pavilion, soon to be replaced



A football practice area, also used for the stage at the annual music festival and for caravan rallies



Wet ground in front of new tree plantations, which should help to soak up some of the moisture!

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Liverpool Hope University

Hope springs eternal...

Student wellbeing ranks high in Liverpool Hope University's strategy for upgrading its landscape provision. Greg Rhodes speaks to **Martin Grayshon**, Head of Grounds and Gardens



Martin Grayshon knows a thing or two about university groundscape. He worked as grounds manager at Liverpool John Moores University for twenty-one years, leaving there in 2011 to take up the equivalent position at Edgehill University for five years before moving to Wirral Borough Council in 2015 as its area manager.

"I headed a team of forty," Martin recalls, "maintaining golf courses, country parks and other amenity areas."

Staff cuts followed however, and Martin opted for an early voluntary retirement package. It was while negotiating his departure that the Liverpool Hope position became available and he applied.

"They'd interviewed several candidates but they didn't fit the bill, I understand,"

Martin explains. "They soon asked me in for an interview and, once they'd seen my portfolio, they thought I was the right person, so I came on board in early March 2021."

Now Head of Grounds and Gardens at Liverpool Hope University, Martin's mission is to lift the sports and amenity provision to the standards his own professionalism demands and the university requires.

His task is a frighteningly simple one; "to return the grounds and campus to their former glory," he states. "They had grown tired mainly due to the impact of Covid and a lack of long-term and regular investment."

"My strategy is do things with a modern approach but not to forget traditional methods, with plenty of emphasis on herbaceous borders, shrubbery and landscaping."

Martin has a like-minded horticulturist in







Martin Grayshon

us as we talk. “It marks the quarter hours,” Martin confirms, as if to emphasise the importance of time in the grounds team’s mission perhaps.

Noise can cause stress day to day as the ‘layers of life’ grow ever more intricate. That, in turn, can impact mental wellbeing, a strong motivator in itself for transitioning to quieter grounds maintenance practices.

“Our vision is to go all electric,” Martin confirms, “but Government needs to give the industry the financial incentive by reducing tax on machinery in line with the targets on zero use of fuels as set by Westminster.” He’s already making moves though and had been trialling a new battery powered ride-on earlier this year to tackle some of the main, Hope Park, campus’s 28 acres and the two far smaller sites, the Creative Campus in Liverpool’s city centre, and the postgraduate hall of residence at Aigburth.

Martin reminds me why the main campus carries such a sense of the past. “This was once a theology college. It dates back to 1930 and replicates one of the University of Cambridge colleges. The monastery next door to us is residence for the Pope when he has stayed previously in Liverpool.”

Martin and his four-man team are always hectic, managing the demands of a mixed sporting and amenity site. “Leaves, predominantly beech - prominent in the area - are a major issue,” he says, “and they involve us in a load of hard work with hand tools to keep them off pitches and lawns.”

However, Martin hit on an idea to save much of the donkey work - a means to cut and mulch the mountain of fallen foliage on a regular basis as season demand.

“No bagging’s needed now,” he says excitedly. “We blow leaves to the centre of the pitch or lawn, then use our new Ariens Zenith E electric ride-on. A couple of runs up and down saves us so much time and effort.”

The zero-turn unit runs off four removeable lithium-ion batteries and is designed to complete a full working day between charges. Power is



The Rector’s Lawn

the university’s Vice-Chancellor Professor Gerald Pillay. “He loves growing roses and we have plenty of them on campus, so that’s one of my key priorities.”

Martin’s move to Liverpool Hope is a timely one, as he finds himself in the midst of sustaining a multi-million pound investment in education as the provider replaces existing infrastructure and expands its student accommodation.

The three campuses cover nearly thirty acres - a U-shaped building occupying the main one, hugging a broad expanse of lawn lined with planted borders.

“A tranquil environment is very important here,” Martin reports. “Many students study social sciences and care subjects and education and the university is keen to create a relaxing setting for them.”

“Although we are sited adjacent to main roads, noise levels are low, partly due to the volume of tree cover we enjoy, with some 1,000 across our three sites.”

“Mental wellbeing is a massive concern these days and we are lucky that so many students remark on just how much they enjoy the grounds.”

A clock sitting at the top of the main building chimes, and a sense of history sweeps over



Martin Grayshon with Jordan Cavanagh, gardener at Hope



Our vision is to go all electric, but Government needs to give the industry the financial incentive by reducing tax on machinery

drawn from fully-charged batteries first before being drawn from all four equally. Martin's certainly an early adopter of what is billed as the first of its kind in terms of a university using this method.

Given the variety of terrain the unit may run over, the blade slip feature is said to absorb impact with little risk of serious damage.

Sounds like a bonus for everyone; less machine noise and more time for the team to focus on other tasks. "Yes, I've known Jason

Lord, from dealers GGM Groundscare based in Burnley for many years, as he supplied machinery to the other university sites and to the council."

"He mentioned the Ariens machine and it sounded like a good fit with my move over to an all-electric fleet. When I heard about the mower, I contacted him to say I was interested in trialling it, which I did successfully for several weeks, before deciding to order one at the end of April."

Manufactured in Minnesota, the mower fell

victim to shipping delays and he didn't receive it until June; no fault of the dealer, he continues. "The team use it to look after the main grassed areas to replace the propelled rotaries or push mowers. Our old main mower was unreliable significant health and safety risk and money drain, so the Ariens is doing the job now."

"It's comfortable to ride on and we can complete campus work in around five hours, with one hour's rotary work and another hour strimming. The machine came with a striping

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With only two in work at any one time during Covid, everything was in danger of slipping. I pulled the place down, keeping paths clear and the grass clipped

kit but, to be honest, it stripes up well without using the attachment.”

The real benefit is the cost saving on fuel, Martin says. “Petrol and diesel spend across the fleet amounted to about £75 a week,” he reports. “That’s been cut to £25 every two months. The figures speak for themselves. We’re using our blowers - all petrol-powered - far less now, as we use the Ariens.”

“Strimmers and small hand tools take most of the fuel outlay now. The diesel tractor is operating less and fuel spend for that came to £35 for the whole summer.”

Arb work is underway in earnest, Martin continues. Two of the topiary yews on the main campus needed moving to make way for change. “We’re going to plant more than

twenty trees as part of the Queens Green Canopy initiative and the three yew cones had to be relocated due to commencement of new building. One of them is four metres high and three metres wide. After carefully isolating the rootball, we managed to move the tree the 100 yards to its new site, using straps, boards and chains.”

“The other yew, six feet high, was slightly easier to manoeuvre but together they took me and the contractor two days to move to move due to the restriction of access. Three topiary yews now stand at one end of the Rector’s Lawn, and three at the other end in place of an imbalance in planting.”

Hedging also lines many walkways and paths. “Inherited *carpinous betulous* is





plentiful but has been neglected. Roy Corden, who handles all our topiary work, is busy retaining the shape and the correct height of these features. He's a master at the work," says Martin.

"The University has a massive woodland boundary with many TPOs in place. Colours run riot in autumn. Tree management is important to prevent wind damage and risk of falling branches and boughs, but I find few people want to handle the work."

"A tree survey and maintenance programme is in place so we only tackle superficial pruning."

Non-native species, such as *rhododendron ponticum* - the mauve variety that many estates managers and owners are on a drive to dig out because of their invasive nature - are making way for other plantings.

There's heavy work going on around the site. "Much of Liverpool is built on bedrock. Dig down two feet and you hit solid sandstone [used to stunning effect to construct the city's monumental Anglican cathedral].

Martin and the contractor handle all the

excavation work, including breaking up concrete areas to help prevent flooding, because of the shallow surface of soil and the solid rock beneath.

Liverpool Hope's sporting provision includes a 3G and a sand-filled hockey pitch, natural turf rugby pitch, "redrainaged two years ago to prevent flooding into neighbouring land and tennis courts."

The quantity of borders, shrubbery, hedging and of course the prized rose garden, makes a mix-skilled team vital in Martin's mission for the Liverpool Hope grounds however.

"Vice-chancellor, Prof Gerald A Pillay, designed the rose garden and was a passionate gardener," Martin says. "The current VC is equally enthusiastic."

Alongside "craftsman gardener" Roy Corden, Jordan Kavanagh has just completed his NVQ Level X in horticulture at Myerscough during Covid. Completing the team is Mike Bowler.

So what's Martin's strategy for bringing back the glory days? "I have changed the maintenance regime as it was not fit for purpose," he states. "Our work has to

accommodate the busy periods in the year, such as graduation, as this is a time when the university must look its best to publicise itself. That makes programming the work key."

At 64, Martin is still hands on. "I'm out on the tools from 7.30am, mowing and blowing," he reveals. "With only two in work at any one time during Covid, everything was in danger of slipping. I pulled the place down, keeping paths clear and the grass clipped." Safely through that hazardous episode in the nation's history, Martin's pressed the 'full steam ahead' button.

Modern landscaping is underway, with the team blending the university new builds with older structures.



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York Racecourse

Grand old course of York

Racing's elite has become more demanding of turf standards in recent years, so how do you ensure the best possible going in the cold, wet north of England? Jane Carley meets Head Groundsman **Adrian Kay** at York to find out

Producing consistent footing for some of the flat season's most prestigious fixtures - including the group 1 Darley Yorkshire Oaks, Juddmonte International and Coolmore Nunthorpe races - on variable soils is the challenge for York Racecourse, and it is one which has been tackled with significant investment in drainage and irrigation over the years. But as head groundsman Adrian Kay points out, it is not a matter of 'fit and forget'.

"I came to York in 2006 and, between 2008-2009, a £2.6m programme of upgrades was put in place," he explains. "But we continue to make improvements year on year."

The 10ha racecourse is situated on an old river bed, an expanse of ground known as the Knavesmire - as the name implies, 'man's bog' - and adjacent to the River Ouse. Soils vary from silts, very fine sands and clay within a short distance, so an intensive programme of renovations is required to maintain consistency of the racing surface.

"We fraise mow and deep scarify part of the course each year, getting a clean surface to manage thatch. We then sand slit to connect to the primary drainage lateral drains, using contractors Chappelows with their Koro and Top Drain," says Adrian. "It's carried out in October or November to get ready for the season starting in May - we're fortunate that we're not racing in April as it



It's an intensive workload to produce turf for top level racing on the former river bed that is home to York Racecourse



Adrian Kay with Ollie 'groundspup' and his new Kubota tractor



An Imants Shockwave is used for decompaction in dry conditions, and was even deployed in January 2022



A second Wiedenmann Terra Spike has been added to the armoury, giving extra capacity for deep tining



Groundsman Key Upton fits new sprinkler heads for the pop up irrigation system

gives time for the grass to get growing after a cold spring, although we do push it as much as we can, and use varieties chosen for their speed of germination and recovery.”

In addition to the annual renovation, December 2021 saw ‘emergency work’ as the gravel layer above the lateral drains had capped with silt, leaving water sitting on top.

“It’s still a learning process,” he comments, “and it’s been a great experience to follow the improvements through from their design.”

“But we still can’t guarantee that we will never have to abandon as climatic changes have an impact - we can get 35-40mm of rain in three or four hours, and in February there was one metre of flood water on the course after rain upstream. All we can do is ensure that we can get rid of rainwater as quickly as possible, and constantly monitor river levels.”

At the other extreme, managing irrigation is carried out to minimise water use, whilst aiming for that all-important ‘good to firm’ ground.

“We irrigate between three and five in the morning, when the winds are lightest and

the water is not getting burnt off by the sun, and make use of wetting agents,” Adrian explains.

The irrigation upgrade included adding a second borehole, modernising the pump system and fitting pop ups to move away from the evapotranspiration that can occur with booms.

“We’ve had our irrigation water analysed, and we use the water additive Quadrop which slightly acidifies it to be more like rainwater. The added capacity means we can put 5-6mm per night on if necessary, although 3mm is more usual.”

The pop-ups have been upgraded over the past two years, with Hunter GT885 sprinklers installed to give improved consistency and throw, 90 on the bend in 2021 and 110 on the home straight this spring.

Turf maintenance also plays a key part, and Adrian recently added a second Wiedenmann Terra Spike to the armoury.

“Deep tining to make the most of the irrigation water and encourage root growth is such an important task, so we’ll run both together to get more output. We also have a



Seeding with the new Kubota L series compact, which is also used on lawns due to its lighter weight



A new Toro Groundsmaster 5900 wide area mower makes for productive cutting while producing a quality finish



Scarification taking place at the end of the season



The home straight showing where sand slits have been placed on part of the track using contractor Chappelows' Top Drain

Rotoknife which we can use in dry conditions - it was actually out in January, so it's good to have the two different systems to use according to the weather conditions. The pandemic made us, like many others, look at new ways of working and some of the changes have been so positive we've stuck with them."

Adrian comments that having the resources to invest in machinery helps to uphold the high standards required. Mowing is down to a pair of Toro ride-ons, a 5900

and new 4900 Groundsmaster rotaries.

"We can be mowing up to four times a week, but with the two mowers we'll go out after lunch and the whole track can be done in three hours. Quality is vital, so having the deck out front is a benefit, plus they are very manoeuvrable. We're cutting down to 50mm and aim to bring it back up to 75-100mm for the season, and we're now mowing as late as December, which can make timing a bit tight for annual maintenance."

York Racecourse has a long relationship

with Kubota, with 88-90hp M8540 and M8560 and three compacts in the fleet, alongside an F-series outfront mower and RTV utility vehicle.

New to the racecourse is the 62hp L2-622, light enough to use on lawns with a topdresser or ProCore, but still capable on the track.

"We've found them to be really good tractors - light in weight but with plenty of power for the range of implements we need to use, from the Terra Spike to sprayers.



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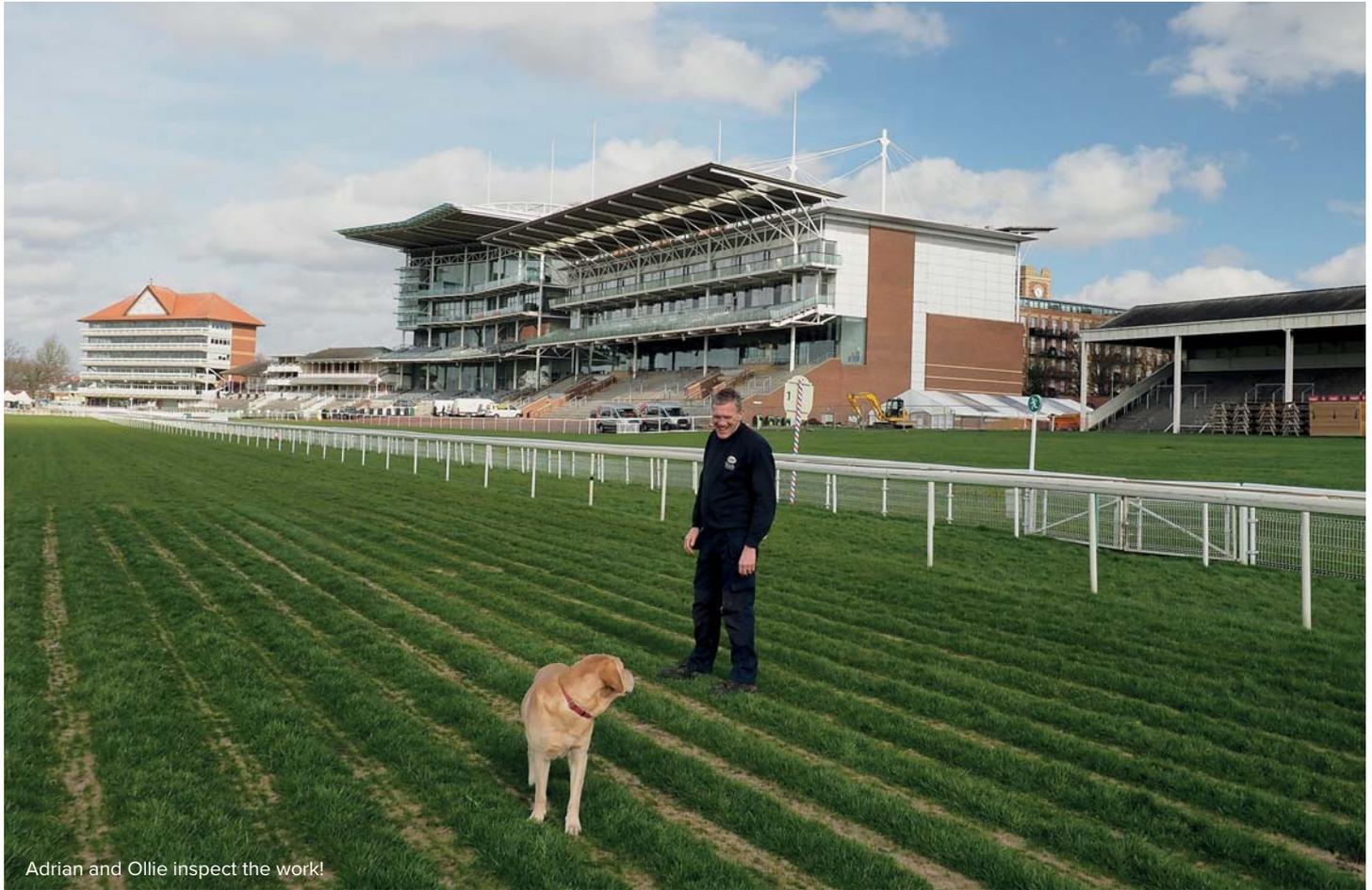
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Adrian and Ollie inspect the work!

They are also very straightforward to use.'

Reliability is another must, he points out. "We can be Terrasping eleven or twelve times a year, and it's also handy to be able to easily swap between similar tractors according to what's available."

The nutrient regime has seen a move over to slow release products over the past decade, he explains.

"Indigrow's 25:5:8 works well on the sandier soil and the hungrier grasses like ryegrass benefit from it. We make an application in the spring and then again before the Ebor meeting in August with a 15:0:9 liquid feed in between, in a tank mix with a wetting agent. There's no set timing for the liquids as it depends on the weather, but the slow

release product gives a good base. We also use biostimulants to help the sward make the most of nutrients. It's a costly exercise on 10ha, especially this year, so experience is key to get it right."

Acelepryn has proved beneficial to keep on top of chafer grubs when evidence was seen of their presence in 2021; prioritising maintenance of the racing surface whilst staff were furloughed meant that the adult beetles were able to evade control on other areas of the course.

The team currently numbers seven, who multitask across gardens and grounds. "We have our own greenhouses and grow on all our own plants from seedlings. We were previously two teams but have now joined

together which seems to be working well. What we would like is some new blood and are looking out for two apprentices to work on both the course and the horticultural departments as we are an ageing and long-standing team."

"It's constantly busy and demanding, but I feel privileged that we have the resources needed to produce the racing surfaces demanded by for the highest level of the sport."



Preparing formal areas around the parade ring for the new season; grounds and garden teams have merged for maximum multitasking



Hospitality is big business at York, so lawns are as important as the racing surface and receive as much care



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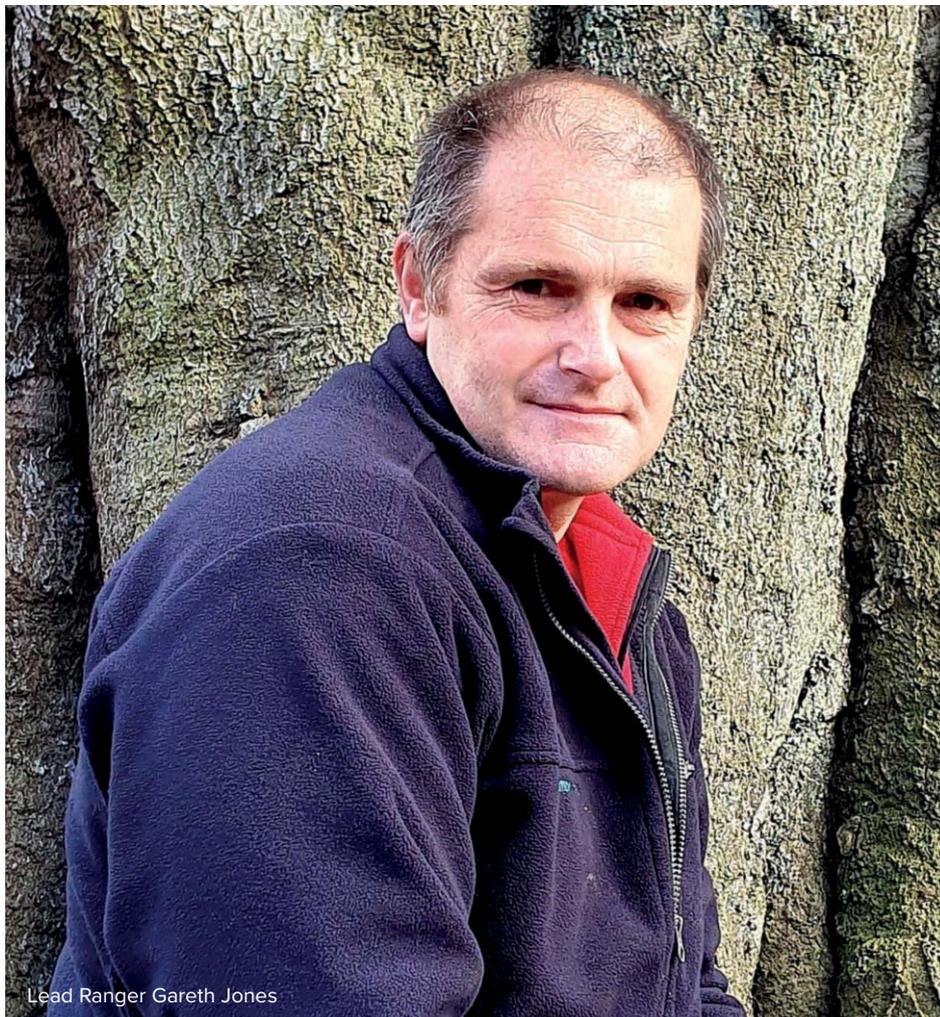
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Clumber Park

Caring for Clumber

Bought by the National Trust in 1946, Clumber Park, originally home to the Duke of Newcastle and once part of the famous Sherwood Forest, is visited by thousands each year. Caring for the vast expanse of this 3,800-acre site comprising parkland, heath and woods is no mean task. David Mears went along recently to meet **Gareth Jones**, Lead Ranger and discover more



Lead Ranger Gareth Jones



Apleyhead entrance

I entered the park through the imposing Apleyhead entrance and then it was a two-mile drive along most of the magnificent Lime Tree Avenue (said to be the longest double avenue of lime trees in Europe at three miles long!) before turning left to the rustic entrance cabin and barrier to obtain permission to proceed. Then it was another left turn past the cricket field, with its wonderful thatched pavilion roof, to reach the Estate Office. This is one of a group of old buildings adjacent to the Walled Kitchen Garden which includes what was the Head Gardener's house in earlier times. It was here Gareth and I met and were joined by Gary Smith, Area Ranger, for a hot drink whilst chatting.



Gareth has been at Clumber Park for thirty-two years, coming straight from school and into a YTS scheme on the Forestry Team. “A necessity of the scheme was going to college in two-week blocks,” said Gareth. “This was at Dartington Hall in Devon.” Gareth achieved a City & Guilds qualification along with an NVQ in Forestry. “This was tailored to the National Trust. I also had land-based learning on tree climbing, pesticides, tractors, timber working including chain saws and achieved the necessary certifications.”

I asked where the inspiration to make a career in this type of work came from. “No one person,” he replied. “It was just what we did as I grew up. We were an outdoors

family, always cycling, walking and hiking in Derbyshire, North Yorkshire Moors and the Yorkshire Dales mostly.”

The outdoor life and all the work involved really suits Gareth and, over the years spent at Clumber Park, he’s progressed, achieving the position of Lead Ranger and has a team of rangers and volunteers to supervise and work alongside. Gareth is a budget holder and purchases within the budget agreed, spending up to £5000. Over this amount and a fixed assets (machinery and equipment) needs to be planned.

The Trust installed a ClearWater washpad water recycling system for washing machinery some years ago, to conserve water and prevent pollution. Classed as a



Across the park we’ve gone from six to twenty skylarks! The habitat is agreeing with them; more seeds and insects available!



Lime Tree Avenue



Winter preparations in the Kitchen Garden



The curse, however, is that sand brings up pebbles which will blunt mower and chainsaw blades. Also, in very dry weather, you get loads of dust, so PPE and face masks are necessary

tangible fixed asset, and as the Trust is a conservation charity, this system met legislative and environmental requirements.

With Gareth as Lead Ranger, his team comprises:

Gary Smith 60, Area Ranger. He's been at Clumber for sixteen years since he made a total career change; he'd been a motor mechanic for BT. "I fancied something different," he said. "I started as a volunteer and a position became available." He loves the job.

Matt Watson, Area Ranger, got into conservation through a Careership Scheme (a successor to YTS) in the Yorkshire Dales. He went on to National Trust Wallington, progressing his career and four years ago applied and secured the Area Ranger position at Clumber.

Lewis Wright, now a Ranger, started as an Academic Ranger (apprenticeship) on a

three-year course and has now been at Clumber for eight years.

Andy Gray, Assistant Ranger, and has served at Clumber for thirty-eight years.

Charis Ollershaw, Assistant Ranger, has been with the team for three and a half years.

Amy Beevers, Assistant Ranger, is one of the newer members of the team and has been at Clumber for a year.

Lucy Callaway is a part time Assistant Ranger who started at Clumber in 2020 as a volunteer.

The team photo shows, from left to right: Gary Smith, Amy Beevers, Lucy Callaway, Gareth Jones, Andy Gray and Matt Watson. (Lewis Wright and Charis Ollershaw were not on site on the day of my visit). There is currently a vacancy for an Assistant Ranger which Gareth says should be filled soon.

Extra help is provided for Gareth's



The team, left to right: Gary Smith, Amy Beevers, Lucy Callaway, Gareth Jones, Andy Gray and Matt Watson.



Main view from across the lake

Countryside Team by forty-five volunteers. (There are three hundred volunteers for all departments at Clumber Park). Volunteers are allowed to tackle a range of jobs which, in the main, are presentational tasks. "They assist Rangers; The list is endless!" says Gareth. One project now is replacing stiles with gates to provide visitors ease of access. Whatever work is tackled, full training is provided in whatever depth is necessary and particularly for tractor work or if brushcutters are to be used. "Some volunteers come with certificates already and want to perhaps improve their CVs

and/or maintain skills." remarked Gareth. Training is continual with "refreshers" and to meet new demands. There are no apprentices employed currently at Clumber Park, but nationally the National Trust has a scheme; one Ranger from Clumber obtained a place at Upskilling School not so long ago. Health and Safety Officers are employed by the Trust and amongst them are those with specialist skills. First Aiders are nominated within each team and other departments. All are monitored and safety ensured.

It doesn't need a rocket scientist to tell me what the soil profile is, as wherever you

tread, it's obvious! As Gareth says, "it's sandy, very sandy! There is just one seam of clay on the southern border." Gareth continued, "sand is a blessing but also a curse. It provides good drainage and is easy to dig, especially for post and gate holes! Grass native to sandy soil is slow growing due to lack of nutrients. The curse, however, is that sand brings up pebbles which will blunt mower and chainsaw blades. Also, in very dry weather, you get loads of dust, so PPE and face masks are necessary."

Extra help for larger jobs comes from a wide range of contractors. Work includes:

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Clumber Park Cricket Pavilion

The Chapel from Tea Room terrace



The park is nearly 4,000 acres and we are Grade 1 listed. A third of this is classified a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and broken down into approximately twenty-five units

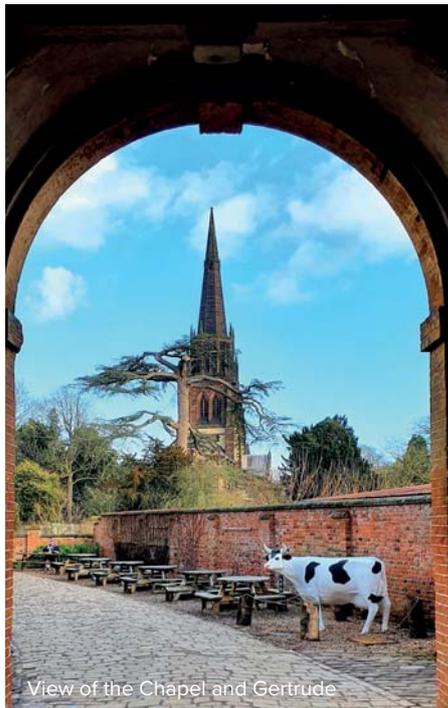
path laying, tree surgery and fencing. There are also commercial forest contractors for the timber produced which provides an income. The trees (Scots Pine, Larch and non-native broadleaf species) for this enterprise were planted between 1920 and 1950.

“The park is nearly 4,000 acres and we are Grade 1 listed,” said Gareth. “A third of this is classified a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and broken down into approximately twenty-five units. These include lowland, heathland, acid grassland, the lake (margins and plants), woodland, and wood pasture; these are the main ones.” I enquired about the cricket club and how this fitted in. “The cricket club is separate from us and, under Deed of Covenant via the last Duke in the Deed of Sale to the National Trust, they maintain that themselves.” I had noticed that the lovely thatched roof on the pavilion had been recently renewed.

Gareth explained to me that there are two principal stakeholders at Clumber; Natural

England for the SSSI and Historic England for the Grade 1 Park. There are around sixty tenants at Clumber Park, the largest of which is the Forestry Commission. In 2012, the stakeholders produced a Parkland Conservation Plan to look at conservation of buildings, parkland, nature, etc. Consideration was given to the history of the park, places and items of archaeological interest and to formulate aims and objectives going forward. There is an aim to have the park look as it was at a certain period in time. The target date has been agreed as 1832. “It’s going to be a long process to achieve this,” said Gareth. “This will involve extensive woodland management to restore the non-commercial woodlands to how it was with straight rows of Scots Pine and Larch! There are over two hundred species of trees here including Walnut, Tulip Tree and Cut Leaf Beech. The Duke was an avid collector of trees and created a pinetum in the park.”

We talked about maintenance and special



View of the Chapel and Gertrude



The Clock Tower



The greenhouse, said to be the longest belonging to the National Trust

considerations necessary. "Seasonality governs maintenance," said Gareth, "and we have to consider the SSSI regulations; for example, bird nesting. We have various grant schemes which specify certain operations at various times of the year." The Trust has a number of grant schemes which specify cross compliance; for example, hedges cut at certain times of the year. All these requirements go into the maintenance plan.

Starting on 1st March, fence lines are checked ready for the return of livestock.

Then it's first grass cutting if spring weather permits. April through until August is generally park presentation: strimming and mowing amenity areas along with woodland paths and tracks. High pruning (low branches) is also necessary and path repairs are ongoing. Wildlife and habitat surveys are also carried out during this period. These monitor changes across the landscape and highlight necessary jobs.

A good example of this is counting skylarks, would you believe! "The more that are singing, the better the habitat," said

Gareth. "Four years ago, a tenant farmer changed from arable to grassland and planted two and a half thousand trees. Across the park we've gone from six to twenty skylarks! The habitat is agreeing with them; more seeds and insects available!" Surveys are important to Gareth and his team. "They help us ensure all is right, especially if what we experience is different from the country generally; then we'd know if we had a problem!"

Back to the maintenance regimes, Gareth said that certain team members had

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No visitors equals no sales, so everyone was on furlough virtually. The Trust then went through another process called Reset which meant further cost savings to be made



specialist maintenance skills and training but most can handle the majority of jobs. Pre-Covid there were two teams: an Estate Team and a Ranger Team.

The Estate Team had Gary Smith as Team Leader. Their work included grass cutting, hedge cutting, strimming and park presentation, with leaf clearance in the autumn. A contractor is employed to cut the five kilometres of farmland hedges annually. A hedge flail is used on farm hedges with hedge trimmers used in high presentation areas. Gareth pointed out that certain hedges are on a two-year rotation for cutting to ensure berries in the second year. Litter picking was also in their remit, especially after busy weekends!

The Ranger Team had Matt Watson as Team Leader. Conservation and SSSI management were their main concerns, alongside summer surveys, litter picking on

the outer reaches of the park, tree felling and scrub clearance. (Cross Compliance applied in the winter months; 1st September to end of February). As there is a third-party grazier on site in the summer, the team ensure animals are contained and safe.

"Then along came Covid, lockdowns and all that went with that!" said Gareth. Both of the two teams were furloughed leaving Gareth as the only Ranger. "Because the Trust is a charity, income virtually dried up!" he said. "No visitors equals no sales, so everyone was on furlough virtually. The Trust then went through another process called Reset which meant further cost savings to be made. Expenditure across the whole organisation was looked at first, then non-paid costs and regrettably some redundancies followed." This left Gareth's teams unbalanced as everyone emerged from the Covid restrictions. It was then

decided that one single Countryside Team be formed. "This is working well," said Gareth. "All have received extra training, so everyone can do everything!" Presentation still ranks high, however, particularly in high visitor areas.

Machinery is purchased ordinarily on a ten-year cycle, with the dealer that supplies a piece of kit carrying out major servicing too. Day to day maintenance is carried out in-house. There is no brand loyalty as the mantra is to buy the best for the job and ensure it is robust! "Do you have a favourite piece of kit that really helps you?" was my next question. "The Telehandler with log grab to move felled trees and more!" was Gareth's response. "It is probably the most versatile piece of kit on site with attachments including: snow plough, man basket (cherry picker), rotating brush and pallet forks." The next question was, "what's





Roadways being laid for extra parking

on the wish list?" Gareth said that this would more than likely be a multi-purpose machine with low ground pressure tyres that could take a variety of attachments front and rear to cover the amenity and conservation side.

Asking about pests and diseases, the main issue it seems has been AOD, (Acute Oak Decline). This, Gareth tells me, has been likened to Dutch Elm Disease. Acute oak decline is a combination of factors which cause oak trees to become stressed.

Environmental stresses like soil conditions, drought, waterlogging and pollution can all impact the tree. Insects, fungi and bacteria then move in on the vulnerable tree and push it into decline. The disease is being thoroughly researched at present.

Fauna and flora are of importance on a site like this and, naturally, great care is taken. An environmental policy is in place as are environmental consultants working for the Trust. The team also work with The

Environment Agency, particularly with regard to the water quality in the lake.

Next, we talked about legislative compliance. In addition to adhering to SSSI and Cross Compliance requirements, Duty of Care is very high for all on site. With over seven hundred thousand visitors per annum (pre-Covid), there is much work involved ensuring safety. The main areas that are always prioritised are: infrastructure, snow clearance and gritting and trees; risk

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Getting Personal

Gareth Jones - a full playlist and a big bar of chocolate!



Gareth stands by the largest girth tree in Clumber Park

Who are you? Gareth Jones, Lead Ranger, National Trust Clumber Park.

Family status? Married with a daughter.

What's your guilty pleasure? The odd bar of chocolate.

What's been the highlight of your career so far? Seeing the significance in the part me and the team play in the continual improvement in the wildlife and landscape within Clumber Park.

What are your pet peeves? Missing deadlines and being late.

If you could go anywhere right now, where would it be?

Turn the clock back a few years to pre-pandemic, and somewhere hot and sunny on a beach.

Do you have a lifetime ambition? To enjoy my life.

Which three albums would you take to a desert island? I couldn't just bring three albums; I would look at bringing an entire playlist.

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

Buy another ticket, as obviously I'm on a winning streak.

What's the best piece of advice you've been given? Think smarter not harder.

What are you reading at the moment? - hard copy or online? Reading a Woodland Trust booklet around tree veteranisation. (A process carried out to increase the amount of dead wood like habitats for wildlife. Ed)

What's your favourite smell? The smell of a bluebell wood just after it's rained; that fresh spring smell.

What do you do in your spare time? Spare time, what's that?!

What's the daftest work-related question you have ever been asked? No such thing as a daft question it's how you reply to it is the most important thing.

What's your favourite piece of kit? The multipurpose use of the telehandler from forestry to groundcare; it proves useful to the operation.

What law/legislation would you like to see introduced? A law to simplify legislation and make life simpler.



The lake looking towards Hardwick Village

management is a high priority.

An environmental policy is in place, as one would expect of this national institution. Pollution prevention is a must, hence the ClearWater washpad water recycling system, along with bunded and secure fuel/oil dispensing. Recycling is carried out as a matter of course and waste management is handled professionally and efficiently by approved contractors.

We next discussed the weather patterns and noticeable changes. "Wetter winters are more prevalent and can cause issues, because there's no ground frost," Gareth said. "It's not a major concern however. Dry summers mean less cutting!" Clumber, as with all others involved with horticulture and groundcare, has seen weather patterns have changed and the long hard winters are no longer being experienced. Warm sunny days in March are not such a rarity

nowadays either and spring seems to be arriving earlier. Interestingly, one weather incident that occurred back in the very hot spell in June 2018 created media interest; an example being The Yorkshire Post's headline at the time: Heatwave causes foundations of mansion demolished eighty years ago to re-appear at National Trust estate. The mansion referred to was Clumber House, the seat of the Dukes of Newcastle. Following a devastating fire in 1938, the property, close to the lakeside, was demolished. The outline of the foundations of the house re-appeared in the grassed area during the heatwave!

Mentioning projects next was a good reason to tour the grounds and show me some of the work being undertaken by the team. As we went out into the yard area, Gareth pointed to a collection of trees that he said were for



The lake looking towards Clumber Bridge



Matt in action with chainsaw

orchard planting. (Somebody obviously had a sense of humour as our photo shows). We jumped in the pickup and travelled the short distance to a marked-out area. "This is where the Duke's Orchard was," explains Gareth. This one-hectare site adjacent to our meeting place area is being planted in the coming time with orchard trees. "Apples, pears, cherries, plums, greengages, etc., anything that bears fruit!" exclaims Gareth. So, the orchard will be re-established. The fruits will certainly come to good use, I'm sure. Gareth went on to say that they are replanting fifty-six parkland trees which have been lost since the 1920s onward. "We've also worked, in partnership with a tenant farmer, to create conversion from arable to woodland pasture. As a result, there's less water usage (irrigation) and a drastic reduction in pesticide use," said Gareth. "Soil sampling has shown an increase of carbon too."

Whilst on the site of the Duke's Orchard and across the track we'd driven down, machinery was hard at work. Gareth explained that this was to create much needed overflow parking which included roadways to various sections. It's very clear

that this demonstrates there's an increasingly growing demand from the general public for the type of outdoors experience that Clumber Park has to offer.

Our tour continued (photos were needed!) and we arrived at the lakeside near the Chapel, which certainly was a good photo location. Incidentally, the Serpentine Lake, as it's officially called, took fifteen years to build! It covers eighty-seven acres and is almost two miles long. Here a number of the original buildings survive around a courtyard area and are in use as a tea room, gift shop, food kiosks, discovery centre, etc. The chapel, commissioned by the 7th Duke of Newcastle, is a magnificent building and was built some time after the house in 1889. An interesting view of the spire was afforded to us through the Clock Tower arch where a life-size model cow, Gertrude, was placed (very realistic!); I guess she was there to encourage ice cream sales!

We continued to the four-acre Kitchen Garden where winter preparations were underway. However, the pièce de résistance was the remarkable and original greenhouse. (Sorry, Glass House!). At forty-eight metres long, it is said to be the longest

//

Wetter winters are more prevalent and can cause issues, because there's no ground frost. It's not a major concern however. Dry summers mean less cutting!

original example on National Trust property. It was certainly an amazing sight and well preserved.

It was now time to meet the team members at a suitable location off Lime Tree Avenue and where Matt was carrying out some chainsaw work. With a suitable photo taken, we moved on and Gareth stopped at a rather large tree. To give an idea of its size, Gareth stood by it: the largest girth tree in Clumber Park and quite impressive! Then it was back to the estate office to conclude the visit.

As I had discovered; there's so much more to Caring for Clumber than one imagines!

Website:

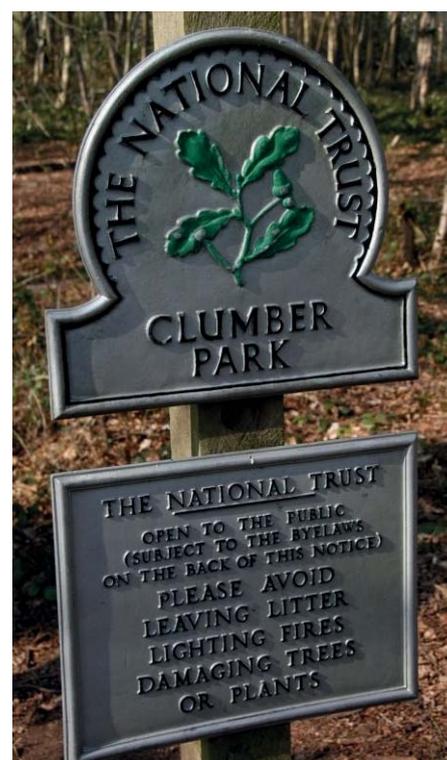
<https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/clumber-park>

History:

<https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/clumber-park/features/the-history-of-clumber-park>



Wartime posters in the potting shed



Artificial infill

Mitigate the migration



The ability of a synthetic turf surface to sustain high levels of usage and allow large numbers of people to play and enjoy sport has cemented their role in many communities. However, as with any engineered product, it's important that an artificial pitch is used in such a way that minimises the negative impact it has on its surroundings. One important fact to consider when it comes to both the usage and maintenance of your synthetic surface is minimising the migration of infill into the environment. **Tom Shinkins** of GKB Machines explores



The EMEA Synthetic Turf Council (ESTC), working in conjunction with the European Standards Committee (CEN), has prepared Technical Report 17519: Guidance on how to Minimise Infill Dispersion into the Environment detailing how the employment of some simple design, operation and maintenance procedures can help to reduce the potential of infill contaminating the surrounding environment.

Laid out in the report is how the provision for minimising infill movement begins during the planning and construction of the installation. Once the pitch is in situ, consideration could be given to simple

measures such as the fitting of low-level containment barriers around the perimeter fencing so as to help keep infill in, without restricting the visibility from any spectator vantage points. Decontamination mats and/or boot cleaning stations should also be installed for the quick and convenient cleaning of boots post-game. Any recesses for catching infill at these cleaning stations should be suitably filtered to prevent rainwater from collecting and potentially carrying away the compiled material. Looking outside of the installation, any adjacent surface drains should also be suitably protected with covers and silt buckets to ensure infill from entering the stormwater

”

Silt traps can help to reduce infill getting into the waterways and these should be regularly checked and emptied as required to ensure they remain effective



drainage system during any adverse weather.

There are numerous other measures that could be employed in and around the construction phase, with good consultation with the manufacturer and/or installer able to identify the easiest and most effective methods of minimising migration at your specific venue. With the use of a synthetic surface, infill will naturally tend to disperse outwards towards the pitch perimeters which is where effective maintenance comes into play; ensuring that infill is returned to the

higher use areas where it is required for surface stability and playability. The easiest way to do this is through regular brushing.

The most suitable brush for a surface will often be defined by the manufacturer, and this advice should be heeded in order to reduce the risk of causing unnecessary damage or wear to the installation. GKB have a range of brush options including the 4m wide Brush, for quick surface coverage with hydraulically foldable wings for convenient transportation and storage, and the GKB Quick-Brush, which can be configured with a

range of optional extras including a rake or rubber finishing mat to suit individual requirements.

Also in the GKB stable is the Rotobrush, designed specifically for the brushing of the perimeter areas. The rotating brush head on the arm of the Rotobrush can switch between clockwise and anti-clockwise operation, with the rigid bristles effectively collecting the accumulated infill and moving it towards the centre of the surface. Together with redistributing infill, brushing the perimeters of an artificial pitch is also crucial



When brushing or using any other maintenance tools or cleaners, it is inevitable that some infill will be collected on the bristles and bodywork, so take care to ensure that machinery is thoroughly cleaned before it leaves the surface





to stop moss, algae and other contaminants taking hold.

Using the GKB Rotobrush to maintain the perimeter areas ensures much lower levels of infill migration when compared to other traditional methods of maintaining the extremities, particularly the use of a leaf blower, which should be avoided. Care should also be taken when using any brush with a vertical rotation, where coverage may result in infill flicking up and off the surface.

When brushing or using any other maintenance tools or cleaners, it is inevitable that some infill will be collected on the bristles and bodywork, so take care to ensure that machinery is thoroughly cleaned before it leaves the surface. Ideally, once the job is complete, the equipment should then be securely stored on a hard surface, in an area that doesn't drain into the surrounding environment. As already mentioned, silt traps can help to reduce infill getting into the waterways and these should be regularly checked and emptied as required to ensure they remain effective.

In addition to the natural migration associated with play and maintenance, the effects of mother nature can also impact on infill levels. A synthetic installation, like a natural grass field, will have an element of camber to help prevent puddling - however, the greater the camber, the greater the probability of infill accumulating at the boundaries following any periods of heavy rainfall. Managing snowfall is another situation to consider. Only if it is completely necessary should one attempt to clear snow from an artificial surface due to the inherent risk of removing large quantities of infill and potentially damaging the carpet fibres. If snow is cleared to the outsides of the pitch,

again, sufficient perimeter boards should be in place to restrict the migration of infill when the accumulation begins to thaw.

Together with reducing the negative impact that infill migration has on a surface's surroundings, employing some of the tools and techniques discussed helps to ensure infill remains where it is required and reduces the amount of additional infill required to keep depths at the levels specified by the carpet manufacturer. The ESTC report outlines six considerations to reduce the possible contamination level when carrying out infill top-ups:

- Visually inspect the delivery of infill materials to ensure that the packaging is not damaged or open
- Store the materials securely until required, in an environment where the packaging will not degrade or get damaged
- Open the bags in the confines of the pitch - do not transport loose infill from the storage location to the pitch
- Ensure the surface is secure and the appropriate containment measures are in place prior to the operation
- Collect and contain the empty infill packaging before removing them from the pitch
- Thoroughly clean the equipment used in the 'top-up' prior to transporting them back to the storage area.

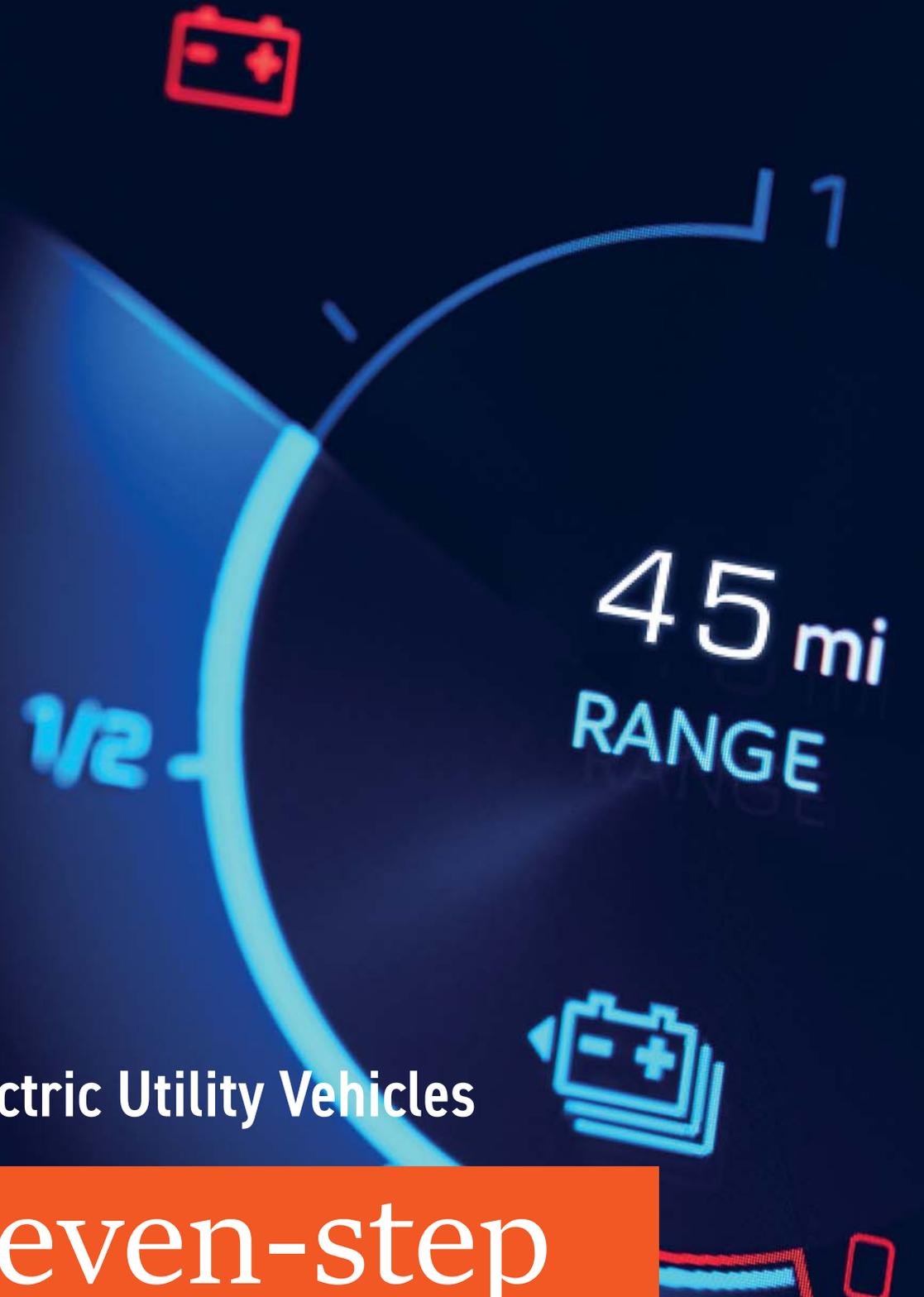
When it comes to controlling the dispersal of new infill, similar principles to the rules discussed with brushing should be employed. Refrain from using broadcast dressers to spread new infill, for risk of throwing infill outside of the surface area. For

the distribution of all types of infill - sand, SBR rubber, TPE rubber or cork - the GKB Infiller features a 3m³ hopper and accurate distribution adjustments to 'drop' a precise amount of material exactly where it is required. The Infiller can travel at a maximum speed of 15km/h, covering a working width of 1.5m per pass, whilst the rotatable driver's seat means it can be operated with ease in multiple directions.

Further information around synthetic surface 'best practice' can be sourced through the EMEA Synthetic Turf Council - of which GKB Machines are a member. The ESTC is a trade association for the artificial turf industry across the EMEA region - its objective and purpose to serve, promote, develop, grow and advocate the work conducted by those operating in the sports and landscaping sectors.



Tom Shinkins



Electric Utility Vehicles

Seven-step method

As much as it is exciting to be in the market for a utility vehicle, it can also be overwhelming. Here's how you should think about whether an electric vehicle is right for you, says **Dave French**, sales manager at Reesink e-Vehicles



Electric utility vehicles can be nippy, fun to drive, require little maintenance and produce no emissions, so are a major contributor to reducing climate change. But, even if you're sure you want one, there are quite a few to choose from. That's why it's important to understand what you're looking for

When it comes to choosing or moving to electric, many people still have concerns about cost, choice and charging, but those barriers are falling fast and Reesink e-Vehicles hopes to speed things along by providing a simple and straightforward seven-step method to navigate this brand-new world of electric utility vehicles, and allow you to make an informed and educated purchase, saving on headaches (and pounds) down the road.

What are you looking for? Be honest

Electric utility vehicles can be nippy, fun to drive, require little maintenance and produce no emissions, so are a major contributor to reducing climate change. But, even if you're sure you want one, there are quite a few to choose from. That's why it's important to

understand what you're looking for.

1. Battery type

The type of battery used is one of the most important things to consider when purchasing an electric utility vehicle. Two of the most popular ones on the market are lithium-ion and lead-acid batteries - the first being part of one of the latest technology offerings, whilst the former has been around since the mid-1800s.

Lithium-ion batteries are not only superior in terms of reliability and efficiency (95 percent compared to 75 percent of lead-acid) but are also safer to use: they release no emissions and feature control systems that protect the battery from improper use and warn of malfunctions automatically for added peace of mind.

Although more expensive upfront, their

higher lifecycle numbers mean a reduced replacement frequency, thus lasting longer and ultimately making them the more cost-effective option of the two in the long run.

The benefits also more than make up for it: they charge faster, are more durable and able to withstand harsher environments, allow quick and partial charging without getting damaged, are smaller and lighter, lose power much more slowly during discharge, waste less energy and require no maintenance, which saves on additional costs and time.

Not to mention the environmental advantages such as releasing no emissions or leaks whilst being charged, no expense of topping up with deionised water, or toxic chemicals being released in their manufacturing and recycling process.



The Capella Work Machine can take two passengers at a time and has an electric lift rear cargo box with an impressive 670kg carry capacity



The Sirius 4 people carrier has a canopy option



Electric vehicles' ranges have exponentially increased since their conception



2. Open, canopy or cab

What's the purpose of the vehicle? If it's going to be used primarily as a people carrier, then keeping the team, guests and customers covered from the elements will take priority.

In which case, the canopy/screen option will keep passengers cool, allow for air flow and provide shade/shelter from rain and excessive sun.

If the vehicle's going to be in use all day, then cabbed is your best bet, further protecting from rain and wind during the winter months. There's even the choice of climate control in some models for the ultimate comfort, although here in the UK, a heater is probably the preferred choice for a superior, cosy ride. With so much to do, the last thing you need is to battle the elements.

3. Payload and towing capabilities

Will your electric utility vehicle need to move large amounts of materials or many passengers at a time? If so, payload and towing capability will be a key consideration to avoid straining the vehicle and ending up having to repair it - or worse, replace it with a different machine, incurring additional costs.

Not only is that money thrown down the drain, but also an ironic waste for someone looking to become more sustainable and eco-friendlier by choosing an electric option in the first place. Something that could easily be avoided by doing your research beforehand.

Grounds managers, whether in a

landscaping environment or on a campus or school grounds, often rely on utility vehicles to carry workers and materials for project work. This requires a robust vehicle that won't slow down or strain under heavier weights, so check the payloads and towing capacities on the available options and make an informed choice.

4. Range

A great concern for most electric vehicle newcomers is the thought of running out of battery in the middle of a job or somewhere without a nearby option to recharge the vehicle. This so-called 'range anxiety' phenomenon, which we covered a couple of issues ago, is well-known in the world of electric vehicles and has been around since the beginning, with efforts being made by brands and manufacturers to eliminate it for good.

This is a worry you don't need to have - electric vehicles' ranges have exponentially increased since their conception to the point where they are able to fulfil most of the work required of them. However, there are differences in range dependent on the vehicle, and these should be considered depending on your needs.

The majority of operations carried out on enclosed sites require far less range than you might think. And, with even the smallest batteries available covering 20-30 miles, the ability to opportunistically part-charge the lithium options, range should not be a point of considerable concern. The bigger models, carrying 10Kw batteries, will offer 60-70 miles with ease. And, let's face it, with



With an on-board charger and 60-70 miles at your disposal each day, it will be hard to ever run out of battery

on-board charging across the entire range, how far will it be to the nearest three pin plug socket?

5. Speed

Speed is a factor to take into account when choosing your electric utility vehicle. It's important to note that the operation the vehicle it is being used for will, more often than not, require the vehicle to travel at low speed for most of the time.

Electric utility vehicles can travel up to 25mph, but the likelihood is that customers will, in the main, use them at speeds far lower than that - around 7mph - because the vehicle will be used in spaces where people will be circulating and there are obstacles and people to navigate, thus keeping everyone safe and not interfering with the landscape.

Reducing the speed also helps conserve energy and allows the battery to last even longer, preserves the life of the vehicle and makes users and those around them safer.

6. Accessibility

Most businesses will be operating their utility vehicles in private property away from the hustle and bustle and therefore won't require specific licensing or specifications. You will be able to drive them inside your property limits straightaway, without any restrictions.

But, if your business requires you to take your utility vehicles onto the road, they can be registered accordingly and set up to fulfil the required regulations.

7. Cost

Finally, the biggest and possibly most important consideration to have when choosing an electric utility vehicle is, of course, the price.

Different models come at different price points, depending on their specifications, and manufacturers have come a long way to ensure these values are now more in line with their diesel and petrol counterparts, something that didn't happen when electric vehicles first arrived on the market.

And, as the market develops and material costs drop (especially when it comes to battery costs), so will the overall price until electric vehicles become just as or more affordable than internal combustion engine vehicles. That said, we aren't all looking to utilise electric vehicle to save money. The agenda is far greater than that.

Additionally, you still have many attractive finance options to choose from. And, due to high demand and the global commitment to gradually shift to electric, there's been an effort to incentivise businesses to make the change through government schemes, tax incentives and other types of discounts for EV fleet owners.

Also, it's important to note that, despite having a higher upfront cost, the total cost of ownership of electric vehicles is considerably less than the diesel or petrol counterpart and are thus the smarter financial option.



Dave French, sales manager at Reesink e-Vehicles



Reesink e-Vehicles brings to the UK a comprehensive and extensive range of battery-powered golf buggies, passenger buggies, and commercial and utility vehicles from STAR EV. For further information on making the step into battery-powered machinery for your venue, contact Reesink online, by phone on 01480 226800 or www.reesink-evehicles.co.uk

North Berwick Golf Club

Rough Treatment

North Berwick's Course Manager Darren McLaughlan is undertaking a five-year rough management programme to return the course to a more natural state



Darren McLaughlan started his role as Course Manager at North Berwick Golf Club's, The West Links and its 9-hole par 3, 'The Wee Course', in October 2020, mid-pandemic.

These past eighteen months, Darren has adjusted seamlessly to the demands of a site fondly acclaimed, both here and abroad, for its off-the-scale levels of fun and enjoyment.

In March, North Berwick was named for the first time in the top ten of Great Britain & Ireland courses, in the latest 'Golf World' rankings. Darren, and his team of seven

greenkeepers, plus newly appointed golf mechanic, not unsurprisingly, were delighted by the news.

"It's a real privilege our course is becoming a premier 'bucket list' destination. We want to return it to its former glory; make it as firm and fast as we can. We see ourselves as custodians of the land and, as such, are keen to bring back native bents and fescues, synonymous with links golf. Everything we do has a minimalist approach. We're about solid, cultural practices which have stood the test of time while also keeping a close eye on modern technology and advancements," he said.



There's little we're doing here that you wouldn't have read in a textbook thirty years ago; we are not looking to reinvent the wheel





Darren, who has previously held Course Manager positions at Montrose Golf Links and Machrihanish Golf Club, is an R&A Scholar. Last July, he was part of the R&A's agronomy team at Royal St. George's for two weeks at the 149th Open, responsible for daily performance testing.

"There's little we're doing here that you wouldn't have read in a textbook thirty years ago; we are not looking to reinvent the wheel," continued Darren.

"On the links it's much more about what you don't do... The end goal is to do less, so, minimal fertiliser, minimal water... less means the place looking as natural as possible."

Fundamental to this restoration mission, in February, the club took delivery of a

Wiedenmann Super 500, a 4-in-1 sweeper, collector, flail mower and scarifier, to begin North Berwick's rough management programme.

Purchased from Rob Hogarth, Regional Sales Manager at dealer, Fairways GM at Kinross, the Super 500 is widely recognised as the machine of choice on the road to wispy rough.

"We're under no illusions that our rough management programme will take five years. We were extremely fortunate to borrow a Super 500 for two weeks from Stewart Duff at Gullane Golf Club to give our members a preview of what they could expect. We chose a few notorious locations that slow play down, to show the dramatic

difference it could make when it became easier to find your ball."

"The main initial effort focused on 'in play' areas but, in time, all areas of rough can be targeted. We are keen for native grasses - the bents and the fescues - to thrive and push out patches of Yorkshire Fog and rye. We will thin sections to make the environment more conducive for indigenous grasses to return. Our process is cut, collect, rake, then we scarify the bottom. To begin with HOC is 150mm and we scarify at ground level to -5mm. Aesthetically, it's at the 'ugly' stage, so we've had to reassure our members that improvement is on its way. There are no chemical solutions or shortcuts to this... it's just solid cultural



Aesthetically, it's at the 'ugly' stage, so we've had to reassure our members that improvement is on its way.

There are no chemical solutions or shortcuts to this... it's just solid cultural practices





Darren McLaughlan

practices. You aren't going to make the change we're looking for without the help of a unit like the Super 500."

"We are being selective, targeting places where the ball from the tee shot would get a kick off from the undulations in the fairways, and roll from there. Rough starts around the fifth ... so left of five, right of six, left of seven, left and right of eight and behind ten, right of eleven and right of thirteen. Ultimately, we will have it thinned from the fifth to the 14th where our heavier rough begins and ends."

"Timing wise, we have two opportunities in the year; early spring, before the nesting birds are on site, and then again in autumn, after a full season's growth; the idea being to keep the length of the grass at a

manageable height, and, by collecting the clippings, you reduce the nutrient-holding capability of the soil. By removal of the clippings, you are giving the indigenous grasses – the poverty grasses if you like, the competitive edge to grow back and eliminate Yorkshire Fog and the rye grasses."

North Berwick is a GEO certified facility, so Darren's team have systems in place to recycle and promote sustainability.

"The clippings are taken to a compound at the edge of the 7th where all sorts of grass clippings, woody leaves and shrubs are stock piled. We bring in a digger at intervals to turn it over and disperse. Over a period, it breaks down into humus which we mix with

divot sand to become a great starter when we patch our tees and fairways.

Darren says dealing with the Wiedenmann and Fairways GM teams has been easy.

"Back-up service is a big part of it. Guys like me will invest in the machines if we know the back-up is there. The training session at handover is also so thorough that, from day one, we all have a total understanding of the machine."



Timing wise, we have two opportunities in the year; early spring, before the nesting birds are on site, and then again in autumn, after a full season's growth



Frank Newberry

Fight or Flight? Or Freeze?



Fresh from running a Conference Speaker Master Class, Turfcare Sector Trainer and Presenter **Frank Newberry** turns his attention to a fear that many of us have in life – the fear of public speaking. He offers three quick and easy ways to minimise the fears that are strongest in the final hour before we make a speech or presentation. This final hour is when we are most likely to fight or flee or freeze!

Over the years, it has become evident to me that the one skill-set that is disproportionately valued by others (including employers) is the ability and confidence to speak in public. Yet, I was reminded of how worrying public speaking can be in the last edition of this magazine when one of Paul Brett MG's 'Getting Personal' questionnaire responses caught my eye (see page 40 of Pitchcare issue 101).

Paul said that public speaking scared him. Maybe it is because it takes courage to speak in public that people are duly impressed when we can remain calm and coherent under the fearful pressure of talking to an audience.

I took a look at some recent research which revealed that Paul is not alone - the fear of public speaking is considered the number one fear in many modern societies. More people spontaneously cite public speaking when asked what they are scared of - and even when asked to pick from a comprehensive list of fears and phobias - public speaking is the number one choice (see table below):

Number One Fear

1. Public Speaking or Stage Fright - 19% of people
2. Death and End of Life - 16%
3. Spiders and other Arachnids - 13%
4. Darkness and Twilight - 12%
5. Heights, Altitudes, and Elevations - 11%
6. People and Social Situations - 10%
7. Flying in Aeroplanes - 7%
8. Open Spaces and Squares - 5%
9. Thunder and Lightning - 4%
10. Confined Spaces and Small Rooms - 3%

Some people would rather die

Apparently, seventy-nine percent of people

place public speaking somewhere in their top ten fears with nineteen percent placing it at number one. You might even suppose - from the previous table - that some people would rather die (about one in five) than have to speak in public!

Let me pause here to ask which of the listed fears you suffer from? Which is your number one fear?

Having asked that question I must say that a lot of the items on this fears list I really like. Maybe you too enjoy 'people and social situations', 'flying in aeroplanes', 'open spaces', 'thunder and lightning'. 'Darkness and twilight' surely these are not too bad? Especially sunsets and, speaking for myself, my nervous system has got used to me standing up and speaking in public. Many people, including me, can testify that the more you do it - the easier it gets.

Rational versus Irrational Fears

Dr Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), known to many as the 'father of psychoanalysis' worked with people who had irrational fears. It is normal and rational to have fears when we feel threatened. We all have fears but some of us are gripped by the more powerful anxieties that Freud called irrational fears. I understand that the three fears most likely to be irrational (more scary than they need to be) are:

1. Fear of Rejection

If I mess up a talk some people might reject me, not like me as much, or at least think less of me. Not so much a problem with people who hardly know me but what about my boss or others I want to impress in the audience?

2. Fear of Failure

If I mess up a talk – I will have failed at something I thought I could do, something others thought I could do. I will have failed, and failure is so deflating when it happens. My self-confidence could also be affected for a long time after the episode.

3. Fear of Exposure

If I mess up a talk - I might be found out and exposed as a fraud. I may well suffer extreme embarrassment and even humiliation. Nowadays, this can be exposure of a very public kind. People might record my talk on a smartphone and publish it on social media for all to see.

Oh dear, public speaking seems to combine Freud's three biggest irrational fears!

So what quick and easy steps can we take to minimise our fears? I have three things that I like to do to reduce my stress when I have to give a talk for the first time, perhaps to a new client or a new audience, i.e. people who do not know me.

Eye-Brain Control

All three tips come under the heading of Eye-Brain Control. This is part of the 'fight, flight or freeze' phenomena, well known in human and animal behaviour, i.e. when we see something scary, unusual or dangerous we either face it head on (we 'fight') - or we run away from it (we 'flee') or we freeze in terror! We become literally speechless!

This reaction could be caused by anything - from seeing a vicious animal running towards us or seeing an audience with high expectations staring at us. Our brain quickly computes that there is danger present and gives us the option to either fight or flee.

Maybe we have evolved to this state over millennia and perhaps we have survived as a species because of it. Our eyes just take over or control our brains for a split-second. Just long enough to sew a seed of doubt in our minds.

There will also be a physiological reaction. People talk of having 'butterflies in the stomach'. The adrenal gland starts to release cortisol in order to reduce the stress that this relatively unusual activity is causing.

Our bodies might now be on full alert, saying

to our brains that we should leave these unfamiliar surroundings our eyes are seeing. Maybe we can go somewhere more familiar and less threatening to the eye? Our eyes, after all, are just doing their job and telling our brains that we are in danger.

Three quick and easy ways to minimise the fears

Here then are three quick and easy ways to minimise the fears that are strongest in the final hour before we make a speech or presentation.

1. Get to the venue early

Particularly if the venue is new to you - and to your eyes. I like to be at the venue one hour early to set up my laptop, projector and screen. Even if I am using the venue's audio visual equipment, I still arrive early to ensure that everything is working perfectly.

I check if the screen can be seen from all angles, where the loos are, where the emergency exit route and assembly point are, etc. I go through my presentation one last time. Ensuring that all of my slides are appearing on the screen as I intended them to (transitions, animations and embedded videos).

2. Greet people when they arrive

There will be a number of people arriving early, including the organiser (and the people the organiser is giving a lift to on the day). Greeting people will distract you from the butterflies in your stomach. Greet them with a



More people spontaneously cite public speaking when asked what they are scared of - and even when asked to pick from a comprehensive list of fears and phobias - public speaking is the number one choice

big smile; show you are happy to be there. Bring joy into the room with you. If you look worried it will worry other people.

Pre-Covid, I attended a two-day conference at which the main speaker went round greeting everyone and shaking everyone's hand. That would have been about a hundred handshakes on day one. He did the same on day two, and even remembered my wife's name from the day before!

3. While others speak before you

Sit on the stand, if there is one, and face the audience so that your eyes get used to people looking in your direction. If your eyes meet an audience member's eyes, just give a

little smile and nod slightly - doing this indicates that you are relaxed and happy to be in the room.

Listen intently to the previous speakers and identify something they say that you agree with, make a note of it and use it at some point in your talk. In your introduction, thank any previous speakers for their remarks. These actions will keep your mind busy and stop you from 'freezing'. You will have something positive to do as your excitement and anxiety builds just before your talk begins.

You will win admirers in your audience

Three quick and easy things then; three steps that you can take in the final hour before you give a speech or presentation. If you can give a talk willingly and with a smile, you will win admirers in your audience. Good luck with your next/first ever talk. Just beware though; doing well could earn you even more invitations to speak!

Frank Newberry has been helping people in the turfcare sector to get better results for over thirty years. His clients include the ATP Ireland, BIGGA, the GMA and Sampson Training Solutions. If you are new to public speaking or if you are an old hand looking to take your performance to the next level with a Speaker Masterclass just contact Frank by e-mail or by telephone via the contact tab of his personal website which is at www.franknewberry.com.

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Machinery and Supplies

Product Update

A round-up of the latest product news announced in recent weeks



In order to meet with the increasing demand for conservation mixtures, DLF Seeds have announced expansions to the Pro Flora wild flower and Colour Boost amenity flower collections, in two brand new mixture guides for 2022.

Having recently increased their in-house production for wild flowering species, a number of new mixtures have been introduced - designed to bring biodiversity and visual impact to even more amenity and agricultural spaces.

Wild flowers have long played a vital role in renovation and landscaping projects, improving visual diversity and providing support and conservation for wildlife and pollinating species. With that in mind, DLF have introduced Pro Flora 15 - Pollinator. Pro Flora 15 contain a mixture of native origin wild flowers and fine-leaved grasses, which will thrive in a range of soil types, and produce a prolonged flowering period - perfect for bees, butterflies and other pollinating insects.

Also new for 2022 is Pro Flora 16 - Coastal. With many of our coastal areas under threat from human activity and the sea, Pro Flora 16 provides land managers with a mixture for restoring some of these spaces and/or regenerating areas with poor quality land. Containing 20% wild flowers such as Kidney Vetch and Viper's Bugloss, this new mixture can provide valuable habitat for coastal-dwelling insects and invertebrate species.

A number of mixtures have also been launched in the Colour Boost collection, designed for maximum floral impact. Skyscraper contains classics such as Cosmos and Zinnia and is created for areas where a taller growing mixture is required to deliver the desired level of visual impact. As with many of the Pro Flora mixtures, pollinators are at the forefront of species selection for a number of Colour Boost mixtures, with the new Honey Bee & Butterfly mix selecting flowers that will provide both a spectacular display and a valuable nectar source for bees and other pollinating insects. Completing the expanded range is Classical, a mix of blue and white species, ideal for more formal settings.

Full details of the Pro Flora and Colour Boost ranges can be found in the new brochures, available on request, or by visiting www.dlf.co.uk/wildflowers

Following in the footsteps of the Mk6 SM34 Rotary Mower and Floating Head cylinder collection, INFINICUT® have now extended the Mk6 features and mantra across their Fixed Head range.

The 2022 model FX range incorporates new features including CAN bus protocol, for improved operator control, enhanced reliability and even more superior cut quality.

Extensive improvements were brought about with the introduction of the Mk6 range, now available on the 22", 26", 30" and 34" Fixed Head pedestrian cylinder models. The electrical architecture has been completely overhauled, including updates to the battery, motors, controllers, contactor and VCM to deliver the robustness and reliability demanded by today's turf professionals.

Incorporating CAN bus protocol into the design facilitates the communication logic, making the INFINICUT® the world's first professional mower with Bluetooth connectivity - enabling wireless interfacing and adjustments to be made via the InfiniApp, available for smart devices.

While the electrical operation and other features have been refined, the leading-edge cut quality



now synonymous with the INFINICUT® mower, remains. The in-house manufactured SMARTCut™ cutting reels are available in 7, 11 and 14 blade set-ups, with an optional contra-rotating groomer attachment available for alleviating grain and turf density problems. As with the floating head variant, the grass bucket is mounted on the traction unit providing a more consistent cut height and ensures the mower remains optimally balanced throughout operation and during end-of-line turning.

www.infinicut.com

Based on the principles of their VStrong scarifier, the new Verticollector range promises effective organic matter removal and clean collection of the extracted material in a single pass.

The Verticollector is available in two working widths - 1.2m and 1.6m - and is equipped with precision-engineered steel blades, spaced at 25, 50, 75 or 100mm, for the accurate removal of thatch, surface debris and lateral growth down to depths of 40mm. The wind paddles, fitted to GKB's unique CombiRotor®, generate enough suction to lift the extracted material up and into the new 400L collector which can then be hydraulically lifted and conveniently emptied at the press of a button.

Ideal for use on golf and bowling greens, cricket wickets and other situations where collection of the removed material is desirable, the multi-



functionality offered by the Verticollector enables the operator to complete the job swiftly - bringing benefit to plant health, whilst keeping surface and play disruption to a minimum.

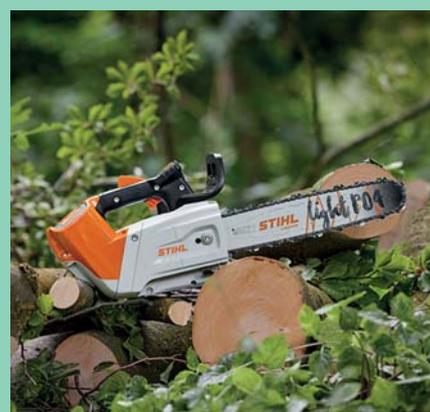
www.gkbmachines.com

The MSA 220 T and MSA 220 TC-O are STIHL's most powerful cordless top handled chainsaws, designed for tree care professionals to remove larger branches or perform crown maintenance with ease.

Recommended with a light-weight 14" guide bar, both MSA 220 T models use a high performing PS3 full-chisel saw chain to achieve a fast, high-quality cut. The recommended AP 300 S battery delivers 2.1kW of electrical power, providing up to 29 minutes of working time and plenty of power for cutting larger sized branches.

Both models have an adjustable oil pump, an ergonomic trigger system and a 180° LED display, ensuring the operator always has a clear overview of key information such as the operating status of the saw and the chain brake position. In addition to these features, the MSA 220 TC-O also has an oil sensor that will notify the user when the chain oil tank is empty, helping to reduce potential downtime, premature wear to the cutting attachment and the risk of overheating.

The MSA 220 T and TC-O top handle chainsaws are built with durability in mind and are suitable for use in the toughest conditions thanks to the hard-wearing components. Maintenance of the machine is kept simple via



the MSA 220 T's modular design, allowing housing parts to be removed and replaced quickly and simply.

Other features include side-mounted chain tensioning, captive nut on the sprocket cover and tool-free oil tank cap as standard. In addition, the MSA 220 T boasts an easy-to-clean air filter for long service life and optimum motor cooling.

www.stihl.co.uk



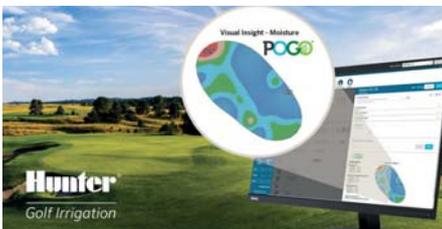
The across-all-areas Maredo Wiedenmann STrac 700 system is poised to welcome a new HighSpeed-Corer head later this year, taking its number of tool type attachments to six.

Brought to you via your local Wiedenmann UK dealer, the pedestrian Maredo unit is ideal for turf renovations to bowling greens, on sports pitches, to golf courses and especially on turf surfaces where tractors cannot access.

The STrac 700 features easy controls on its powerful guiding handle and a set of interchangeable heads which all come with a working width of 65cm. A very short turning radius means the rear wheels can adopt a variety of operating positions, while the tools connect effortlessly, cassette style.

The five cartridges that make up the system are the Flex-Verticutter which scarifies to 25mm; a Vibe-Spike aerator which relieves compaction down to 60mm while following undulations; the FlexFrase Mower which strips the top layer to 20mm, leaving a perfectly flat and smooth surface to overseed and which also levels off uneven areas; the VibeDisc-Seeder, a slit seeder which can dose seed from 0-15mm at as low as 2g/m² to 15g/m² and finally, the VibeSpike-Seeder, a dimple seeder which creates a pattern of dimples where the seeds will be placed.

www.wiedenmann.co.uk



Hunter Industries has joined forces with turfgrass technology solutions leader POGO to bring new sensor and visual insight integrations to the best-in-class Hunter Pilot Network.

Hunter's robust irrigation control system effectively balances watering demands with flow capacities to determine the most efficient watering cycles possible. Best of all, the highly intuitive software is fully customisable according to the daily irrigation management needs of the turf.

KAR UK, the leading wholesaler of irrigation equipment in the UK and an integral distributor of Hunter Industries irrigation equipment, has welcomed the news according to UK Sales Manager, Mike McDonnell.

"The new partnership signals exciting times and will help turf managers to make smart irrigation decisions that will ultimately result in healthier and better-quality turf."

"KAR UK is incredibly proud to work so closely with Hunter Industries and the team is looking forward to championing this unique new irrigation technology."

www.karuk.com

ICL is rebranding its alkaline-extracted seaweed 'SeaMax' as 'SMX', a highly concentrated Atlantic Ascophyllum nodosum seaweed, harvested from sustainable and renewable sources by Acadian Seaplants.

For any turf professional it is important to weigh up the evidence from product trials. Multiple trials carried out using SMX clearly demonstrate how seaweed extract improves the condition and rooting of the turf. This is because the SMX extraction process retains important and influential biochemical compounds.

As an example, research recently published in the European Turfgrass Society Proceedings showed how different Ascophyllum nodosum extraction methods produced contrasting effects on turfgrass rooting. The alkaline-extraction method (as used in the production of SMX) produced significantly greater root length and root volume than other commonly used extractions.

Independent trials also showed that SMX helped the turfgrass produce longer roots, a greater root mass and it improved the quality of growth (shoot weight), compared to competitor products or controlled conditions (using no seaweed extract). Trials that placed the turf under drought conditions, showed that the turf

quality and colour improved noticeably when treated with SMX. In addition, when SMX has been included in annual nutritional programmes, the turf quality remained significantly higher throughout the autumn and in the lead up to winter.

Although the name might have changed, the formulation is the same. SMX is available as a standalone product in water soluble form (Sportsmaster WSF SMX) and in liquid form (Vitalnova SMX). It is also included as an effective dose in SierraformGT Spring & Summer CalMag 14-0-7 as well as the new organo-mineral fertiliser Gronamic Golf 6-2-4.

Pitchcare are an appointed distributor of ICL products. Visit the Pitchcare Shop to view the full range



The STIHL MS 881 is the world's most powerful series-produced chainsaw, ideal for professional heavy-duty felling, logging and mobile saw mills.

With 121.6cc of displacement and 8.6hp/6.4kW output, the MS 881 is not only 19% more powerful than the heavy duty MS 661, but also the only saw in the STIHL line-up to drive a 0.404 pitch chain. With standard bar lengths up to 41" and able to accept guide bars up to 59", the new saw is the ideal machine to tackle even the most demanding forestry jobs.

At the heart of the MS 881 is the STIHL 2-MIX engine that ensures the machine is the only chainsaw in its performance class that meets the strict requirements of the European Euro-5 (EU5) exhaust emission standard.

In addition to EU5 compliance, the MS 881 has been engineered with maintaining a great power-to-weight ratio. New construction of cylinders, slimmer sprocket covers, and the development of lightweight components have resulted in an impressive weight-to-power ratio of 1.55Kg/Kw, whilst maintaining robustness and durability.

As well as outstanding power, the new chainsaw is designed with operator comfort in mind thanks to a one-touch stop button,



ensuring the MS 881 is ready to start at any time, whenever it is warm.

Other design features include captive nuts on the optimised chain sprocket cover that offer additional convenience when changing the chain, as well as a new oil pump that regulates oil flow rate according to demand, guaranteeing optimum oil flow at all times.

A long service life and ease of maintenance are improved through the use of a HD2 air filter with a radial seal that provides excellent protection against fine dust often created when planking and in saw mill environments. The introduction of a diagnostic socket means that specialist dealers can quickly identify a fault and eliminate it quickly.

www.stihl.co.uk

Intelligent Lithium-Ion batteries are at the heart of all Mountfield cordless ranges. These batteries recognise the mower or tool that they are fitted to and tune the power appropriately to maximise battery life and deliver the right amount of power to get the job done!

Recently, the Mountfield team shared news about their brand new Freedom 28e rider mower. This machine is engineered around four removable 5Ah batteries that intelligently synchronise when mowing and are also interchangeable with the handheld gardening products that feature in the Freedom500 cordless range.

Now, the batteries for all mowers and gardening tools in the Freedom500 range are fully interchangeable, making the whole gardening and mowing experience versatile, easy and with



the power of petrol but convenience of cordless.

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www.mountfieldlawnmowers.co.uk

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OFFSIDE

The not so serious side of the industry

England fans may face £9,000 per night

The eye-watering cost of attending the 2022 World Cup has been exposed by a new report, which claims England fans will have to fork out thousands of pounds to stay in Qatar.

An investigation by The Sun has revealed that supporters of the Three Lions could be forced to pay up to £9,000 per night for a hotel in the country during the tournament,



which gets underway on November 21.

More than one-and-a-half million fans are expected to travel to Qatar, which is only around the size of Yorkshire, and there are growing doubts over whether the country will be able to cope with the influx of visitors.

Most hotels are already booked up, with the remaining rooms now soaring in price following Friday's World Cup draw.

A pint of Heineken costs £11.50, while a glass of wine is around £11. Alcohol will only be available in special zones around stadiums. I think I will stay at home and watch it in the pub!

As seen on social media ...



It snowed when Nottingham CCC were having their team photo taken today ahead of the new season!



When the assistant's mowing messes with your head!

Dog blocks goal

A fed-up amateur footballer joked he may have to "hang up his boots" after his goal was blocked by a runaway dog.

Ross Hamilton looked certain to score for Ferguslie Star against Vale of Leven AFC in a tense cup tie after homing in on goal with just the keeper to beat. But the 26-year-old was left gobsmacked when a cheeky off-lead Golden Retriever - dubbed Alan Ruff - jumped inside the posts and deflected the ball before it could cross the line.

Despite a team mate battering it in just seconds later, the goal was disallowed by



the referee - bringing about a change of luck for the Paisley team, who had been 2-1 up.

The IT worker joked: "It was just unbelievable."



Roberto Carlos plays for Shrewsbury pub



The Brazilian World Cup winner Roberto Carlos made an unlikely return to the game, swapping the yellow of Brazil for the red shirt of an English pub team.

The retired left-back made an appearance for Bull in the Barne United in the village of Hanwood, near Shrewsbury, after the team won a charity "Dream Transfer" raffle on eBay.

Although Carlos scored, Bull in the Barne still suffered a 4-3 defeat at the hands of fellow Shrewsbury and District Sunday Football League side Harlescott Rangers, noted Irish sports site The 42.

HER: HE'S PROBABLY THINKING ABOUT OTHER WOMEN
HIM: HOW DO I REMOVE THE RED DYE FROM DIESEL?



An explosive start to the game!

A grenade was thrown onto the pitch during a Newell's Old Boys game in Argentina.



The club were playing in the El Clasico Rosarino derby against arch-rivals Rosario Central.

Kick off was delayed due to the grenade exploding and creating holes in the pitch.

It's somewhat surprising the game was even able to go ahead, as a grenade being thrown onto the pitch is surely a bit of a security scare! The groundsmen must have done an excellent job to repair the pitch in a short space of time.

DIARY DATES

MAY

5th-8th: Golf - Betfred British Masters hosted by Danny Willett, The Belfry, Sutton Coldfield (europeantour.com)

14th: Football - FA Cup Final, Wembley Stadium (fa.com)

15th: Football - Women's FA Cup final, Wembley (fa.com)

16th-22nd: Golf - US PGA Championship, Southern Hills Country Club, Tulsa, Oklahoma (pgachampionship.com)

16th-5th June: Tennis - French Open, Roland Garros, Paris (rolandgarros.com)

18th: Football - 2022 UEFA Europa League final, Ramón Sánchez-Pizjuán Stadium, Seville, Spain (uefa.com)

21st: Football - EFL League One play-off final, Wembley Stadium (efl.com)

21st: Football - Scottish Cup Final, Hampden Park (hampdenpark.co.uk)

25th: Football - Europa Conference League Final (uefa.com)

27th: Rugby - 2022 European Rugby Challenge Cup final, Stade Vélodrome, Marseille (rugby-league.com)

28th: Rugby - 2022 Heineken Champions Cup final, Stade Vélodrome, Marseille (eprugby.com)

28th: Football - EFL League Two play-off final, Wembley Stadium (efl.com)

28th: Football - 2022 UEFA Champions League final, St Petersburg (uefa.com)

29th: Football - EFL Championship play-off final, Wembley Stadium (efl.com)

JUNE

2nd-27th: Cricket - England vs New Zealand Test Match Series (ecb.co.uk)

13th-19th: Golf - US Open, The Country Club, Brookline, Mass (usopen.com)

14th-18th: Horseracing - 2022 Royal Ascot (ascot.com)

27th-10th July: Tennis - The Championships, Wimbledon (wimbledon.com)

JULY

1st-17th: Cricket - England vs India ODis, Edgbaston (ecb.co.uk)

6th-7th: Industry - SAGE 2022, Sports & Grounds Expo, Malvern (sportsandgrounds.events)

6th-31st: Football - Women's Euro 2022 (uefa.com/womenseuro)

9th: Tennis - Women's Wimbledon final Wimbledon (wimbledon.com)

10th: Tennis - Men's Wimbledon final Wimbledon (wimbledon.com)

14th-17th: Golf - The Open, The Old Course, St Andrews (theopen.com)

19th-12th September: Cricket - England vs South Africa Test (ecb.co.uk)

28th-8th August: Industry - TGA Summer Show 2022, Kinross, Scotland (turfgrass.co.uk)

28th-8th August: Athletics - Commonwealth Games, Birmingham (birmingham2022)

To have your event included in this magazine diary section, please email details to kerry@pitchcare.com

QUOTE ME HAPPY

"The build-up suggests we're getting there. Of course, the longer you go, you can hear the crowd, 'shoot, shoot, shoot', you know, and that sometimes is a challenge for the players." **Manager Graham Potter tells Brighton fans to stop shouting because it's putting off the players.**

"It was at that moment it slapped us in the face. We had to do something different otherwise we'd win most games, but not the really important ones." **Australia's Meg Lanning's team turned things around to beat England to the World Cup.**

"There's a captains' agreement that every captain signs. I think actions speak louder than words. I'm fully committed to this, to be the captain, to deliver the best result I can with the team." **Swedish Henrik Stenson is appointed as the next Ryder Cup captain.**

"Is he basing his opinions and his public statements on what he has read? Somebody with a lot of influence such as Southgate, somebody with a big audience that listens to what he has said has got to pick his words carefully." **Qatar 2022 chief executive Nasser Al Khater after the England manager voiced his concerns over the Gulf nation's suitability to host the World Cup.**



Meg Lanning

"I thought our physical effort was so intense that it probably made them look pretty ordinary and they are not. We have massive selection choices. We have invested a lot in the depth of the squad so we can have these problems." **Coach Simon Middleton after an England win in the Women's Six Nations.**

"This is the weakest Mexican team I have seen in my life, this is a great opportunity to beat them at the Azteca Stadium. This Mexican team reminds me of the 2017 United States team, where a generation of players was coming to its end." **American retired player quickly turned himself into the most hated man in Mexico ahead of the 2022 World Cup.**

"We did not disinvite Phil. He made a personal decision and I don't know anything beyond that." **Augusta chairman Fred Ridley said Phil Mickelson is taking a break from golf after apologising for his criticism of Saudi Arabia's regime.**

"They are walking around the pitch. It's nowhere near good enough. There can be no complaints. City have been absolutely outstanding. But as a Manchester United fan, it's embarrassing." **Gary Neville blasts Man United players for 'throwing in the towel' during a recent Manchester derby.**

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