

PITCHCARE

The turfcare magazine from pitchcare.com

February/March 2019

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DON'T MISS

Time for a rethink?
We get the views of groundsmen on warm-ups and warm-downs

ROY - OF THE CITY!

In the latest of our 'Key Note' interviews looking at individuals who have helped shape and move the turfcare industry forward, Lee Williams meets **Roy Rigby**, Grounds Manager Global for Manchester City Football Club, at their City Football Academy training base which is situated next to the Etihad Stadium

Howzat for a job title?

To provide sporting excellence over a number of years takes certain skills and qualities. Often these qualities need to be present not only in the athletes but the coaches and everyone who contributes to the nurturing of them. At Felsted School, Essex, teamwork has become a tradition and it is at its most prevalent in the Grounds Department

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WELCOME TO

PITCHCARE

Spring - into action?

February is always such an uncertain month weather-wise. Last year, we were gripped with sub-zero temperatures blown down from Siberia, but we have largely, and luckily, missed most of the cold and wet weather throughout this winter.

Spring also started very late last year. It was the third week of April before we saw any significant growth and recovery, so I have my fingers crossed that warmer weather will be with us much sooner this year. Unfortunately, as I write this on a very wet February day, the long-range forecast is showing some cold weather will be with us into the early part of March at least.

Still it can always be much worse, America has been gripped with record low temperatures brought about by a polar vortex from the North Pole.

Temperatures at the end of January were down as low as minus 37°C and, with the wind chill, down to minus 50°C. In contrast, Australia was, in the same period, experiencing record temperatures, with a heatwave offering daily temperatures above 40°C, again breaking records.

Thankfully, the weather didn't cause havoc with BTME this year, but there was a major layout overhaul of the Harrogate International centre for the show. The hall structure was changed completely, and positively it seems, to encourage delegates to spend more time going around and viewing what's on offer.

The historical layout had been the same for maybe fifteen years, and companies tended to stay in the same spot year on year, so regular visitors would often bypass many stands to see their favourites. Although mildly confusing, the much-needed revamp for 2019 has shown that visitors took more time to

stop at stands in between their usual destinations. I'm sure there will be some tweaking required for next year's show, but with visitor numbers up, BIGGA will be largely delighted with the new look and their delivery of the event.

And finally, it would be remiss of me not to mention Brexit, a subject that has caused so much angst within our country. I attended an annual seed distributors conference in January, along with around twenty of my industry competitors (we all get along fine - honest). One of the speakers conducted a secret ballot, with three separate questions to do with remain/leave/no deal etc. The results were, not unsurprisingly, divided within the room; but it was close, narrowly edged by the leavers.

Whatever the outcome though, we must face the future together and get on with it. We are a nation that has proved, throughout history, that we can face adversity and win.

All the best for the spring.

**Cheers
Dave Saltman**



SAY THAT AGAIN!

"I believe getting into this industry is one of the best decisions I ever made. I love the passion of the job and what I do. If there is one thing I'm good at it's looking after grass"

Roy Rigby, Manchester City FC

"If you have a dream job, Ringway is that place that you perhaps didn't know about that ticks all the boxes. I don't know if it's the endpoint, but it's certainly the type of club I was aiming for when I first got into the industry"

Richard Stephens, Ringway Golf Club

"I do feel, 100%, that we are undervalued. We never get many thanks or a pat on the back when the pitches are good but, when they are struggling, we seem to get the bad press"

Nick Hyndman, Fleetwood Town FC

"I think there are still too many people out there who don't recognise the skill and the professionalism within greenkeeping"

Lucy Sellick, Wenvoe Castle Golf Club

"People don't realise that damage from warm-ups is sometimes massive and the impact of that means the pitch can end up looking battered in places before kick-off"

Andy Gray, Southampton FC

Meet the Pitchcare team



DAVE SALTMAN
Managing Director
t: 01902 440 254
e: dave@pitchcare.com



JOHN RICHARDS
Operations Director
t: 01902 440 256
e: john@pitchcare.com



KERRY HAYWOOD
Editor
t: 07973 394 037
e: kerry@pitchcare.com



PETER BRITTON
Advertising & Production
t: 01952 898 516
e: peter@pitchcare.com



CAROL SMITH
Grounds Training
t: 01902 440 251
e: info@groundstraining.com



LEE WILLIAMS
Editorial
t: 07375 419 442
e: lee.williams@pitchcare.com



ALASTAIR BATTRICK
IT Manager
t: 01902 440 255
e: alastair@pitchcare.com



DAN HUGHES
Marketing & Sales
t: 01902 440 258
e: sales@pitchcare.com

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Pitchcare.com
Allscott Park, Allscott, Telford
Shropshire TF6 5DY
Tel: 01952 897 130
Fax: 01952 247 369
Email: editor@pitchcare.com

www.pitchcare.com



Issue 83 February/March 2019

Roy Rigby, Manchester City FC

COVER STORY: Roy of the City!

In the latest of our 'Key Note' interviews looking at individuals who have helped shape and move the turfcare industry forward, Lee Williams meets **Roy Rigby**, Grounds Manager Global for Manchester City Football Club, at their City Football Academy training base which is situated next to the Etihad Stadium. **P56**

GOLF

Welsh Wonder

Set in scenic countryside in the heart of the Vale of Glamorgan, Wenvoe Castle Golf Club is long recognised as one of the finest challenges of golf in Wales. On a very cold morning late in January, Lee Williams met up with the club's recently appointed Head Greenkeeper, Lucy Sellick. **P18**

Greenkeeper - Born and Bred!

Wheatley Golf Club lies on the outskirts of Doncaster, South Yorkshire, sandwiched between the leisurely River Don and the busy M18. David Mears recently met the club's Course Manager, Roger Stillwell, to discover more about his greenkeeping heritage and the ongoing work being carried out at this fine parkland course. **P28**

Taking on the challenge

Established in 1909, Ringway Golf Club is generally regarded as one of the finest parkland courses in Cheshire. A stern but fair test for golfers of all abilities, it boasts commanding views across to Manchester, the Lancashire hills and Derbyshire Peaks. The club is proud of the Harry Colt designed, par 71 course which measures 6482 yards. Lee Williams visits the course to meet with their new Course Manager, Richard Stephens. **P36**

Sand dunes and salty air

Established in 1890, The Island Golf Club enjoys a unique setting bordered by sea on three sides. Links Superintendent, Dave Edmondson, has been at the club for six years and spoke to us about his impressive career to date and club developments. **P46**

WINTER SPORTS

Oli gunning for success!

Oud-Heverlee Leuven is a Belgian football club from the city of Leuven, to the east of Brussels. It was created in 2002 from the merger of three clubs, FC Zwarte Duivels Oud-Heverlee, whose registration number it inherited, Daring Club Leuven and Stade Leuven. Their home ground is the King Power at Den Dreef Stadium, located in the city's Heverlee region. **P64**

Cod's Law!

Ten percent of the town's residents regularly attend Fleetwood's home games, a measure of the club's continued success. Lee Williams met up with their new(ish) Head Groundsman, Nick Hyndman, to discover what recent developments have taken place in this remote corner of Lancashire. **P70**

Trying to make his Mark

After an early start and a long drive from Oldham, Lee Williams pulls up outside Rodney Parade Stadium situated in the centre of Newport, South Wales. At the time of writing this, Newport have just reached the fifth round of the FA Cup. Lee met with Mark Jones, Head of Operations, to discuss developments and his time at Rodney Parade. **P78**

SPECIAL FEATURE

Time for a rethink?

Do we need more precise clarification of what is acceptable practice when it comes to warm-ups and warm-downs? Lee Williams gains the thoughts of groundsman from a variety of football clubs. **P12**

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SUMMER SPORTS

A Place in history for a village ground

Cricket has been played 'in the back garden' of one of England's foremost stately homes for nearly 300 years. Neville Johnson paid a midwinter visit to Penshurst Park, a village cricket club whose ground is one of the oldest active venues in the country. It is one of only one hundred clubs to feature in Remarkable Village Cricket Grounds, published in autumn last year. **P98**

EQUESTRIAN

Ludlow's road to progress

They say that new brooms sweep clean but, at Ludlow Racecourse, Tom Moreland - in his first groundsman role - aims to keep a balance between the latest science and techniques and traditions which have seen the course through the last 294 years.

P104



Lucy Sellick,
Head Greenkeeper,
Wenvoe Golf Club

CONSERVATION

In the face of competition

Despite breeding and reintroduction programmes, the UK's birds of prey still face threats from unscrupulous individuals and syndicates out for personal gain. Peter Britton reports on the current state of play. **P110**

A common sense approach

In the present climate of litigation, many clubs are now afraid of the words health and safety. However, with a common sense approach to surveying your trees, an efficient and cost effective strategy can be put in place which should cover your legal requirements. **P116**

TECHNICAL

The Pannal Game

On the outskirts of the North Yorkshire town of Harrogate, a huge project is coming to fruition to provide a 'homeless' junior football club with their own dedicated grounds to boost community sport. **P120**

A brief history and analysis

In part one of a two part article, Maxwell Amenity Technical Manager John Handley provides a brief history and analysis of the current situation surrounding pesticides. **P136**

TRAINING

Dolphins and Sharks

In this, the first of a two-part article, Communication Skills Trainer Frank Newberry reports on the perils of giving people feedback on their performance at work. **P132**



Penshurst Park Cricket Club



Island Golf Club



Oud-Heverlee Leuven FC



Future of Fungicides

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BASIS for success

Maxwell Amenity add two more BASIS Advisors, bringing the total to ten

Maxwell Amenity have furthered their commitment to providing customers with agronomic advice of the highest quality by supporting two members of the technical sales team through their BASIS Amenity Horticulture Turf qualifications.

Technical Sales Advisor, James Norton (left) and Sales Manager, Tom Weaver have both passed their BASIS certificate in Amenity Horticulture Turf courses carried out at the STRI HQ in Bingley. They will continue with CPD to remain on the professional advisors register. BASIS is an industry recognised, independent standards setting and auditing organisation who offer a range of exams for industry professionals.

With ever changing legislation affecting products widely used within the amenity and horticulture industry, it is vital for sales advisors and agronomists to have the knowledge and expertise to advise customers on methods of best practice. Tom, who also has a BSc in Sports Turf Management, commented that "I feel that the course has allowed me to develop my knowledge and will help me to provide



James Norton (left) and Tom Weaver

customers with high quality and effective solutions to their turf problems."

James, who has previous experience in both greenkeeping and groundsmanhip, acknowledged that the course has furthered his knowledge of industry products including fungicides, herbicides and insecticides, and he commented that "I now feel that I'm much better positioned to advise customers on a range of products from both a practical and legal perspective."

Dan Hughes, Sales and Marketing Director, outlined that "We are committed to developing our staff and ensuring that our customers are receiving accurate technical advice and follow

latest industry best practice. Working with rapidly changing legislative, technology and climatic conditions, it is important that we continue to develop and support our staff through accredited industry qualifications. As anyone who has undertaken BASIS will testify, it is a tough qualification that requires extensive study and expertise. We are immensely proud of both individuals and our team now extends to ten qualified BASIS advisors and two BASIS trained storekeepers."

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GREAT BRITAIN

New HQ for Links Trust

St Andrews Links Trust has unveiled plans to build a new headquarters at the Home of Golf

The 1,200 square-metre facility will provide St Andrews Links Trust with a two-storey building that, once completed, will serve as an office hub for more than fifty staff working across a range of different operational disciplines, including IT, HR, Food & Beverage, Finance, Technical Services, Tournaments, Golf and Commerce.

The building will provide staff with open-plan offices, meeting spaces and dedicated areas for the training and development of more than 400 permanent and seasonal staff employed by the Trust.

The new offices have been designed by Dundee architecture firm Nicoll Russell Studios. The building has been planned in an energy efficient, environmentally-sensitive manner, and will draw influence from the unique history of St Andrews, while also reflecting the qualities and values for which the Home of Golf is famous around the world.

Preparatory work on the site began in mid-

February as contractors demolished a former residential property that served as a starter's hut for the Balgove Course and provided limited office and meeting space. Work on the new building is expected to begin early this summer ahead of an estimated completion date of November 2020.

As well as creating new headquarters, the project will also include a new starter box for the Balgove course, and seventy-five more car parking spaces for the Eden Course, academy and clubhouse.



OBITUARY - JOHN GREASLEY

The golf industry lost one of its most respected figures when John Greasley lost his fight against cancer.

News of his death prompted a host of tributes from people he had worked with over the years, many of whom had treasured memories of a man whose outwardly gentle demeanor was matched by an inner determination, true professionalism and strong principles.



John set up his company - John Greasley Ltd - in 1985 and, from humble beginnings, established it as one of the industry's leading course design and construction specialists with clients across the UK and Europe.

John's first job under the new business, in conjunction with architect Martin Hawtree, was hardly glamorous - a nine-hole course on a reclaimed chemical tip in Widnes, Cheshire, for Halton Borough Council.

Yet its success, completed in the year the firm was established, set the tone for a long line of high profile future projects.

John Greasley's list of satisfied clients is as long as it is noteworthy, with some of the most respected clubs at home and abroad featuring among the firm's portfolio.

The company will continue to trade under the leadership of John's son Charlie.

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ASOY awarded at Harrogate

Top sprayer operator Award presented to Keith Gallacher

The Amenity Sprayer Operator of the Year (ASOY) has been won by Keith Gallacher, Head of Complete Weed Control South West and East Scotland.

ASOY recognises and rewards top sprayer operators across the amenity industry. It aims to improve standards, by identifying the best practice of individuals to enhance results - and share their experiences across the industry.

Presented for the second time at BTME Harrogate, the ASOY Awards are organised by the Amenity Forum, and sponsored by ICL and Syngenta, in association with BASIS.

As well as the overall top operator, Keith was the winner of the Landscape and Industrial using vehicle mounted equipment category.

Two other category winners were also recognised by the Awards: Ryan Shepherd of Hortech won Landscape and Industrial sprayer using a knapsack, whilst Andy Baker won the category for Sports turf using a boom sprayer or knapsack.

Keith has a wealth of industry experience and is an expert in all spraying methods. His clients



Left to right: Simon Elsworth (Syngenta), Keith Gallacher (CWC), Mark Pyrah (ICL) and Professor John Moverley

range from local authorities, housing associations, golf courses to large facility companies and businesses within the construction industry. He predominantly undertakes highway spraying, but also has business operational responsibilities associated with running the Complete Weed Control South West and East Scotland franchise.

Keith commented "I take pride in best practice - it's the culture that is bred within CWC and is encouraged from Head Office. We are a team of like-minded individuals that strive to be the best. For me, Professor John Moverley is an inspiration. I believe that our industry as a whole needs to get behind him and the work of the Amenity Forum."

Commenting on Keith's success, from a record entry in the fourth annual ASOY Awards, Professor John Moverley, Chairman of the Amenity Forum, said: "What is done to maintain amenity areas impacts upon every UK citizen every day and is important to ensure healthy and safe environments fit for purpose. This work depends upon the input of highly professional operators, fully trained and qualified. A key element in the task is the use of authorised and safe chemical spraying."

Stephen Jacob, BASIS CEO commented: "The safe and appropriate application of plant protection products is essential to maintaining the environment in which we live, and it's clear that Keith is a true advocate of these principles."

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Tributes paid to Cecil

Former BIGGA Chairman passes away at the age of 91

Many in the industry have been saddened by the death of Cecil George, the respected long-time greenkeeper at Lenzie Golf Club.

The life member and former chairman of the British and International Golf Greenkeepers Association died on January 18 at the age of 91.

Cecil was introduced to greenkeeping as a 15-year-old, joining the staff at Whitecraigs in 1943.

At the outbreak of the Second World War, he spent four months with the Cameron Highlanders before moving to the Parachute Regiment, seeing action in the Middle East and undertaking 109 jumps.

He returned to work at Whitecraigs, passing up the chance to become an engineer, and continued greenkeeping as a profession at Fereneze and Cathcart Castle. Cecil settled at Lenzie in 1954 and, over 37 years, he renovated the course, planting 10,000 trees and scarifying the greens, which had been 80 percent moss.

In the 1960s, he set up the first training course



for apprentice greenkeepers at Woodburn House in Glasgow, working with Bob Moffat, going on to establish greenkeeping accreditation for City & Guilds, HNC and HND courses.

Credited with doing more than any other to progress the education of greenkeepers, his contribution to the profession has been described as "gigantic".

Cecil is survived by his wife, Margaret, and children Lorna, Lynn and Ken.

OBITUARY - ALICE DYE

Alice Dye, the first female President of the American Society of Golf Course Architects (ASGCA), a Fellow and 2017 Donald Ross Award recipient, died on the 1st February 2019, at the age 91.



The matriarch of the most famous family in golf course design - and architect of the famed 17th hole "island green" at TPC Sawgrass - ASGCA members will remember Alice Dye for her service to ASGCA and the game of golf.

A winner of more than fifty amateur golf tournaments, Dye earned the Indiana State Championship nine times, and won three Florida State Championships and eleven Indianapolis City Championships. She also won the Doherty Cup, and secured a place on the US team for the 1970 Curtis Cup.

ASGCA President Jeff Blume commented: "Alice was certainly a pioneer and inspiration to us all, regardless of gender, but she blazed a trail as only she could for great architects like Jan Bel Jan, Vicki Martz and Cynthia Dye McGarey to follow. She will definitely be missed.

A leader in golf administration, Dye served on the USGA Women's Committee and USGA Handicap Committee, the LPGA Advisory Council and on the Board of the Women's Western Golf Association.

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BIGGA Award 2019

BIGGA announced the three winners of the BIGGA Awards 2019 during the Welcome Celebration at BTME

Outstanding Contribution of the Year (sponsored by Jacobsen)

Jack Percival, 24, deputy course manager at Chipstead Golf Club in Surrey, received a standing ovation at the BIGGA Awards in recognition of his selfless efforts in helping the homeless. Aged 17, Jack had found himself homeless for six months and, in the years since, has turned his life around and works hard to support those who sleep out on the streets.

Jack hosted an event in Croydon on 23rd December that provided food and warmth for the homeless during Christmas.

Jack said: "This is unbelievable, I didn't think I could cry in front of hundreds of people, it was just brilliant."

"I didn't do this for an award, I was homeless myself when I was 17 and I did six months on the street. I turned my life around, met my partner, and this is just the start for me. We did a big feed at Christmas and there was one guy who cried because he got a haircut. I saw a guy dance because he got new shoes and you can't put a price on that."

BIGGA Chief Executive Officer Jim Croxton said: "I'm delighted that we have been able to recognise Jack's achievements in this small way. He is an incredible young man and I'm proud to call him a member of the association."

Championship Greenkeeping Performance of the Year (sponsored by Rigby Taylor)

The greenkeeping team at Harleyford Golf Club in Buckinghamshire was announced as winner of the BIGGA Awards 2019 Championship Performance of the Year, just five years after the club was declared bankrupt.

Course Manager Craig Earnshaw has a team of six greenkeepers whose office is 1.5 miles from



Jack Percival with Textron's Andre Andrade and BIGGA Chairman Scott Reeves

the golf course - meaning a 15-minute drive from the maintenance facility to the first tee.

The team has not only been commended for its incredible work in preparing the course to a standard worthy of hosting a professional tournament - the PGA EuroPro Tour's Matchroom Sport Championship - but the staging of the event didn't go without incident.

When stormy conditions and heavy rain on the eve of the tournament completely washed out the club's bunkers, the team worked through the night to replace the sand, with even Craig's fiancée, Tracy Forth, being enlisted to cut rough and blow fairways.

The tireless efforts of the team paid off, and Harleyford has been chosen to host the PGA EuroPro Tour's Matchroom Sport Championship once again in 2019.

Craig said: "This is mad, I can't believe it to be honest. When you look at who I was up against, I am really just a little short for words. I didn't think we would win. The guys on my team were amazing and they're a real credit to the golf club."

Greenkeeping Project of the Year (sponsored by Baroness)

BIGGA member Stuart Imeson has rounded off a banner year that saw him become a father for

the first time and then be placed in charge of the entire operations at his golf club by winning a prestigious industry award.

Stuart, general manager and head greenkeeper at Dunstanburgh Castle in Northumbria, was announced as the winner of the BIGGA Awards 2019 Greenkeeping Project of the Year.

In addition to taking on parenting duties and embracing his changing role at the golf club, Stuart has continued to provide excellent educational opportunities for fellow BIGGA members through his incredibly-successful Bunker Camps, which was a sell-out in 2018 as greenkeepers from across Europe came together to take part.

Stuart said: "To be honest, I'm a little bit star struck by the whole thing. If you just look at the standard of people that were up for awards, it's an amazing achievement. If you look at my three lads, it's absolutely out of this world to even think we could win something like this."

BIGGA Chief Executive Officer Jim Croxton praised all the winners and nominees for highlighting the extraordinary efforts being put in, both on and off the course, across the UK. "All are a credit to BIGGA and the greenkeeping industry as a whole," he concluded.



The Harleyford Greenkeeping Team receiving their award



Stuart Imeson with Adam Butler of Baroness



BIGGA Chief Executive Officer Jim Croxton

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

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

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Gordon Moir recognised

Lifetime Achievement Award presented to Gordon Moir at the 2019 Golf Environment Awards

A Lifetime Achievement Award was presented to Gordon Moir, retired Director of Greenkeeping at St Andrews Links Trust, for his services to the turfcare industry.

STRI head of ecology, Bob Taylor, said: "It was a real pleasure to be able to honour Gordon with a Lifetime Achievement Award, giving recognition to his dedication to ecology and environmental sustainability, and all that he has achieved during his illustrious career spanning over twenty-seven years at the St Andrews Links Trust."

The winners of the four main categories were:

Environmental Golf Course of the Year 2019 - Aldbrough Golf Club

Creating what many thought to be impossible, an almost perfect blend of course and ecology to the point where it is hard to tell where one begins and another stops. All without sacrificing the playability of the course.



The Government has been accused of trying to bury a major report about the potential dangers of global warming to Britain - including the doubling of the deaths during heatwaves, a "significant risk" to supplies of food and the prospect of infrastructure damage from flooding.

The UK Climate Change Risk Assessment Report, which by law has to be produced every five years, was published with little fanfare on the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs' (DEFRA) website on 18 January.

But, despite its undoubted importance, Environment Secretary Andrea Leadsom made no speech and did not issue her own statement, and even the DEFRA Twitter account was silent. No mainstream media organisation covered the report.

One leading climate expert accused the Government of "trying to sneak it out" without people noticing, saying he was "astonished" at the way its publication was handled.

In the report, the Government admitted there were a number of "urgent priorities" that needed to be addressed.

It said it largely agreed with experts' warnings about the effects of climate change on the UK.



Gordon Moir (centre) with Bob Taylor and Rowan Rumball

Conservation Greenkeeper of the Year 2019 - Phil Stain, Notts Golf Club (Hollinwell)

Phil and his team's knowledge of ecological practice to maintain a course that is in keeping with the surrounding countryside and create great community engagement.

Outstanding Environmental Project of the Year 2019 - Wyllyhof Golf Club

An innovative new design of ecological enhancement shows that we still have a lot to learn. Conservation is a young science and there is still plenty of room for new ideas.

Operation Pollinator 2019 - Corhampton GC

The club has shown that you have to be brave when it comes to habitat management, but the results of their efforts are well worth it, creating big new expanses of habitat for pollinators.

STRI ecology consultant, Rowan Rumball, said: "Huge congratulations to the winners and finalists of this year's awards. We have been amazed by the work that golf clubs and greenkeepers are doing for the ecological and environmental wellbeing of their courses and within the local community."

"Environmental best practice is an important part of all golf clubs' working remit and, through the introduction of next year's Home Nations awards, we hope more clubs will be encouraged to enter the 2020 GEAs."



Pesticides post-Brexit

New Government guidance issued on pesticides post-Brexit

The Government has issued guidance to manufacturers and users of Plant Protection Products (PPPs) on what action they need to take now to minimise any disruption once the UK leaves the EU.

It says the high scientific standard to which decisions on the use of pesticides are made will not change and that it will continue to be guided by the most up-to-date scientific assessment of the risks to animals and the environment.

If the UK leaves the EU on March 29 without a deal, pesticides currently available in the UK at the point of exit will continue to be so, allowing products to be marketed and used as normal, it says.

The Government says future PPP applications for use and renewals in the UK will continue to be considered by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), on behalf of the UK Government (DEFRA) and the devolved administrations. It is said the format and data requirements for new applications will remain the same as they do now, minimising disruption for businesses.

The key change would be that, if a business wishes to place a new pesticide on the EU market, it will need to make a separate

application to the EU, a process which could take up to three years.

Farming Minister George Eustice says: "Delivering a negotiated deal with the EU remains the Government's top priority, but it is our job to responsibly ensure we are prepared for all scenarios, including no deal."

"If the UK leaves the EU with a deal, there will be an Implementation Period (IP) during which the UK will continue to follow decisions made by the EU on pesticide approvals and Maximum Residue Levels (MRLs)."

"The key difference for businesses is that, during the IP, the UK will not be able to act as a 'leading authority' under the EU regime and the HSE will be unable to conduct active substance or MRL evaluations. Therefore, businesses wishing to supply new pesticides to the UK and/or EU markets would need to make an application to a competent authority in an EU Member State."

Businesses that may be affected by either scenario are advised they should read the latest guidance on the UK regulation of pesticides after the UK leaves the EU.



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Pitch Protection Regulations regarding warm-ups and warm-downs

Time for a rethink?

They cause a great deal of damage to the playing surface, and the problem needs to be addressed. Do the regulations require amending? Do we need more precise clarification of what is an acceptable practice? To investigate these questions, **Lee Williams** gains the thoughts of groundsmen from a variety of football clubs

In my time as a Head Groundsman, I too have had many problems and encountered disrespect from some visiting coaches, so I completely understand the concerns and frustrations from across all levels of football. In this article, we speak to a few groundsmen about their experiences and thoughts on the subject.

Mike O'Brien, Groundsman, Stockport County FC

Having spoken to numerous groundstaff over the last couple of years, it's very clear that a lot of clubs encounter the same problems as we do on a weekly basis.

On match days, groundstaff invariably encounter fitness coaches leading the players onto the pitch without having the courtesy to liaise with them and advise on the best area of the pitch to conduct their warm-ups. Consultation is of paramount importance to ensure that those areas that are "off limits" are avoided. This is especially significant during adverse weather conditions.

It is essential for "fast feet drills" to be conducted at the side of the pitch. Goalkeepers must use the warm-up goals to avoid unnecessary damage to the goalmouth areas. Strict timescales must be followed to allow the groundstaff enough time to set out and remove goals and other equipment; they must not start warming up too early or finish too late. Fortunately, half time does not usually cause many problems, however, occasionally, players do need to be reminded to stay out of the goal areas.

Warm-downs seem to be the most problematic area. Players appear to be confused as to what constitutes a warm-down. The consensus defines post-match warm-downs as "easy exercise following intense activity to allow the body to transition

to a resting or near resting state gradually." Recommended activities include a slow jog or walk and gentle stretching. They are thereby allowing the heart and breathing rate to return to normal levels and to give the body time to remove waste products, such as lactic acid, from the muscles.

It is commonplace to see players who have not even taken part in the game - and in some cases have not even been named on the team sheet - take to the pitch and start sprinting up and down. This is unacceptable; the warm-down time is not for this purpose.

I would be interested to hear from fellow groundstaff and ask them to share their experiences and difficulties encountered. Can you offer any suggestions for improvement? Personally, I would like to see:

- Coaches to consult groundstaff before warm-ups commence
- Warm-up/down time to be reduced in bad weather
- Clarification of what exercises are permissible for warm-ups/downs
- Educate coaches and players that Pitch Protection Regulations actually exist and why there is a need for them. It is not just a matter of the groundstaff being difficult
- Form a standard complaints procedure to deal with teams that do not comply with the regulations

Our main concern is our wish to prepare an acceptable playing surface to the best of our ability, enabling players to enjoy the game, demonstrate their skills, and for the supporters to experience a good game of football.





After all, we are all - or should be - trying to help each other to produce as good a surface as possible, so that the players can perform to the best of their ability



People don't realise that damage from warm-ups is sometimes massive and the impact of that means the pitch can end up looking battered in places before kick-off, which doesn't look good on televised games

Andy Gray, Grounds Manager, Southampton FC

A lot of the problems with any type of pitch usage comes down to education. None more so than warm-ups. Due to the localised intensity of most of the drills they do, it is often the case that more damage is done in the warm up than the actual game itself.

I have found over the years that, if you speak to the coaches before they set up, you can (mostly) get them to go where you want. There is no point talking to them when they are in the middle of their warm up as they will not change what they are doing at that point. Most of them now know before you even say anything what you are going to ask - fast feet off the pitch, possession boxes on the wings, shooting in the practice goal etc. and so, agree to it all and say that's what they would do anyway.

Pre-match shooting in has changed a



little with the new way of 'team shape' and needing the whole width of the pitch, thus the need to do it in the main goal. However, I have found this not to be that bad as it is only a few actual shots at the keeper rather than lining up like a firing squad and firing balls at two keepers for 5-10 minutes and destroying where that goal is.

I have worked in all top three divisions; all at Southampton and, for the main part, it is actually the PL teams who are the best/easiest to deal with. Often in League 1, it was the away teams 'cup final' and all they wanted to do was shoot balls at the main goal both before the game and at half time. I chased many a goalie and subs out of the penalty box in the FL.

We do have guidelines and rules for warm-ups and warm downs in the PL, which are on the wall in both changing rooms. However, unfortunately these are not worth the paper they are written on. You can report misuse of the pitch to the delegate but only after the match, long after the damage has been done and the culprits are twenty-five miles up the motorway or at the airport! The fines then handed out are so minimal it is mere pence to the club.

As I started, I think it comes down to education. This can start at your own club by building a good relationship with your own S&C department. Explaining why you are asking to go here, why you don't want them to do that there etc. These then look after your own training pitches and, in turn, will respect the pitch when they play away. We have a good relationship with the S&C department here at Southampton, from 1st team all the way through the academy and I hope they take into consideration the pitch when they play away. Of course, it can come down to personal character and attitude with some people; unfortunately something that you cannot do much about sometimes!



It is commonplace to see players who have not even taken part in the game - and in some cases have not even been named on the team sheet - take to the pitch and start sprinting up and down. This is unacceptable



Paul Knowles, Head Groundsman, Northampton Town FC

I think most groundsmen would agree that warm-ups and warm-downs are one of the more significant challenges we face throughout the season. Guidelines were brought in over ten years ago now, so maybe it's worth a revisit/refresher. I believe, certainly this season and maybe last, things are slipping and etiquette has started to slide.



We all understand players need to warm-up/down. We accept that. But it's a two-way street and there needs to be acceptance about pitch conditions from coaches too. Small keep ball squares are in vogue at the moment. But set two or three squares up and hop from one to the other, not stay in one. Carry them out in a corner, too, where there is less wear from the game. Same with shuttles.

I've said for years pitch etiquette/management should form an element within the coaching badge. It is in their interest to look after the surface. You can't control damage from a game as its completely random, but warm-ups and downs can be managed more effectively.

Within the guidelines, something should be added to have a discussion with a groundsman at 1:45pm. Make it formal. Not hang around tunnels pre-match waiting for a coach or avoiding them altogether. The whole process needs tightening up in my opinion.

In the interests of fairness, a lot of clubs are respectful, but we need to turn that into all clubs. Things have improved over the last ten years, but we should always strive for better.



Peter Ashworth, Head Groundsman, Preston North End FC

With regards to warm-ups, I feel there have been improvements over the years, but also know a lot more can be done. I have approached this in numerous ways over the years, and I'm currently on the "go with the flow option". Which translates to; I will sort out the mess afterwards.

I do find a lot of the clubs will now ask or generally try to do any of the rough work off the pitch or out on the wings. I also must admit that now having a few small lighting rigs (still not enough) has made me chill out a bit more as I know I can help aid recovery in the high wear areas. I also fully understand that clubs without such luxuries, and maybe no reinforcement in their pitch (fibre/Desso etc.), will find it much tougher after a heavy session in the wrong conditions.

An option I have put forward in the past was to have contact with the visiting team's fitness coach/coaches in the days building up to the game. A quick email off them detailing what they intend to do could help a groundsman prepare when letting them know where to carry out the various parts of the warm-up. The groundsman could either email back a quick diagram of the

pitch detailing where they would like each skill to be carried out, or at least be prepared for when they arrive on the day of a game.

I feel most clubs generally do the same every game, so their warm-ups could even be sent out to all clubs in their league at the start of the season. If they change it at any point, they would have to let the clubs know. I feel doing something along these lines, helping to open the lines of communication, will help stop any match-day confrontations and unwanted stress that groundstaff and coaching staff can often face. I feel this could be a straightforward task once everyone gets used to it, without taking up too much of anyone's time.

After all, we are all - or should be - trying to help each other to produce as good a surface as possible, so that the players can perform to the best of their ability.



Pitch Protection Rules (as stated by EFL)

28.1 In order to protect the pitch, unless otherwise mutually agreed between both participating Clubs, the following procedures shall be adopted by Players and Officials in the periods immediately before and after a Match and at half time:

(1.a) the pitch shall only be used for warming up or warming down by Players named on the Team Sheet

(1.b) pre-match warming up by either team shall not commence until 45 minutes before the kick-off time at the earliest, shall not last for more than 30 minutes, and shall end no later than 10 minutes before the kick-off time

(1.c) if portable goals are provided, they shall be used for all goalkeeping drills other than crossing practice

(1.d) the goalmouth area shall be used by goalkeepers only if portable goals are not provided or for crossing practice and then only for not more than 20 minutes

(1.e) for the purposes of warming up and warming down each team shall use only part of the pitch between the edge of a penalty area and the half way line or as otherwise directed by the groundsman

(1.f) all speed and stamina work shall be undertaken off the pitch parallel to the touchline opposite the side to be patrolled by the assistant referee or, in the absence of sufficient space, in that part of the pitch described in paragraph for the purposes of warming up and warming down each team shall use only part of the pitch between the edge of a penalty area and the halfway line or as otherwise directed by the groundsman; above or as otherwise directed by the groundsman

(1.g) Players using the pitch at half time as aforesaid shall give due consideration to any other activity or entertainment taking place on the pitch at the same time

(1.h) the Home Club may water the pitch at half time provided that it gives reasonable notice to the referee and the other Club that it intends to do so and that any such watering is carried out evenly over the entire length and width of the pitch

(1.i) any warming down after the conclusion of the Match shall last for no longer than 15 minutes and for that purpose neither penalty area shall be used

Daniel Bunce, Head Groundsman, AFC Fylde

My major gripe with warm-ups is inconsistency. There are guidelines that a team should be out 45 minutes before kick-off, but I'm amazed when teams actually stick to this. You can have one team



out at 2:00pm and then the others may not come out until 2:25pm. The regulations state teams should only be allowed to have the squad out warming up, but some bring out players on their way back to fitness, sprinting up and down the line in the same areas repeatedly from 1:30pm!

But my major gripe is goalkeepers' warm-ups. A new 'thing' seems to be that keepers need 'a few sighters' in the main goals. I'm sorry, but if you don't know what you're doing by now, you shouldn't be playing.

Rondo drills are the new killer; five players in the same area with fast passing and closing down, killing the same area without moving it about.

Another problem I'm starting to face now is linesmen warming up. They run up and down the area they then batter for ninety minutes; running up and down like a shire horse. When asking them why they need to do this, most just entirely disregard anything I have to say. How a respect campaign can be utilised across the board is beyond me.



Of course, it can come down to personal character and attitude with some people; unfortunately something that you cannot do much about sometimes!



Anthony Harry, Grounds Manager, Swansea City FC

I think each club needs to have a bit more support. Our policy includes the following:

- No players are allowed on the pitch an hour before kick-off
- All fast feet drills have to be carried out off the pitch at all times
- If cones are set up on the pitch to do any of the fast feet drills, we ask coaches to remove them and put them in the places they're meant to go
- Goalkeeping drills are all in our dead ball areas with the portable goals and they are only allowed to do crosses in the goalmouths. No strikers finishes - all of that is done off the pitch

I just think there needs to be more from the match delegates for when teams don't do it. It's unfair when the home teams abide by all the rules and away teams seem to try their luck a little bit. Although things can be resolved very quickly, it sometimes gets heated.

We need that 'go to person' so, if there is a problem, they could step in to help the groundstaff resolve the issue. People don't realise that damage from warm-ups is sometimes massive and the impact of that means the pitch can end up looking

battered in places before kick-off, which doesn't look good on televised games.

The drills are intense, which is the main reason for us insisting that everything must be done off the pitch.

We have a lot of side areas which are more than suitable and should mean policies are adhered to.

It's the same for rugby. We don't allow pitch access an hour before the game and, if it means standing in the tunnel to enforce that, we do! It's a very strict policy that we stick to and we're not in their faces. We approach people in the right manner and explain the situation and they're usually willing to help you out. The meeting and greeting is key for us; we always introduce ourselves to opponents coming onto the pitch and take them to the areas where we want them to go. That way there is no arguing and it reduces disputes. That might be something that more groundstaff need to look at. Thankfully, it does work for us.



If you have experienced similar issues, let us know. Email: editorial@pitchcare.com or post on the forum; www.pitchcare.com/forum



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Wenvoe Castle Golf Club

Welsh Wonder

Set in scenic countryside in the heart of the Vale of Glamorgan, Wenvoe Castle Golf Club is long recognised as one of the finest challenges of golf in Wales. On a very cold morning late in January, Lee Williams met up with the club's recently appointed Head Greenkeeper **Lucy Sellick**

//

Promoting the industry is way up there. I believe we need to encourage more young people into our industry; regardless of gender. There's a lot of stressed, overworked greenkeepers out there, and there shouldn't be!



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Clubhouse

As I approach the course, the first thing to hit you is the beautiful old castle building, which is now the clubhouse, pro shop and greenkeeper's sheds. Waiting for me in the old courtyard is Lucy Sellick, who gives me a warm welcome and, with the threat of rain, she immediately takes me out for a tour of the course on the Toro Workman, before we sit down in her office for a brew and chat about all things turf.

Lucy has been in the industry since she left school and has never looked back. She explains: "I still remember the day now. It was my sixteenth birthday when my next-door neighbour, who was building a golf course at that time (Virginia Park Golf Club, Caerphilly), knocked on the door. He asked me would I like to earn some money and I excitedly replied yes please. I was straight in at the deep end; I helped lay turf on the driving range during the build and also used to go before school to pick up golf balls. As soon as I left school, I started full-time on the new nine-hole golf course as an apprentice

greenkeeper where, over the next nine years, I worked my way up to first assistant."

Lucy then took a position as a qualified greenkeeper at the prestigious Celtic Manor Resort Golf Club in Newport, South Wales. "I spent nine years working at Celtic Manor, and I'm proud of the fact I had a hand in building the new course in readiness for the 2010 Ryder Cup." She then moved on to Saltford Golf Club in Bristol as deputy course manager where she had a one-hundred-mile round trip a day, and was averaging over 31,000 miles a year, which she did for almost ten years. To do that kind of mileage every day shows a lot of dedication. I asked what her motivation was: "I absolutely love my job. I loved the course; the members were great and it was such a wonderful course where I also played some nice golf. However, I thought it was time to look for a position closer to home." I asked how she came to be at Wenvoe Golf Club. "It was a strange scenario, as I had applied for the head greenkeeper job at Llanishen Golf Club first, which was closer to home



I think there are still too many people out there who don't recognise the skill and the professionalism within greenkeeping





I don't have to worry about the fairways all summer. All the lads do a great job and I couldn't do it without them

than this. I was on a shortlist of two and I didn't get it, but then the head greenkeeper, who was previously here, got the Llanishen job. Wenvoe found out I was looking, and they got in touch with me, which was quite nice. After a few conversations and an interview with the Chairman of the Greens and the President, I was offered the position, which took some time to sink in."

Lucy is keen on training and is always looking at ways she can improve as a greenkeeper. She currently holds NVQ Levels 2, 3 and 4 in Sportsturf Management, spraying certificates PA 1, 2

and 6, 360 excavator licence, chainsaw cross-cutting and felling licence and, on top of all that, she took a course in Conservation Environmental Management fourteen years ago, which is now serving her well. She explains: "I just had that feeling greenkeeping was going to go that way, plus I love the outdoors. It was interesting building dry stone walls, hedge laying, learning about ecology, wetlands and woodlands. It's now come to fruition as ecology and looking after the environment is prevalent in the industry. I'm now looking to do a course possibly on the agronomy side of the job." I admire the fact



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Getting Personal

Lucy Sellick - Space, Taylor Swift and G&T

Who are you? Lucy Sellick, Head Greenkeeper. Been in the industry for twenty-eight years and love the outdoors.

Family status. Married to Lee and have two fluffy kids; Neve the border terrier and Hunter the giant ginger cat.

Who's your hero and why? Katherine Johnson, the mathematician who worked for NASA. If it weren't for the film 'Hidden Figures' who would have known what she achieved and with so many struggles. Also, how cool would it have been to be around the whole space race era.

What would you change about yourself? I can be shy in small groups and sometimes worry too much.

What's your guilty pleasure? Sports films and I love a listen to Taylor Swift or Dolly Parton.

What's been the highlight of your career so far? It would have been cutting the 18th green at the Wales Open with a full grandstand applauding. Now, it has to be reaching my current position.

What are your pet peeves? Surprises followed by excuses.

If you could go anywhere right now, where would it be? Patagonia, but would be happy with a cottage in Scotland.

What's the best part of your job? So many to list; being outdoors, weather, great industry, golfers and the Friday feeling when you look back and see what you have achieved.

... and the worst? Being outdoors, weather, negative industry, golfers and that Friday feeling seeing a machine breakdown.

Do you have a lifetime ambition? Would love a round of golf without a double bogey on my card.

Favourite record, and why? Maccabees, Given to the wild, Taylor Swift's 1989 and Mumford & Sons, Sign No More - this got me through a tough time in my life.

Who would you choose to spend a romantic evening with? I would have to say the hubby, but he wouldn't mind me having dinner with Chris Martin.

If you were to describe yourself as a musical instrument, what would you be and why? An oboe. I'm someone with a distinctive voice with depth and character once you become aware of its existence.

Which three people, living or dead, would you invite to a dinner party? Victoria Wood, The Queen and Michael Collins.



If you could be anyone for a day, who would it be and why? Museum director for the Natural History Museum. I would love to have the place all to myself at night and look through all the places we don't get to see.

Do you have any bad habits? I pick at my nails and I have little patience.

... or any good ones? Helpful to others.

Do you go to bed worrying about the next day's workload? Sometimes it can't be helped; bad weather, staff or fixtures can change plans.

What are you reading at the moment? Hooked on Luke Jennings after watching Killing Eve and love 'Cunk on Everything', a laugh out loud book.

What's the best advice you have ever been given? You don't know what people's expectations are, so do the best you can and hopefully you won't disappoint.

What's your favourite smell? That weird smell after it rains in summer or a G&T; too close to call.

What do you do in your spare time? Allotment, golf, gin or coastal walk with a camera hunting fossils.

What's the daftest work related question you have ever been asked? Was asked once if I was allowed to touch the elephants when a car insurance sales person mistook Greenkeeper for a Zoo Keeper, when asking what I did.

What's your favourite piece of kit? Hate to say it but my smartphone; weather, fixtures, emails, suppliers, links to others within the industry for support or advice, camera, notepad, measuring device; the list goes on. If this answer is too controversial, I'll say ProCore.

What three words would you use to describe yourself? Diligent, courteous and decisive.

What law/legislation would you like to see introduced? Before introducing new ones, I would have current ones enforced! Shocking to read clubs not providing pensions, PPE or hot running water for their staff.



that Lucy is always willing to learn and is not afraid to ask questions of fellow greenkeepers if she doesn't have the answers.

Lucy thanks her granddad for inspiring her to get involved in working outdoors. "He was a parkie cutting grass. I think a bit of that rubbed off on me, but he was also in the forces, so I was all geared up ready to join the navy. The opportunity to work at Celtic Manor blew me away with what I got to do there. I enjoyed working with Mark Harper when I was at Virginia Park Golf Club, and being part of the South West section, speaking with Paul Worster and many other industry professionals have helped and supported me along the way."

Lucy has a small team to help her with the day to day maintenance of the 18 hole, 6208-yard, par 72 parkland course plus practice hole. This includes Steve Webb, First Assistant, 39 years' service with qualifications including: Level 3 Sportsturf, spraying PA 1, 2 and 6, 360 excavator licence and





Lucy and her team, (left to right): Steve Webb, Ty Garland, Ben Rees and Laurence Walter

chainsaw licence. Laurence Walter, Assistant with 49 years' service and NVQ Level 2 in Sportsturf and spraying PA 1, 2 and 6 under his belt; Ben Rees, Apprentice Greenkeeper with 3 years' service and currently studying towards an NVQ Level 2; Ty Garland, who works part-time and was the former Head Greenkeeper, who has served the club for an unbelievable 48 years. "Ty will hate me for this, but I think he is over 70 now. He comes in on Tuesdays and Fridays

and each time he pops his head around the door and says "Fairways as normal" to which I reply "Yes please Ty". Once he has cut the fairways, he cleans off the mower and greases it up. He's just amazing and it means I don't have to worry about the fairways all summer. All the lads do a great job and I couldn't do it without them."

Lucy tells me about the general soil profile of the course. "It mainly consists of clay, with quite a high rock content on the front



It's now come to fruition as ecology and looking after the environment is prevalent in the industry

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Most love their job and hate to leave on a Friday with the course not looking its best so, if you are understaffed, the first thing you are going to do is make up that shortfall



Vertidrainning is carried out three times per year

nine holes, so aeration is a no go on those fairways. Greens are a mixed bag; a few were rebuilt and, topdressing over the years, means there is a good 5 inches of sand on them, which is good. When I first came here, I struggled with thatch on the greens to around 50mm and I'm still working out which are good and which are bad. It's still part of my learning process, but we haven't seen a temporary green yet and we've played on frost."

Summer was a real struggle for Lucy and

the team with an irrigation system in need of an upgrade. "The system is older than me at forty-seven years old now. Some greens have triple heads and they're just awful. They were the bane of my life throughout the hot summer and created constant problems; we were doing a lot of the watering manually, but luckily we managed. There is definitely some major investment needed, to the point where I want to say to the club 'let's drop all the winter projects and re-invest in new heads on the greens,

install new PVC pipes and generally give it a good overhaul'; at present, we are just constantly fixing leaks."

During summer, the greens are cut daily at 3mm with an old Toro 3250 Greensmaster and run over with the Tru Turf roller to improve ball speed and roll. In the winter, the height of cut is lifted to 5mm and only cut when needed (which has been a lot with the growth we have had this winter). Lucy likes to run the tractor-mounted GreenTek sarel roller over the greens and, once a month, she will use the Toro Procore with 8mm tines at a depth of 4 inches. Then, three times a year they will use the Verti-Drain 7316 at a depth of 8 inches. In Autumn, they pulled out 5 inch cores and replaced with an 80/20 rootzone mix. The team brush the greens with a tractor mounted V brush rather than choosing to scarify (with the heat we had last summer); this flicks all the unwanted debris from the base of the greens.

Whilst out on the course, I noticed a lot of disruption from worm casts and birds, and asked if this is a big problem. "Yes; worms and worm casts are a big concern, I have just started to look at! I'm currently investigating a product called Angus Downcast, which I'm being advised on by Ray Hunt from ALS. I'm tempted to use



I absolutely love my job. I loved the course; the members were great and it was such a wonderful course where I also played some nice golf



Course history

The current clubhouse is on the site of a former castle which was built in the early 1700s. There is still speculation that, a Wenvoe Castle known to exist in the mid-1500s, was its predecessor and reputed to have been burned down by Owain Glyndwr, a potent Welsh nationalist who led the rebellion against the occupying English forces at that time.

The buildings and land forming the golf course were owned by the Thomas family who accumulated wealth and significant influence as they gradually passed from affluence to extravagance fuelled by a desire to be both Members of Parliament and landscapers on a grand scale. It is possible that, at that time, the early seeds of a golf course were beginning to emerge with records showing the area of the front nine holes was known as 'The Gathers' and the back nine aptly called 'The Lawns'.

The Thomas family eventually paid the price for their extravagant lifestyle and, in 1774, were forced to sell land and property and Wenvoe Castle passed into the hands of Peter Birt who made his personal fortune from coal and canals in Yorkshire. Mr Birt immediately set about dismantling the buildings on the site, rebuilding in its place a mansion house with castellated battlements with the front of the new 'castle' measuring some 374 feet long. This was the only mansion house built in Wales that was designed by Robert Adams. The Birt family married into the Jenner family, who later became involved in the creation of the golf course.

However, in 1910 there was a severe fire which destroyed almost all of the Birt-built Wenvoe Castle, with only the East Pavilion, the Stables and Archway Tower remaining intact. These remaining buildings are still enough to provide the elegance and grace of a Country Mansion House and enjoy protection as a Grade II Listed Building.

The buildings took on a new lease of life as a clubhouse when the golf course was opened in July 1936 by the Rev. Hugh Jenner, the club's first president and benefactor over many years.

The outbreak of World War II had a dramatic effect on the golf course. The top floor of the clubhouse was requisitioned, and the back nine holes were ploughed up and commanded to produce cereals. By early 1941, club meetings were cancelled because of air raids and blackouts and this fear was not without justification as bombs actually fell on the fifth fairway causing considerable damage.

After the war, it took some considerable time to regain the land for golfing purposes, and it was not until 1956 that the full 18 holes finally came back into play and, by 1958, a water supply had been installed to every green.

Over the years, improvements to the course have been carefully planned and implemented. A demanding layout has been developed through the planting of significant numbers of trees, particularly on the back nine holes. Additional bunkers were strategically placed to supplement the natural hazards such as the lakes. The result demands good course management by the player and a stern but fair and enjoyable test of golf. Adjustment of the tees has enabled the length of the course to be maximised, and the course has now been extended to championship standard of 6544 yards from the back tees.

it this year, with a turf hardener leading up to winter, but it's something I need to speak to Ray more about. At the moment, it's just a matter of switching the greens every morning."

With more and more fungicides being removed from the market, Lucy would like to incorporate more bent grasses into the greens. "The greens are 60% bent, 30% poa annua and the other 10% is a bit of everything. You can just see the poa knocking off now and I just think it would be good to fill those gaps a little bit more, especially with the way it's going with pesticides. We are going to have to get a bit more

protection through species rather than relying on chemicals."

Lucy is currently using up a stockpile of fertiliser that she inherited from the previous head greenkeeper and, once this has been used, she will look to put a fertiliser programme together. "I have just bought a winter tonic of SeaAction Liquid Seaweed and Turf Hardener for the greens and I'm just waiting for a spray window. In the next month or two, I will sit down and look at the brochures in the office to see what the best options are available before making my decisions based around price, products, reliability and



Tree carving from 1944

Women in turfcare

In an era of equality, we at Pitchcare don't wish to be seen as singling out females in the industry. However, in a male-dominated profession, we wanted to ask Lucy how she feels about it.

How do you find being a woman in a male dominated industry?

- Most in the industry have been welcoming
- I believe I have had to work harder and prove myself
- Don't be put off by the few negative comments out there
- You could say we work smarter

Have you experienced any adversity whilst in the job towards yourself?

- People's perceptions - this is where we need to be visible
- When enquiring about lift capacity on tractors, I was asked 'what colour do you want it in love'? I found this unprofessional and answered not yours
- In interviews, I have always been asked, 'can you lift heavy things?' and 'I know we shouldn't ask but do you have children?'

Do you enjoy the Job?

- I love the job! Therefore, I hate that so many women are missing out on this great industry

What are your thoughts on getting more women interested in working in the industry?

- I don't think it's just women. There seems to be a whole recruitment shortage and taking away 50% of the population makes it harder. The turf industry needs to push the sector as a whole. I believe most greenkeepers fall into the industry because they played golf, or a family member did the job ... not many grew up wanting to be greenkeepers. Again, this is where visibility comes into it and I think TV coverage of tournament set-ups may be helping

What advice do you have for any women who are interested in a career in groundsmanship?

- Give it a try! Clubs are screaming out for volunteers or seasonal help, which is a great place to start. Then, if you enjoy it, look at it becoming a career. There is lots of information and contacts out there that would help, but don't be put off
- Too good a profession to be missing out
- I hope seeing me on the surface - someone who they can relate to - provides motivation



agronomic advice."

Lucy has a combination of everything when it comes to machinery. "Some of it has been purchased outright and some on hire purchase. We have a mixed fleet of ages in the shed which looks good but, on the other hand, it's not so good. My four biggest pieces of kit are less than three years old, then I have a ten-year-old greens mower and a Toro Workman. I'm not complaining though as there are definitely people worse off than me. It's something I will need to sit down with the club and work out in the future."

Lucy likes to have regular talks with her staff about training and health and safety. "We regularly have little chats on various aspects of the job and share ideas. When new machinery comes in, we all have compliance training from the dealer whilst they go through all the features of the machine. We have a dynamic risk assessment process so all staff know where they can and can't go working; this is made up of red, amber and green zones. I feel, training wise, we are all pretty much up to speed."

Lucy believes there are too many

clubs taking advantage of passionate greenkeepers. "Most love their job and hate to leave on a Friday with the course not looking its best, so if you are understaffed, the first thing you are going to do is make up that shortfall. There's a lot of stressed, overworked greenkeepers out there, and there shouldn't be. I think there are still too many people who don't recognise the skill and the professionalism within greenkeeping. The only way to get members to understand what we do is through education, e.g. by inviting them down to the sheds to look around and get involved. Since I have been here, I have had the Greens Chairman, General Manager and Captain in to look at the problems first hand, rather than discuss it in the clubhouse, which better exposes them to our problems."

Lucy is quite active within BIGGA. "I'm Chairman of the South Wales section and I sit on regional boards, so for me, promoting the industry is way up there. I believe we need to encourage more young people into our industry; regardless of gender."



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Wheatley Golf Club

Greenkeeper - Born and Bred!



Wheatley Golf Club lies on the outskirts of Doncaster, South Yorkshire, sandwiched between the leisurely River Don and the busy M18. David Mears recently met the club's Course Manager **Roger Stillwell** to discover more about his greenkeeping heritage and the ongoing work being carried out at this fine parkland course

arrived on a bitterly cold but sunny morning and received a warm welcome from Roger, who has been at Wheatley for eight years. We took advantage of the sun and cloudless sky to tour the course, chatting initially about the 'Born & Bred' label. Roger grew up in a golf environment and, throughout his life, has seen much of golf courses, not just in England, but Wales, Ireland, Germany and Spain.

He was born in Sussex where his father was a head greenkeeper. His grandfather also was a head greenkeeper; obviously, greenkeeping is in the family blood! So, when I asked "was there one person who inspired you?" there was only one answer: "My father!" He remembers when the family

moved to Wales and his father was appointed Head Greenkeeper at Royal Porthcawl Golf Club: "I wanted to be involved, so dad found jobs for me to do and my interest really grew."

After a time, the family moved to Ireland when Roger's father became Head Greenkeeper at The Royal Dublin Golf Club. Roger maintained his now avid interest in greenkeeping and, following school when fifteen/sixteen, he started an apprenticeship at the club. After two years, his father became self-employed as a managing consultant, with Roger joining him, predominantly in a "hands on" capacity. This led to a contract in Germany and involved the German Open. Further work in Europe followed and Roger enjoyed working for the



Roger Stillwell out on the course



Golfers at the original Wheatley Golf Club

European Tour for seventeen years.

During this time, he studied for Scotvec with SRUC Elmwood, obtaining first in class for three years. Spain then beckoned with an offer of the Course Manager's position at the PGA Catalunya Resort in Girona. After a few years, Roger moved to Murcia as Course Manager and to be part of the new project at Roda Golf and Beach Resort. Five years on, the decision was made to return to the UK, following an offer of the Course Manager's position at Wheatley golf club.

Roger is in control of budgets and, following agreement with a supportive Greens Committee, has free rein to spend responsibly; he has no complaints.

The Club, Course and Staff

Wheatley Golf Club was designed by leading golf course architect George Duncan and came into existence in May 1914. Originally, it was located in the splendid 103 acre grounds of Wheatley Hall (built in 1680), at that time owned by Sir William Cooke, when he moved out and leased land and part of the hall to the golf club. However, as upkeep of the by now deteriorating building had become too much for the golfers, the decision was made to relocate the club to their current home on Armthorpe Road, just slightly to the north-east of Doncaster town centre, in 1933 where it has stood ever since. The hall and land were subsequently sold.

The fast running course, laid over sandy terrain is in two loops of nine which finish outside the clubhouse. It measures the considerable distance of 6398 yards from the tee on the first hole to the pin on the eighteenth, for which it offers a par of 71, a good indication of the challenges in store for you!

Laid out on luxurious parkland, predominantly heathland, it is fairly flat overall, but there are plenty of hazards to keep you on your toes. It has been said to be "One of Yorkshire's better courses, but often doesn't get the recognition it deserves"!



The greenkeeping team l-r: Roger Stillwell, Gordon Spencer, Matthew Hodgkinson, James Critchlow, Harry Hudson, Paul Wildsmith (not in shot, college)

Roger, the longest serving member, is ably assisted by the following greenkeeping team:

- Matthew Hodgkinson, Assistant Greenkeeper - golf and football experience, two years at the club
- Paul Wildsmith, Greenkeeper (Training) - landscaping experience, four years at the club

- Gordon Spencer, Greenkeeper - building experience, three years at the club
- James Critchlow, Greenkeeper - landscaping experience, two years at the club
- Harry Hudson, Greenkeeper (Training) - Apprentice - straight from school, three years at the club

Wheatley does not employ a workshop

technician as Roger is competent in regular work, including cylinder grinding. Basic maintenance work is carried out in-house, i.e. oil and filter changes, etc. All machines are sent away for major maintenance and warranty work.

Roger describes the soil profile as sandy, gravelly loam. Greens and tees require plenty of aeration. The team started using an Ecosol aerator to drill and fill six of the



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Toro Triflex 3400 11 Blade for approaches (summer height 7mm winter 9mm)

Toro Triflex 3400 8 Blade for tees (summer height 10mm winter 12mm)

John Deere 7700a fairway unit (summer height 12mm winter 18mm)

John Deere 1600 Turbo Wam rough unit (75mm all year round)

Toro 3500d Groundmaster Rotary Sidewinder for semi rough (35mm)

2 x bunker machines - 1 Toro and 1 John Deere

John Deere 2500b dedicated to the vibro rollers

John Deere 2500e dedicated to Greentek verticutters and scarifiers

John Deere Pro Gator

John Deere E Gator

Kubota Mini Digger

John Deere 4520 with front loader

John Deere 4520

John Deere 3720

Amazone for non-maintained rough clearance during the winter

John Deere TC 125 Core Collector

Bear Cat tractor mounted chipper

300l Sprayer

Turfco wide spin topdresser

Imants Shockwave

Wiedenmann Terra Spike

Agrimetal tractor mounted blower

The machinery was on contract, but now this is purchased outright. The club buy small items locally, but all machinery through a main dealer. Whilst you'll see there is a mixture of Toro and John Deere machines, there is no loyalty to a single brand; as Roger says: "we choose the best kit for the job at the best price. One piece of kit that has significantly helped to improve our playing surfaces has been the Thatch-Away Verticutters and scarifiers; superb!"

Roger is looking forward to hiring a vert-drain for drill and fill to aid aeration in winter: "I'd say that a Hydro-Ject would be top of my wish list."



Inside the new irrigation pump house

greens last year with impressive results. The machine penetrates to 31cm into compacted layers and back fills instantly with soil amendment. The machine does not damage the turf surface, and allows you to put it back into play within an hour. The team will repeat the process on a further six greens this year!

The Hunter irrigation system, installed within the last three years and housed inside a dedicated pump-house, is proving to be paying dividends. The system irrigates greens, tees, approaches and fairways; "Absolutely brilliant!" says Roger, "And I can control it from a mobile!"

The course, along with many others in this country, has experienced torrential rain in more recent years. Flooding has occurred but, fortunately, this clears usually within two hours when rain has ceased.

There used to be issues with airflow, but the team have remedied this with most areas cleared of bracken and other growth. There just remains one small section to tackle as soon as is practical (see before and after shots).

A small practice area is maintained by the greenkeeping team. No other facilities are provided for members other than the usual clubhouse ones ... but there is a bar!

Maintenance Regimes (see boxed item)

All team members are able to carry out mowing and basic tasks but, as seen in the

team list, each has his own skill set which enables more specialist work to be carried out by those with relevant skills and experience. Most work, including spraying and construction is carried out by the team with very little requiring outsourcing. Presentation ranks very high and all are committed to maintaining the high standard expected. Pride in what is achieved is clearly evident.

Ongoing yearly seasonal renovations will include:

Spring - hollow tining

Summer - micro-tining monthly

Autumn - Shockwave, double scarify

Winter micro-tine greens

Bunkers require ongoing renovations and this is a project I witnessed at first hand during my visit.

"All bunkers are susceptible to flooding through erosion and silt build-up" says Roger. "So, we carefully dig and find the original sand under the course to ascertain bunker depth. We then use bunker-lining turf (prevents stone lift), grassing the banks to reduce new sand pollution." I asked about other bunker methods/products recently introduced and Roger said that he had researched and seen one particular installation. He feels that for Wheatley, the method he's employed works well.



Before bramble clearance



After bramble clearance between the 2nd and 4th



Renovation work on two bunkers on the 7th green

“Naturally, we have to work within budgetary constraints for renovations of course, but do not seem to be experiencing problems” says Roger.

We discussed changing weather patterns and what effect these had. Roger’s comments were: “Changing weather patterns have had a dramatic effect; the seasons are definitely shifting. There has been more torrential rain, so there’s more erosion and flooding; hence turfed bunker banks. Summers are now longer and warmer with harsh sun creating burn-off. Fortunately, some of this has been mitigated to an extent by the use of our new irrigation system - a good insurance policy! We take soil samples regularly to check what work is required.”

“We hold regular monthly Greens Committee meetings and present a report. All members are kept up to date too, as we place the meeting news and other information on Intelligent Golf for them all to see.”

One matter that is of importance to the club is keeping abreast of and meeting the requirements of current legislation. Roger and his team are compliant and stay

informed by a Health & Safety Officer employed by the club. “We have a water recycling wash system, have the latest PPE, recycle and/or dispose of waste correctly and ensure certificates necessary are up to date, e.g. spraying. All the team are trained in First Aid and we have a defibrillator in the club-house.”

“All of the greenkeeping team have undertaken requisite training and this is ongoing. Two of the team are currently in training programmes at Askham Bryan College. Harry Hudson, now in his third year with us and an apprentice, is proving to us that the system is working!”

Pests and diseases

“We spot spray weeds to reduce chemical usage and use nematodes for eradication of Chafer grubs” says Roger. “The two predominant diseases would be anthracnose in late summer and fusarium autumn through winter. This winter has been worse than usual!”

“We do not suffer too much from animal nuisance. We like foxes; they help keep rabbits down. We rarely see geese, but on occasions we need to get the mole man in.”

Weekly work list during the growing season at Wheatley Golf Club

Greens cut daily

Approaches cut three times per week with boxes

Fairways cut three times per week with boxes

Tees cut three times per week with boxes

Full rake of bunkers, greenside by hand and fairway bunkers with machine twice per week. Checked on Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday for footprints

Cut bunker banks once per week

Holes changed three times per week

Semi rough cut twice per week

Rough cut fully once per week and high growth areas twice per week

Verticut greens once per week

Brush fairways and approaches once per month

Hollow core with the Wiedenmann once a year using the 18mm hollow tines

Topdress lightly every 4-6 weeks

Divot tees once per week

Solid tine monthly with Wiedenmann using 8mm tines

Fertilise greens and tees with granules three times per year.

Fertilise with liquids when required between granule applications

Apply granular feed to all fairways and worn areas at the start of the season, then apply liquid feed with growth regulator to fairways through the growing season

Blow clippings as and when required to keep surfaces clean

Strim around trees, course furniture as and when required

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Getting Personal

Roger Stillwell - a couple of Winstons and a pair of brothers - could be one hell of a dinner party!

Who are you? Roger Stillwell, Course Manager at Wheatley Golf Club.

Family status? Married, with a daughter in university.

Who's your hero and why? Seve, great inspiration, charisma.

What would you change about yourself? Lose about five stone!

What's your guilty pleasure? Watching movies while eating Haagen Dazs Belgian chocolate ice cream.

What's been the highlight of your career so far? Being able to work for the European Tour preparing the courses for the great players in the early days like Seve, Faldo, Monty, Woosnam etc.

What are your pet peeves? Golfers who are disrespectful to the course.

If you could go anywhere right now, where would it be? Mexico.

What's the best part of your job? Working outdoors.

... and the worst? Watching the golfers disrespect the hard work which goes into looking after the course.

Do you have a lifetime ambition? Pay off all debts and travel the world.

Which three albums would you take to a desert island? Dark side of the moon, Queen's Greatest Hits and the Beautiful South.

Who would you choose to spend a romantic evening with? Margo Robbie ... best change that to the wife!!!

If you won the lottery, what is the first thing you would do? Pay off the mortgage and go around the world first class.

What would you consign to Room 101 and why? Bureaucrats who ban products from their offices and do not see the actual reality of what is happening in real life.

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

Winston Churchill, Ray Winston, the Krays.

If you could be anyone for a day, who would it be and why? Quentin Tarantino, to try and figure out what goes through his head!!

Do you have any bad habits? Snore like a train.

... Or any good ones? Very generous.

Do you go to bed worrying about the next day's workload?

Not really, just depends on what's on at the time.

What are you reading at the moment? - hard copy or online?

Rattle, by Fiona Cummins. About a serial killer.

What's the best advice you have ever been given? You can count all of your friends on one hand.

What's your favourite smell? Fresh cut grass.

What do you do in your spare time? I've taken up boxing and love it, going to the local, looking after my tropical fish and don't mind cooking.

What's the daftest work related question you have ever been asked? There are too many, but a good one was: "why can't you heat the water in the irrigation system to defrost the greens?" Then: "have you found gold yet?" While digging out bunkers, or another: "are you filling that bunker in?" While clearly you're digging it bigger.

What's your favourite piece of kit? Amazone.

What three words would you use to describe yourself? Understanding, fair, clinically obese.

What talent would you like to have?

Be able to predict the weather for the coming two weeks, as our weather forecasters can't tell you what's happening tomorrow accurately.

What law/legislation would you like to see introduced? Not printable.



Ecology and Environment

The greenkeeping team encourages wildlife, flowers and grasses. Foxes seem to be a help rather than a hindrance and birds of prey are regularly spotted. We spotted three in the time I was there. The team puts up bird boxes each year and there are beehives too behind the sheds. The team is fortunate to have assistance from a select few members who impart their specialist knowledge and offer practical help with strategic planting and other environmental initiatives.

About our industry

Discussing the state of the industry, Roger raised two thoughts: He believes that the increasing demands

being placed on greenkeepers generally appears to be causing raised stress issues. The other is that the help from certain fungicides and insecticides is being reduced with the withdrawal of certain products with no real alternatives available.

As with many in the industry, Roger is of the same opinion in that greenkeepers are undervalued!

BTME each January is where the team always visits, and perhaps one or two others.



View from behind the 12th

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Ringway Golf Club

Taking on the challenge

Established in 1909, Ringway Golf Club is generally regarded as one of the finest parkland courses in Cheshire. A stern but fair test for golfers of all abilities, it boasts commanding views across to Manchester, the Lancashire hills and Derbyshire Peaks. The club is proud of the Harry Colt designed, par 71 course which measures 6482 yards. Lee Williams visits the course to meet with their new Course Manager, **Richard Stephens**



Regularly chosen for regional finals, Ringway Golf Club has most recently hosted the Cheshire Men's Match Play Championships and the Northern Qualifying Round of the prestigious Brabazon Trophy for amateur golfers.

The clubhouse sits at the top of the course on Hale Mount and affords extensive views across Cheshire and the Pennines. It is a modern facility that was rebuilt after a disastrous fire in 1987 which destroyed the original buildings.

Just a stone's throw from Manchester Airport, in Hale Barns, Altrincham, I meet

up with Richard (Richie) Stephens, Course Manager at Ringway Golf Club. Richie has been at the club for three years (previously at Flixton Golf Club) and he is enjoying the challenge at this prestigious course.

It's the middle of winter, and there are still a lot of projects Richie and his team are working on. Before we sit down and discuss this in detail in Richie's office, he is kind enough to switch the radiators on, so I can warm up when we get back from looking around the course; the plan being to look at the ongoing works being carried out and take a few photos. I'm very glad of this as I'm definitely feeling the cold these days; I must

be getting soft!

The club has recently employed a new general manager. This led to a meeting to discuss what direction the club was going in and what could be done to improve the course. The general opinion was that the tees needed improving as a matter of priority.

Richie explains; "We have set up a programme of improvements where we are doing six, six and six over three years, so all eighteen sets of tees - men's and ladies. They will be drained, where necessary, but mainly they will all be relevelled with the help of BPG Contractors Ltd from Oldham and



If you have a dream job, Ringway is that place that you perhaps didn't know about that ticks all the boxes. I don't know if it's the endpoint, but it's certainly the type of club I was aiming for when I first got into the industry



We have got a very sensitive course with it being so old, so we like to give it that feel when we design new features



The AFT 45 trencher digs the channels for the new irrigation pipes

and Aspect Turf from Leeds; all done in an impressive three years. In the fourth year, we are hoping to complete our 18-hole Orange course - a four-thousand-yard short course within the main golf course - with all new tees." They were putting the finishing touches to the first six main tees whilst I was there.

One of the most significant projects being

carried out, which will also continue over the next three years, is the replacement of the 57-year-old irrigation system, which was put under a lot of strain in last summer's drought.

"This is a big outlay for the club, so we have decided to split it up. To help reduce costs, we will do the main line this year using our own AFT 45 trencher to dig the channels for the new pipe, which the irrigation

company will then lay. The pipe will link into our old greens system. Alongside that, we will have quick couplers at tees, so they can be irrigated next year. The year after, all greens will be fitted with valve in head sprinklers, so we can do a lot more efficient watering, enabling us to control individual heads so we can save water by focusing it where it is needed. The final stage will see all eighteen tees irrigated, which will be a first for the club. It will all be controlled on a computer system, which will be fantastic."

It doesn't stop there for Richie as they also have a few side projects on the go. "We have done six hundred metres of drainage this year that is pretty much standard in our project's budget. We are doing three main pathways as well; these are just basic MOT (Ministry of Transport) aggregate with a limestone crush top. They are mainly to cope with increased buggy traffic and to bridge wet areas through the winter. The paths were well received last year, so we are looking to eventually path a full nine holes giving what we call a safe buggy route. This will then span the whole of the course, enabling buggy use all year."

Planning is already in place to start on a bunker renewal programme, which is due to begin after the tees have been completed, but they have already made some steps towards it by filling in at least six bunkers this year. This was done with strategic improvements in mind; the changes are all architect approved and it's all part of a long-term plan. It's fair to say Richie and his team have a lot of work cut out for them over the next four years.

After completing his A-Levels, Richie wanted to pursue a career in groundsmanship and was offered a place on a three-year HND course in golf course management. His original intention, after completing this course, was to be a football/cricket groundsmen, but he found himself working in golf as he felt the wages, at the time, were better. His first job after leaving college was at Lee Park Golf Club as an assistant greenkeeper, which was on a short term contract as he had signed up to go to



Richard 'Richie' Stephens



One of three new pathways

Ohio State University's TOP Program.

The first club he worked at in the USA was Whistling Straights. "Back then it wasn't really heard off, but now it's going to host the Ryder Cup in 2020. I then moved to South Carolina to Harbour Town Golf Club, which was an idyllic place to work and live. The course is on the PGA Tour, so I got to experience prepping for the tournament. I was twenty-two years old at the time, and it's something I won't ever forget." Richie then

moved back home, where he met up with some friends at Carden Park and was also fortunate to bump into Andy Campbell, the club's course manager.

"He asked me what I was doing as they were looking for staff. At the time, I was out of work but did have a few interviews lined up. Andy told me to 'get up to HR and we will sort you out'. That was great, and I started the week after!"

After a year and a half, Richie felt he

needed to push on with his career ambitions. "I was actively looking for a first assistant role so, when Paul Massey from Frodsham Golf Club gave me a call, and offered me my first assistant position, I jumped at the opportunity. I loved working at Frodsham with a great group of lads, plus it was a nice course with a good reputation at that time."

Richie then applied for the head greenkeeper job at Flixton Golf Club after the deputy head at Frodsham had

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Getting Personal

Richie Stephens - on an evening with the Beatles and so many heroes

Who are you? Richie Stephens, Course Manager at Ringway Golf Club.

Family status. Married to Jo and have Eliza, 7, and Francis, 2.

Who's your hero and why? Loads of heroes; mainly in turf. Mike Cove, ex Head Groundsman at Liverpool College (for getting me into the industry). Dennis Mottram, ex tutor at Reaseheath and Keith Homes, ex Head Greenkeeper, Cheshire Course at Carden Park who taught me a lot about traditional methods. Professor Frank Rossi at Cornell University (USA) and host of frankly speaking on Turfnet radio. His show forces me to think beyond my level.

What would you change about yourself? I have dyslexia which means any sort of paperwork, reading or writing takes ages.

What's been the highlight of your career so far? It was in 2001 and my first PGA tournament experience. I finished cutting the tees at Harbour Town before celebrating my birthday that night. The next morning I cut the approaches for the playoff and watched the finish on the famous 18th green full with pride.

If you could go anywhere right now, where would it be? Any beach bar on Hilton Head Island, SC, USA.

What's the best part of your job? Having a different challenge every day.

... and the worst? Paperwork.

Do you have a lifetime ambition? I've been lucky to do a lot of construction and to be part of five full build/renovations, but I would like to be part of a golf course construction from start to finish.

Favourite record, and why? I love all types of music but Paul Weller "You Do Something To Me" was my wedding song. It's probably in most of my playlists.

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

If you were to describe yourself as a musical instrument, what would you be and why? Bass guitar. For the most part, I'm in the background. I am simple and straight forward but can end up wandering off in my own world from time to time.

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



Beatles music so it's got to be John, Paul and George (sorry no room for Ringo).

If you could be anyone for a day, who would it be and why? My childhood dream was to be any Everton Striker, on any match day at Goodison Park.

Do you have any bad habits? I eat too much chocolate.

... or any good ones? Switching the kettle on any time I pass it. Which is never as often as I'd like.

Do you go to bed worrying about the next day's workload? Yes, I think most people who care about what they do can't help it. But I try to keep the effects to a minimum by constantly making lists.

What are you reading at the moment? Creating Classics: The Golf Courses of Harry Colt.

What's the best advice you have ever been given? The three most important things in greenkeeping ... aeration, aeration, aeration - Denis Mottram.

What's your favourite smell? Deep Heat. It reminds me of that feeling of getting ready to play any sport. It's the best feeling.

What's the daftest work related question you have ever been asked? As someone who constantly asks stupid questions, I think if you don't know the answer it can't be daft. I was once asked why the course was closed, when stood in ankle deep water which surrounded a green and covered most of the fairway. I hoped they were taking the mick, but you never can tell.

What three words would you use to describe yourself? Dad, husband, turfie.

What's your favourite piece of kit? Amazone proffihopper. It's awesome!

What talent would you like to have? Play guitar like Slash from Guns N' Roses.

What law/legislation would you like to see introduced? The word 'brexit' should be banned after 1st April 2019.



persuaded him to apply. "I did the interviews but didn't get the job. To be fair, it was the first time I had been disappointed, but thought 'oh well, I mustn't be ready for it.' Then, a few months later, I got a phone call saying the guy who took the job had backed down, taking a position elsewhere, and would I be interested in taking over which, obviously, I did. I learned a lot in the ten years I worked at Flixton as we had a small staff, so we all had to share duties. Alongside this, I was managing budgets and taking on all aspects of Health and Safety for the club."

This led to him taking the position as course manager at Ringway. "If you have a dream job, Ringway is that place that you perhaps didn't know about that ticks all the boxes. I don't know if it's the endpoint, but it's certainly the type of club I was aiming for when I first got into the industry. I wanted





We must be proactive. I don't think there is any other way now there is no chemical that will gives 100% control with iprodione going this year and propiconazole next year

Ringway, NVQ Level 3 Sportsturf, PA 1, 2 and 6; Jez Quirk, Second Senior Greenkeeper, twenty-nine years at Ringway, NVQ Level 3 Sportsturf, Chainsaw CS 30/31/32 and First Aid at Work; Matt Corbishley, First Assistant Greenkeeper, eight years at Ringway, NVQ Level 3 Sportsturf, PA 1, 2 and 6, CS 30/31/32; Steve Giles, greenkeeper, twenty-six years at Ringway, NVQ Level 2 Sportsturf; Will Cummings, greenkeeper, two years at Ringway, NVQ Level 2 Sportsturf, PA 1 and 6, CS 30/31 and First Aid at Work; Seb Dolezyczek, mechanic, ten years at Ringway, Electrical & Mechanical Engineering diploma, basic Toro and John Deere mechanic's certificates, Hunter Grinder certified, TIG/MIG welding certificate and CS 30/31/32.

All staff regularly attend greenkeeping workshops and have the basic greenkeeping Health & Safety certificate and basic First Aid certificate.

Richie has an annual subscription package with the STRI who carry out tests once a year. He uses these to put improved performance measures in place. They currently have a course architect, Frank Pont from Infinity Golf Design in Holland, working on some projects around the course. "We have got a very sensitive course with it being so old, so we like to give it that (Colt) feel when we design new features."

Fifteen of the main course's eighteen greens are soil based. The remaining

three have been reconstructed to USGA specification with the old sod put back. "If anyone has managed that before, they will know the problems that brings with infiltration through the top and poor rooting, so we are always fighting with them. They were put in because of their position and were severely hampered greens anyway. We have built two practice facility greens as 50/50s which are really good. We used washed turf to build them; they perform well in wet conditions."

When it comes to maintenance of the greens, the priority is plenty of aeration. Richie explains, "Anything from putting the Toro ProCore over them, slitting in the winter and verti-draining five or six times a year with the thinner tines; depths will vary depending on the hardness of the ground in the winter. When it's soft, we try and go down to the 10 inch mark. In the summer, it tends to be

to be at a higher-end members course where we had enough budget and staff to continue to move the club forward, but one that wasn't a propriety club, so I could work for people who wanted to put every bit of money back into their golf club. This what I have at Ringway."

He went through a stringent interview process to get the position, and knew he was up against some good greenkeepers so he felt very fortunate, at thirty-seven years old, to be at Ringway as course manager.

His qualifications include NVQ Level 2 sports turf, HND in Golf Course Management, and the Ohio TOP Program, plus short courses he has attended with Pitchcare and BIGGA and PA1, 2 and 6 spraying certificates.

Richie's staff includes Gary Sykes, First Senior Greenkeeper, twenty-seven years at



What's in the shed

- John Deere 220 pedestrian mowers x 5
- John Deere 2500e triples x 2
- Toro 3520 triples x 2
- GreenTech verticut and Sarel roller units
- Greens Iron 3900
- Amazone Profihopper
- Toro Reelmaster 3100-D Sidewinder
- Toro Reelmaster fairway mowers x 2
- Toro Groundsmaster rough mowers x 2
- Kioti Utility Vehicles x 3
- 5 tonne digger
- 3 tonne dumper
- AFT 45 trencher
- Dakota topdresser
- Sweep n Fill brush
- Kubota 40 hp tractor
- Kubota 50 hp tractor
- New Holland 30hp Boomer tractors x 2
- Wiedemann Terra Spike
- Team 400 litre sprayer
- Toro ProCore
- Hunter grinder



around 5-6 inches. Occasionally, we will go with the half inch tines and put them down at 12 inches to shake them up, because there are times when you must break up that subsoil. We are fortunate now to have a contractor (MG Turfcare) come in with the Air2G2, which now takes away the need of going down so deep. We can fracture the soil at the base level with that and we don't get the tractor marks and holes. It's a great tool that should be used in conjunction with other aeration methods, at the correct times."

Using a contractor, Richie likes to use the Imants Koro with scarifying units on the greens, going down to a depth of 20mm in

one pass to take a lot of organic matter out. "This has been really effective against the top-level thatch, which is something we are trying to reduce."

I asked Richie if this doesn't tend to disturb them quite a bit and make them look a bit iffy? "Yes, we were lucky that we did a summer renovation, and we are going to change over to a winter renovation instead; we are going to go in the back end of September this year, when we would normally go in at the beginning of August. We were able to turn the greens around after three weeks back to summer greens quality, but the questions come from golfers asking if we can do it at the end of the season. With

warmer summers/autumns, and taking some advice from the STRI, we think we can do it at the end of September, and this will be followed with the verti-drain, overseeding with a traditional creeping bentgrass seed mixture and topdressing with sand. We will also overseed in the summer as well as that is the best time for the seed to take."

Using the results from the soil tests, Richie tries to follow a fertiliser programme as best they can but, with the unusual weather in 2018, this has seen some changes in inputs. "We have hit over 110kg of nitrogen on our greens this year which is a lot over what we would normally do; we tend to be around the 80kg mark a season. We are looking to top up the other deficiencies (phosphorous and potassium) in the back end to harden them up for winter and then we will use lawn sand at 16g/m² through the winter to keep them quite acidic and harsh on the moss."

"In summer, we use a 26-0-0 High N liquid feed from April to September. I don't use any one brand, it comes down to price. Alongside this, we will use seaweed, iron products and Primo Maxx. Front and back we will use a micronised granule fertiliser at low rates, so we don't get the speckling. In March, we will use ICL Greenmaster Pro-Lite cold start 11-5-5 and, in September, a 5-5-10 with iron at 20g/m², which has



The environment is a big part of what we do now, from washdown, birds, bees and the flora



worked quite well, but this is where the extra nitrogen came from this year as we pushed it up towards 30g/m².”

This summer has also seen Richie rethink his wetting agent programme for the greens. “We have gone back to the drawing board with our wetting agents. We now use Aquatrol Zipline soil surfactant, which will be applied once a month at low rates throughout the year, but with the summer heat stress, this was upped to a fourteen day programme, which worked well.”

Richie is proactive with his disease management and follows a recommended fungicide programme from coming out of seeding at the end of August to the end of December. “We use a few different mixes, but the base products are Heritage, Dedicate, Instrata and Exteris. The final two treatments will be Banner Maxx and a Medallion mix. They are going to be a 2/1 mix, then it will flip the other way around.

This will give us some security. With the milder weather over the winter, we have been hit by fusarium, so we can’t afford it to get any worse.”

“We must be proactive. I don’t think there is any other way now; there is no chemical that gives 100% control, with iprodione going this year and propiconazole next year. That’s it, we’re done, we now effectively must anticipate disease the best we can. This year, again with the weather conditions, some people timed it right and some did not. We were unfortunate and got hit with a bout of Fusarium, so it’s just about control now.”

Richie used to cut the greens seven days a week if he could, but he now uses a cut and roll approach. “With using Primo Maxx during the summer growth periods when the growth is high, we are now able to mow around four or five times a week, and we will roll in between using a greens iron, which is a fabulous tool.



Left to right: Richard Stephens, Mat Corbishley, Steve Giles, Seb Dolezyczek, Will Cummings, Gary Sykes and Jez Quirk

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Obviously, people say you are compacting the surface, but we run the sarel roller over on a pretty much weekly basis, so we are relieving as well as rolling. Some of the new irons are coming with sarel rollers included. Eventually, we will be rolling right through the winter rather than cutting and injuring the blade of grass that you're working on and gives it a lot more protection. If we go back to fungicides, it's probably a new way of protecting the plant. Even with cutting at 4mm in the summer, we still get good pace."

Most of the machinery is owned by the club either outright or over a five-year hire purchase plan. Richie doesn't use any one supplier. He will buy a machine on what he believes is the best fit for the course. "We have a wide range of machines from Turners, Cheshire Turf Machinery, GGM Groundscare and Campey Turf Care."

Servicing and repairs are mainly carried out by Seb, their in-house mechanic. Any specialist work that he is unable to do they will pass on to a dealer.

Richie tells me that a key aspect at

Ringway is ecology. "The environment is a big part of what we do now, from washdown, birds, bees and the flora. We have BIGGA's James Hutchinson as our ecology advisor and we work to his programme. This includes the introduction of beehives, bird boxes, bat boxes, environmental corridors where we have previously had pieces of rough and joined them up to make a corridor. Now there is a lot more room for the small mammals. We can only really do stuff now that is within our time. We can't go out and extend ourselves ecology wise. We also have an ancient woodland we have to look after. The Forestry Commission backs all the tree work; we have a licence to fell trees which is very strategic, all with the environment in mind."



RINGWAY GOLF CLUB



We have set up a programme of improvements where we are doing six, six and six over three years, so all eighteen sets of tees



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The Island Golf Club

Sand dunes and salty air

Established in 1890, The Island Golf Club enjoys a unique setting bordered by sea on three sides. Links Superintendent, **Dave Edmondson**, has been at the club for six years and spoke to us about his impressive career to date and club developments



I believe that there are many challenges ahead in terms of water restrictions, the withdrawal of certain pesticides and, of course, changing weather patterns that seem to be of a more regular occurrence

Besides being one of the first twelve golf clubs founded in Ireland, it is the third oldest in Dublin and predates Portmarnock Golf Club by four years. A classic links course set in a rugged terrain and nestled between the highest sand dunes along the east coast, the Island is favourably located in the remote and tranquil Estuary of Donabate and Malahide. We wanted to find out more about the club, its current status and of course delve into the vast industry experience of Dave Edmondson.

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

After playing golf as a junior and my dreams of making the European tour fading by the day, I decided the turf industry was something I was keen on getting involved with (after talking to the greenstaff at my local club in Lancashire). During the school holidays, from the age of fourteen until sixteen, I helped out the greenstaff at my

local club and enjoyed every aspect of it. As it was only a small crew, I was given the opportunity from an early age to carry out tasks such as hand mowing tees, strimming, cutting surrounds and also setting up the golf course.

After leaving school, I enrolled on a first diploma in Horticulture that I studied at Myerscough College. Following on from that, I did a three year National Diploma which was fantastic as I got an opportunity to do two six month placements at The Wisley and Luttrellstown Castle here in Dublin.

After meeting my wife in Dublin, who worked at the same golf club at the time, we stayed in Ireland for a year and moved to Loughrea as Sarah's mother had unfortunately passed away and she wanted to be close to her father during that tough family time.

I worked in a men's clothes shop in County Galway for a year, before returning to Preston for six years where I got a position at Penwortham Golf Club. The club was going through some exciting times

and I was involved with the the reconstruction of all greens from soil based to USGA specification, tee levelling practices, some drainage and a woodland management project.

After six years at Penwortham, four of those being a Deputy Head Greenkeeper, I got an opportunity to move to Paris to a golf club called Golf de St nom La Breteche which was an exclusive private members club near Versailles. I worked with a French speaking large team of twenty-eight staff, with only two Anglophones on the team. I really was thrown in at the deep-end and had to learn quickly.

During my time at St Nom, I worked closely with the superintendent there and was given some fantastic opportunities at the club. These included the management of two courses, a European tour event and various in house construction projects. It was a fun time in my career and one that I will always look back on and say I'm glad that I made the step to come out of my comfort zone, especially with the language barrier.





I think our industry involves working with the weather. We are lucky to be based on a free draining site here at the club, so we do tend to remain open when other sites may be closed



Links Superintendent, Dave Edmondson



Following St Nom, I applied for a job in Royal Ostend in Belgium where I was the Head Greenkeeper for nearly three years. Ostend was enjoyable and the French that I had learned in Paris was useful as the team was a split of French speaking guys and Flemish guys who thankfully spoke great English.

During my time in Belgium, we converted many bunkers to revetted style, started a species conversion to fine links grasses and made subtle improvements to the golf course. We were also the first club in Belgium to achieve GEO status.

What training and education did you undertake?

I have carried out the following courses at Myerscough College: 1st Diploma in Horticulture (studied full-time), National Diploma in Sportsturf (full-time), a Foundation Degree in Sportsturf (part-time) and a BSc (Hons) Degree in Turfgrass Science (studied online). As well as this, I hold all spraying certificates, I'm CPD registered and have carried out numerous short courses.

I am a member of the Golf Course Superintendents Association of Ireland, BIGGA and also an R&A Scholar, all of which I think are important to be a part of. I also attend Irish Links initiative days twice a year.

Was there one person who inspired you?

There have been a few people along the way who have been brilliant and really encouraging in pushing me along with my career. Too many to name really and I have been lucky enough to have great support and encouragement wherever I have worked.

Bill Warnick, my Superintendent in Paris, was excellent and I have the upmost respect for the opportunities that he gave me during my time there.

Jean Philippe Schepens, the Greens Chairman in Belgium was brilliant and it was great to pick his knowledge as he was a top guy and a very successful businessman. He really understood the route the club was following with species transition and was a smart guy.

All of the Greens Chairmen I've worked



We try our best at all times, but 2018 was an extremely challenging year. We now have more members and greenfee play than ever



4th green



View of the 10th green

with have been excellent; Brian Kennedy, John Quigley and John Prendergast. Also, the membership and committees of The Island have been so supportive over the last six years here.

Are you responsible for budgets or do you report to someone else?

I am responsible for keeping my budget on track and also work closely with my GM at The Island, John Lawler, when constructing the greens budget at the start of the financial year. All budgets, of course, have to be approved by the finance committee and ultimately the membership of the club.

About your club

The course is a Championship links with nineteen holes which is 6903 yards and a Par 71. There is also an extra par 3 in the corner of the golf course.

What is the total acreage and how is this split up?

The site is 185 acres with surfaces as follows: greens 1.1 hectares, tees 1 hectare, aprons and



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Getting Personal

Dave Edmondson - an overthinker with lots of advice

Family status. Married to Sarah.

Who's your hero and why? My dad. He's a fantastic role model.

What would you change about yourself? I sometimes have a tendency to overthink things and mull stuff over a little too much. This is something that I'm looking to rectify moving forwards.

What's your guilty pleasure? Chocolate and I do enjoy a pint of Guinness from time to time ... all in moderation.

What's been the highlight of your career so far? Early on: working the Vivendi Trophy in Paris. Bill Warnick, my boss at the time, was excellent and involved me through all of the process. Also, getting my R&A Scholarship; I'm very proud of this. Lastly, gaining my job here at the Island GC. I love this links site; it's very special.

What are your pet peeves? Bad manners - it costs nothing to be polite.

If you could go anywhere right now, where would it be? Somewhere warm maybe? Though the winter hasn't been too bad on that front.

What's the best part of your job? Seeing the links when we have everything in shape, but also seeing people having fun and enjoying our work.

... and the worst? Prolonged spring east winds and drought.

Do you have a lifetime ambition? Not really, I just want to be happy, healthy and have fun whilst I'm here.

Who would you choose to spend a romantic evening with? My wife Sarah ... the safe answer.

Favourite record. The Masterplan by Oasis.

If you won the lottery, what is the first thing you would do? Probably go on a round the world trip.

Which people, living or dead, would you invite to a dinner party? Being a Preston North End supporter I would say Tom Finney who was such a legend in Preston (where I'm from) and a down to earth bloke. Also, my wife Sarah; she'd go mad if I didn't invite her!

If you could be anyone for a day, who would it be and why? Amazon founder Jeff Bezos. I'd say you could have a lot of fun being one of the richest people in the world for the day.



Do you have any bad habits? I probably look into things a little too much. Sometimes it's not necessary.

... or any good ones? I'd like to think that I'm well organised.

Do you go to bed worrying about the next day's workload? I try not to these days as much as possible. I've spent too long in my life overthinking situations to be honest.

What are you reading at the moment? Drive. The surprising truth about what motivates. Daniel H.Pink.

What's the best advice you have ever been given? Travel and gain international experience. The world is a big place with plenty of golf courses in it. As a young greenkeeper: gain as much experience as you can over several different sites. Take what worked and what didn't and use it to your advantage when you get your own golf course. Experience the lifestyle, make friends and have fun whilst doing it.

What's your favourite smell? Freshly cut grass in the spring.

What's the daftest work related question you have ever been asked? When stood next to an irrigation satellite box ... "are there motion sensors that knock those sprinklers off when they picked us up walking down the fairway? Of course," I answered" ... "absolutely"!

What's your favourite piece of kit? I'm a big fan of the Toro 3550. It's changed the appearance of our aprons and surrounds.

What three words would you use to describe yourself? Driven, motivated, passionate.

What talent would you like to have? Being able to predict the future would be really interesting.

What law/legislation would you like to see introduced? Tougher sentences for criminals.



surrounds: 2 hectares, fairways: 9 hectares, semi-rough and walkoffs: 3 hectares.

What additional staff do you have?

I have a great team comprising Keith Byrne, Jonathan Mitchell, Gary Myers, Dan Hunter, Kevin Canavan (jointly responsible for first aid with Keith), Matty O'Rourke, Pat McGann and Alan Callaghan.

Do you employ a workshop technician?

Our Senior Greenkeeper doubles up as the course mechanic and carries out servicing and maintenance in-house.

What additional help do you get?

We use various external outlets including STRI, Ebbert and Mackenzie Golf Course Architects and Robin Hulme Associates irrigation consultants. A selection of construction firms have been used, with DAR Golf carrying out the work over the past few years.





There is nothing more satisfying than seeing the younger guys getting to know the ropes when using a new machine

classify as original greens. Some were reconstructed about eighteen years ago with a modified rootzone, dune sand and organic matter. Another was set about thirteen years ago which we refer to as the new green. Matching up playing characteristics can be a tough balance to strike at times.

Do they require any special maintenance techniques?

All surfaces are managed in line with STRI recommendations.

Do you have any additional equipment/systems at your disposal?

Irrigation on the links was upgraded in 2006 on fifteen holes, however, the remaining three holes are still using a thirty-year-old installation which can be quite challenging at times. Areas irrigated are: greens, aprons and surrounds, tees, fairways, walkways and practice ranges.

Does the course suffer from any regular natural occurrences?

As we are based in a low area of rainfall (if not the driest part of the country), maintaining turf over native dune sand with high volumes of traffic can be very challenging. We try our best at all times, but 2018 was an extremely challenging year. We now have more members and greenfee play than ever.

Are there issues with shade and air flow?

Several of our greens do not get a great deal of sunlight, more so in the winter months when the sun is low in the sky. It's amazing how many microclimates there are on this particular site.

Do you use temporary greens?

No. The frost policy of the club is that it is either a full course open or it stays closed

How would you describe the soil profile generally?

Fine native dune sand natural rootzone.

How were the greens and tees constructed?

We have several original greens that were cut out of the native landscape which I

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 Dakota 410 topdresser
 Dakota 412 fairway topdresser
 Vreedeo super compact overseeder
 Blec dimple seeder
 Kubota L050 tractor
 Toro Flex 21 hand mower x 4
 Toro 1600 tees hand mower x 2
 Toro 1000 hand mower
 Various hand tools, trimmers, rotary mowers, blowers
 Bernard express dual grinders
 Rotary machinery lift



in frosty conditions. Damage doesn't occur only to the putting surfaces; frost can cause damage to all types of playing surfaces.

Do you have a driving range/ practice facility?

We have practice facilities. Chipping green and driving range with artificial and natural turf tees.

Maintenance regimes?

Putting greens are maintained no lower than 4.5mm at any time, which increases to 6.5mm in the winter. These are cut daily during the main growing season. They receive in the region of 35 to 40kg of Nitrogen, depending on the make up of each green. Sand topdressing is regular throughout the year and we generally apply in the region of 7mm depth of fresh material per annum. Organic matter is kept around 4.5% and soil tests are carried out annually. Greens are generally overseeded with approximately 400kg of a mixture of 50% chewings fescue and 50% slender creeping fescue. Wetting agent Revolution is applied monthly throughout the growing season.

Overall, very little chemical is applied to the entire site. Aeration is generally every six weeks throughout the summer. We Hydroject with two deep aeration operations which are carried out during winter.

Aprons and surrounds maintenance is exactly the same as greens. Frequency of cut is two times per week in the main growing season with a height of cut at 8mm.

Tees maintenance is similar to greens, except we use a single application of Aqua Aid PBS 150 wetting agent per annum, divot and move markers daily. We tend to apply more granular fertiliser on tees to save time on application. These are hand-mown twice per week in the main season to 8mm.

Fairways are mown once a week in the



5th green



We're very lucky in that we suffer from very few outbreaks, though there has been a little red thread on a few greens this winter



The ProCore at work on the 2nd green



I worked with a French speaking large team of twenty-eight staff with only two Anglophones on the team. I really was thrown in at the deep end and had to learn quickly

main growing season to 11mm with the same fertiliser regime as greens. All clippings are boxed off, regular wetting agent applications and deep aeration is once per year.

Semi-roughs are generally cut once per week to 2 inches and we follow the same fertiliser and wetting agent schedule as we do for fairways.

Our course setup is quite a large one and includes: trimming holes on days they are

not changed, setting tees, divotting tees, raking bunkers and emptying bins. This is practically carried out 364 days a year. Other maintenance jobs include; tee banks, strimming, an awful lot of divotting and general presentation practices.

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

Our aim is to get every staff member carrying

out each task to the same standard. For example, there is nothing more satisfying than seeing the younger guys getting to know the ropes when using a new machine. The more tasks the guys can carry out, the more versatile the team becomes.

Where does presentation rank?

Very highly and this is an area that we always look to build on.



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What end of season and ongoing renovations do you undertake?

Over the past six years, we have overseeded the golf course and a good few tonnes of seed have been added at this stage. The dry year of 2018 showed up a few weaknesses and highlighted that we still have a way to go on a few fairways. Course improvements are carried out every year with a busy winter programme each year. Bunker renovations take place regularly, in order to keep them at the desired standard of a club of this nature.

Are renovations affected by budgets?

As with any club, budgets have to be adhered to. Within our budget we have a winter programme/budget section.

How have changing weather patterns affected what you do?

I think our industry involves working with the weather. We are lucky to be based on a



free draining site here at the club, so we do tend to remain open when other sites may be closed.

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

Yes we monitor organic matter percentages on a yearly basis and our agronomic programme reflects the findings of these results. We also carry out nutrient analysis.

Communication?

We interact with our club members in many ways such as: Twitter (@Festucaman), regular membership newsletters and emails. I blog every couple of months for the GCSAI which is put out by the Confederation of Golf here in Ireland.

Are you working on any special projects at the moment?

As we are preparing to co-host the Amateur Championship, with Portmarnock in 2019, this winter programme is small by nature. Revetting bunkers, improving links presentations are top of the agenda.

What projects have been undertaken in recent years?

New maintenance facility, new club car park, renovating bunkers, low dune creation in several places, new first tee complex, naturalised fairway bunkers and installation of four new championship tees.

Do you offer ongoing training to your staff?

Yes, very much so. Staff are encouraged to improve themselves with education and courses. This is something the club is keen on promoting.

Machinery?

We have a five year machinery renewal programme in place. This helps us with budget predictions and allows us to gain better trade-in values when switching any of the machinery. We tend to buy direct from a manufacturer and predominantly purchase Toro machines.

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



Several of our greens do not get a great deal of sunlight, more so in the winter months when the sun is low in the sky. It's amazing how many microclimates there on this particular site



Left to right: Dan Hunter, Gary Myers, Kevin Canavan, Matty O'Rourke, Jonathan Mitchell, Alan Callaghan, Keith Byrne, Dave Edmondson. Missing from image: Pat McGann.



Toro 1650 sprayer

Both of the Dakota topdressers have been fantastic in getting sand out, on both smaller and larger areas. The Amazone Profihopper has saved us many man hours this year when cutting and collecting roughs.

For larger scale projects, we contract external course construction firms and we also contract out links verti-draining of fairways and walkways.

Pests and diseases?

We generally make one application of selective herbicide on main playing areas to control pests and weeds. We're very lucky in that we suffer from very few outbreaks, though there has been a little red thread on a few greens this winter.

As with most links golf courses, rabbits are a problem on a certain holes and these are controlled by shooting.

Ecology and environment?

On a site like the Island, local flora and fauna would be very close to my heart. We are currently following an environmental plan set out by Bob Taylor of the STRI and we maintain good relationships with Fingal County Council Environmental team.

About our industry?

I believe that there are many challenges ahead in terms of water restrictions, the withdrawal of certain pesticides and, of course, changing weather patterns that seem to be of a more regular occurrence.

I feel there are more education opportunities than ever for youngsters to participate in and associations are also doing their bit to promote our industry. It can be frustrating at times trying to get messages across to members who don't particularly understand the challenges that we face as an industry. I suppose good communication is key in getting these points across.

I don't believe we are undervalued, but we need to keep banging the drum through increased communication. We can't do this enough! The more we can show and highlight the tasks greenstaff carry out, along with the challenges that we face, the better the understanding will be.



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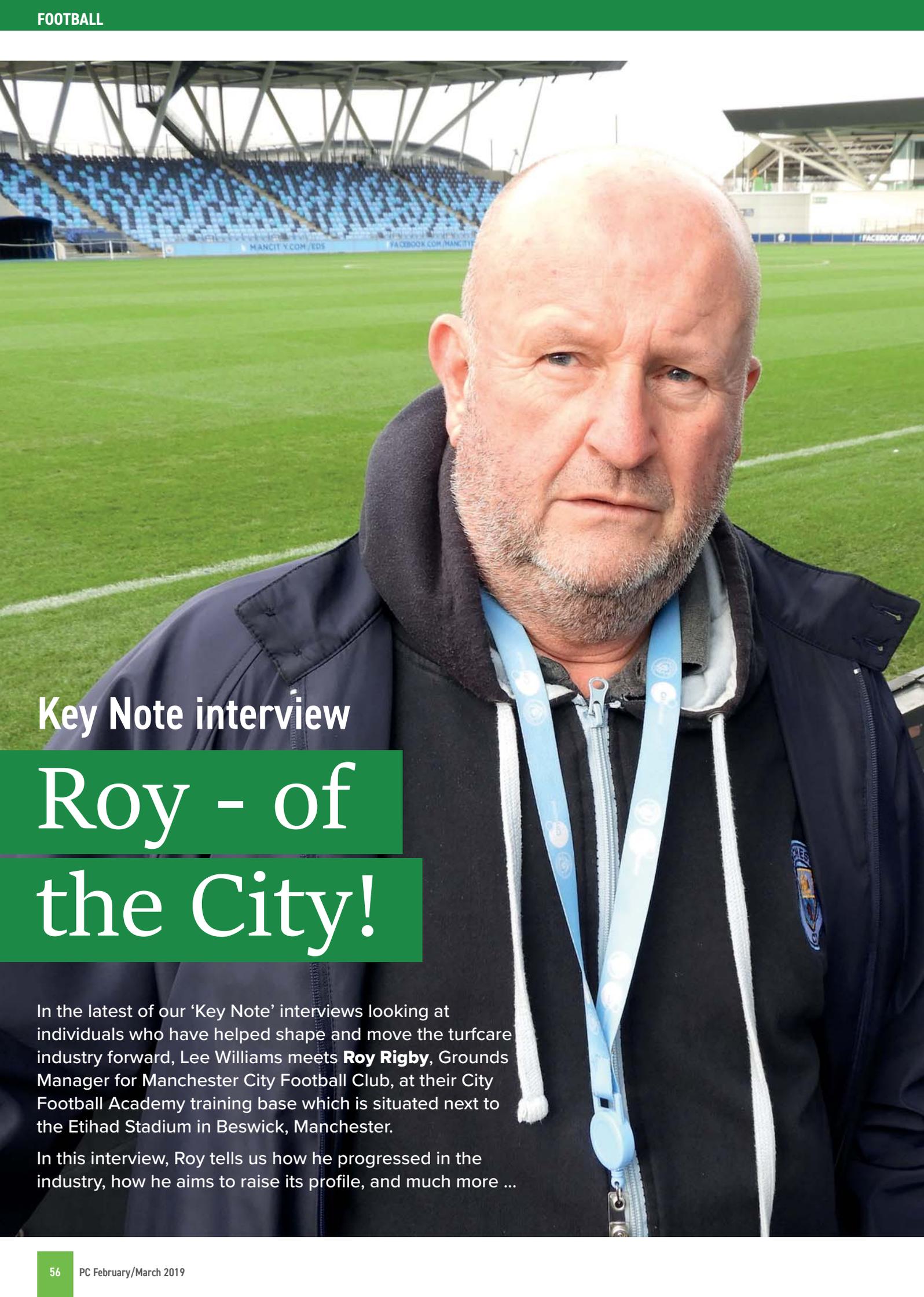


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Key Note interview

Roy - of the City!

In the latest of our 'Key Note' interviews looking at individuals who have helped shape and move the turfcare industry forward, Lee Williams meets **Roy Rigby**, Grounds Manager for Manchester City Football Club, at their City Football Academy training base which is situated next to the Etihad Stadium in Beswick, Manchester.

In this interview, Roy tells us how he progressed in the industry, how he aims to raise its profile, and much more ...



I have known Roy Rigby since 2002, when he gave me the role of assistant groundsman at Manchester City's then training base at Carrington, where he helped me develop my skills and knowledge and gave me my first management role, during the six and half years we worked together. We have kept in touch ever since, and Roy has always been on the other end of the phone whenever I have needed some advice. Only recently, in my role at Oldham Athletic AFC, he gave up his time to try and help me out. I have the utmost admiration for a man who has inspired me throughout my career so far, and I'm honoured to be in a position now to share his story.

Roy was first inspired into the industry through his love of crown green bowls when he was a young lad. "I played at a bowling club in Blackburn called Highfield Park, where I got to know the greenkeeper, George. At the age of fourteen, I was asked to play for the club in the lower leagues; that's how it all started."

Whilst Roy was playing bowls, his dad got friendly with George who told him he was looking for some help watering the green. "There was no automatic watering system at the club, so my dad let me stay out until nine at night, watering the green with a hosepipe. If I needed a rest, I would lay the hose in the middle of the green and let it run down the crown. When I was done, my dad would pick me up." Over time, Roy began helping with maintenance on the green and it was this that helped develop his passion

for looking after grass surfaces.

Whilst still at school, Roy was asked by his dad what he would like to do when he left school, and his answer was; "I want to work in grass on bowling greens".

At the age of sixteen, when Roy left school, it was time to try and find a job doing what he loved, but this wasn't an easy task in the 1970s. "I used to walk seven miles to Corporation Park on Peace Park Road, Blackburn - my parents didn't have much money at the time - to see Norman Thompson in the council offices, and ask if there were any positions available."

"I will always remember one particular Friday he told me to come and see him and he would see what he could do, but he wasn't there. I came home and was ringing wet through, and I ended up with a bad cold which put me in bed for four days. My mum wasn't happy, so she went to the corner shop to use the phone and rang Norman Thompson up. She told him that her son has been up to see him several times but, if you feel you don't want to take him on, then let him know."

Norman told his mum to ask Roy to "come to Corporation Park and he can start Monday. Tell him to bring steel toe cap boots and a bait box". This is where Roy's journey began, and it just shows, with determination, what can be achieved.

Roy's first job, for the first three weeks, was picking up litter around Corporation Park, a 3-acre site with bowling greens, landscaping and a big glass house. After this, Roy was given his official role





I used to walk seven miles to Corporation Park on Peace Park Road, Blackburn to see Norman Thompson in the council offices, and ask if there were any positions available



SGL lighting rigs



of apprentice greenkeeper/groundsman. Soon after, he went to see Norman to ask what his options were for career progression, "I told Norman I wanted to go as far as I could in the industry and was really keen to learn."

Norman explained to Roy that there were courses available, but nobody wants to go on them, but he could see that he was very keen. The only problem was he would have to travel to Myerscough College in Preston!

"I went to college once a week for four years, plus there were four or five occasions when I had to go five days on the run. I had to catch the bus, but I was able to claim the fares back."

During this time, Roy started to question if this career was for him. "As I got to the age of eighteen there were plenty of other distractions, but I started to gain a better understanding of the job, and I believe getting into this industry is one of the best decisions I ever made. I love the passion of the job and what I do. If there is one thing I'm good at it's looking after grass."

One valuable lesson Roy learned from John Welsh, one of his colleagues and

the man who helped him whilst working with the council, was never to cut corners when doing a job; a lesson he has valued throughout his career. Once Roy had gained his qualifications, he was promoted to Head Groundskeeper overseeing the bowling greens and football pitches.

In 1990, Roy joined Blackburn Rovers who were looking for groundstaff to look after their new training ground at Brockhall village. After three months working for the club, he was made Head Groundsman, looking after the day to day running of the training ground's three rootzone and two fibresand pitches with the help of three members of staff.

Then, in 2001, Manchester City were looking for a head groundsman who had experience in Fibresand constructed pitches. "I was quite lucky I had the experience at Blackburn with Fibresand pitches as, at the time, not many people had. In those days, people thought the grass was just grass, but there is a big difference between looking after a rootzone pitch and a Fibresand one."

When Roy first moved to Manchester



I believe, with the right fertilisers, with the right chemicals at the right time and working with the weather we should be okay





City, he was tasked with taking the club forward, because all the pitch works were then being undertaken by an outside pitch contractor - fertilising, seeding, spraying and all pitch renovations. "I was lucky that, when I was at Blackburn, we did a lot of these tasks in-house, so I brought that experience with me."

"Inside twelve months, all the staff at Maine Road, Carrington Training Ground and the Platt Lane Academy Complex

were doing the pitch works in-house - for example, driving tractors and Workman buggies and also knowing how to work the irrigation system. If we had any problems, it was up to me to resolve them at all three sites."

"At the first team's training complex at Carrington, I oversaw the installation of new Fibresand pitches which, at the time, were all very new to the club. Very quickly in 2001, my position was upgraded to Grounds

Manager. One of my first jobs at the Maine Road stadium was to take out the old rootzone pitch and install a new Fibresand pitch, which was like for like with the first team training ground. In 2002/3, we won the pitch of the year at Maine Road, the first time the club had ever won anything on the grounds side, which was good to see for everyone at the club."

In 2003/4, Manchester City moved to east Manchester to their new home - the

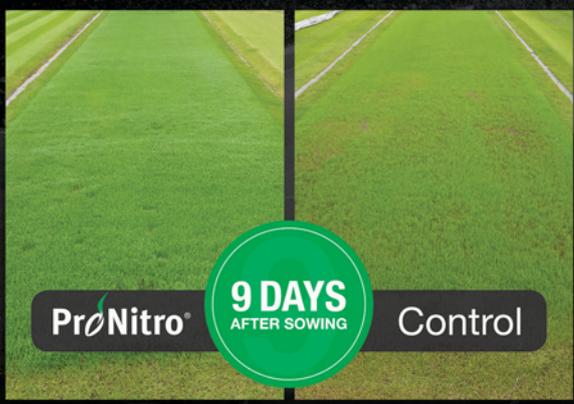
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City of Manchester Stadium (now the Etihad Stadium) - which had a Desso constructed pitch.

In August 2008, the club was bought by the Abu Dhabi United Group and, in September 2009, Roy was asked by the club if he would go out to Abu Dhabi to oversee the Club World Cup and run a team of groundstaff which were called the Dessert group. "I was one of the first to work outside the UK in our industry, working abroad with warm-season grasses (Bermuda and Paspalum) and different fertilisers, chemicals and mowing heights, all of which I picked up very quickly. I had to learn how they worked, and the establishment was so different with temperatures hitting 40 degrees plus, which is a lot different to the cool season grasses we work with in the UK."

Roy spent three months in Abu Dhabi, staying out for twenty-eight days each month, coming back home for a few days, and then out again due to visa requirements.

In 2009/10, the club installed a new Desso GrassMaster pitch with a fully

automated irrigation system at the Platt Lane Complex, which replaced one of the soil-based pitches. At the same time, one of the Fibresand constructed pitches had a fully automated irrigation system installed.

In 2012, the club sent Roy out to Melbourne, Australia, to look at installing a new Desso GrassMaster pitch - the first in that part of Australia - for Melbourne City FC, their sister club.

"Things moved on very quickly with the new owners. We used to water both pitches at Platt Lane with a hosepipe; those were the days! I will never forget, in 2003, we had a scorching summer with temperatures hitting thirty degrees plus. Both grass pitches were dying in front of our eyes, so I made the call to the fire brigade to help us out; without their help, we would have lost both grass pitches for sure."

Planning for the new training ground started in 2008. This was to be called the City Football Academy (CFA), to be built in east Manchester right across the road from the Etihad Stadium. The work was completed in 2014. "I now oversee

seventeen staff in total; three at the Etihad Stadium and fourteen at the CFA. We have seventeen pitches; eight hybrid, six Fibresand and three full size Desso synthetic pitches (two outdoor, one indoor), and I also oversee all the landscaping."

Roy helped with the build of the new 10,000m² sand-based pitch at the New York training complex, which began in 2016 and was completed in 2018. "I have travelled the world with the club. I have been to South Africa, China, Australia, Ghana, Abu Dhabi and the USA working at the training camps abroad. I have been fortunate. I'm a very focused and professional person in everything I do in life, so it has kept me in good stead with all the experience I have gained. You cannot buy experience, although some people think you can. That is why I have stayed at the top from day one, and still moving forward in the industry looking at making things better and moving the club forward."

"In 2018, Manchester City were the first Premier League club to install a new full-size Hybrid Hero carpet pitch system (at



You have got to believe in yourself. Listen to what people say; if you don't know what you're talking about, then you just listen



Desso 3G pitch



I believe getting into this industry is one of the best decisions I ever made. I love the passion of the job and what I do. If there is one thing I'm good at it's looking after grass

the CFA). The reason for this was the club wanted more playing hours in the winter months. The Hero system was chosen after a lot of investigation looking at the hybrid pitches that are out there on the market. I was given a budget to work to, I went down to London on a lot of occasions and over to Real Madrid's training ground to look at the Hero pitch installed there."

"When I first started in the industry, forty-three years ago, as a fresh-faced

sixteen year old, if you had asked me would I be where I am today, I would have to say yes. I have put my life and soul into the industry, helping others along the way, but I must admit it is good to have people around you who want to learn about the industry from the lower level to the top. The most important thing is that myself, the industry and the football club are moving forward, and we are now in a good place. We are all in it together as one team.

Moving to Manchester City is the highlight of my career, and I have never looked back."

Roy tells me that, since he started out, many areas of the turf industry have improved - machines, pitch construction, fertilisers - but the most significant change over the last five years is with chemicals being taken off the market. "We have seen this coming for a while, so what we intend to do is put a plan in place where we keep the

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plant as healthy as possible. We have a big problem with nematodes at the CFA, with the pitches being sand-based, and we are not on our own. It all comes down to how you look after your pitches. I believe, with the right fertilisers, with the right chemicals at the right time and working with the weather we should be okay.”

I asked Roy what he regards the best part of his job and if he has any regrets? “The best part of my job is overseeing everything for the club, looking at new developments and helping the club move forward with the playing surfaces. I have no regrets in life; I’m where I wanted to be, working at the highest level with Manchester City, one of the biggest clubs in the world at this time and, when I retire, I will look back and be proud of what I have achieved.”

The most significant pressure Roy and his team face is turning the pitches around at renovation time, especially at the Etihad Stadium. “The club want to hold concerts on the pitch every year as we are in a big catchment area, and you can’t blame them.”

“A subject that I believe, as an industry, we need to be looking at, is ways in which we can attract more youngsters and women into, what can be, a rewarding career. Manchester City are one such club that has two young grounds women who have successfully completed their apprenticeships and been given



full-time roles.”

“I feel college tutors need to be going into schools and promoting the industry. The interest is out there. I talk to a few children and their parents who ask about getting into the industry. The same questions are coming back to me all the time. The tutors need to be telling them that you can get grants for qualifications if you are of a certain age; people are under the illusion you must pay for everything. The

industry is a better place now than it’s ever been. I believe if clubs invested in people we’d end up with better employees who are qualified to do the job. This is what we do at Manchester City.”

Roy’s advice to youngsters who have just started in the industry is, “you have got to believe in yourself. Listen to what people say; if you don’t know what you’re talking about, then you just listen; I learned that from my dad. Keep your eye on industry

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When I first started in the industry, forty-three years ago, as a fresh-faced sixteen year old, if you had asked me would I be where I am today, I would have to say yes

developments, go on any courses that are made available to you and, when possible, attend trade shows. All you need to do is pick up one thing that could make the difference to your job and how fast you move up that chain. Never be scared to ask a question. There is no such thing as a daft question because it could be the most important question you ever ask in your career. Always think positive and look ahead. I have come from a background

were my mum and dad had no money. I struggled myself with reading and writing when I was younger. I have not found it easy, but I'm sure that, if I can do it, others can too. Sometimes, you have got to walk before you can run. You have to take it gradually and evenly."

Roy likes to attend industry shows and educational days, "It's good to meet and interact with other turfcare professionals, to discuss and share ideas. The shows are

good to have. People say it's the same old thing and, once you've been round, you've seen it, but there are always new things that will come to the market. I look at it like this; if I don't go, I could miss out on the one thing I didn't want to miss out on, and someone else sees it. We also encourage our staff to go when possible; it's about getting the staff out of the day-to-day environment they are in and seeing the wider industry."

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Oud-Heverlee Leuven

Oli gunning for success!

Oud-Heverlee Leuven is a Belgian football club from the city of Leuven, to the east of Brussels. It was created in 2002 from the merger of three clubs, FC Zwarte Duivels Oud-Heverlee, whose registration number it inherited, Daring Club Leuven and Stade Leuven. Their home ground is the King Power at Den Dreef Stadium, located in the city's Heverlee region. Lee Williams meets the club's Head Groundsman **Oliver Makin**



Oud-Heverlee Leuven currently play in the country's second tier, Belgian First Division B, but has played four seasons at the top level; the last time being the 2015-16 season.

With the establishment of Oud-Heverlee Leuven in 2002, the stadium changed its name from Leuvens Sportcentrum to Den Dreef and this saw a programme of stadium expansions to improve both facilities and capacity. These are ongoing, and the final phase should see capacity close to 13,000.

The club is linked with Leicester City Football Club as the two clubs are owned by the same owners (King Power) and a number of staff from Leicester travel between the two clubs, e.g. commercial guys, media guys etc.

Englishman Oliver (Oli) Makin is the Head Groundsman at Oud

Heverlee Leuven (OHL), a role he took on eight months ago after leaving his post as deputy head groundsman at Scunthorpe United. "I was looking at jobs being advertised on the Pitchcare website when I came across this job. I read through it and immediately wanted to find out more so I sent my CV into John Ledwidge, Grounds Manager at Leicester City FC. I then got a phone call offering me an interview with him at the King Power Stadium, and, after that, John offered me the job."

Oli first got into the industry eleven years ago through Phil Collinson who, at that time, was Head Groundsman at Rochdale AFC but also looked after Norden Cricket Club. Oli played cricket for Norden and helped Phil with prepping the square

and outfield, which he took great pleasure in. When Phil was looking for an apprentice to work with him at Rochdale, the perfect fit was Oli, who jumped at the chance to work as a full time groundsman.

Oli made the big step to move abroad to OH Leuven because it was at the start of what looked to be an excellent project to be involved in. "Basically, everything was going to be brand new, and it's something I can now say I was part of from a very early stage. To help transform a very run-down training ground and stadium into what we have today has been a great experience so far."

Oli is working towards his NVQ



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Pitchmark Hybrid Markers x 3

Redexim Charterhouse Verti-Rakes x 2

Baroness triple mowers x 2

Iseki clean up mowers x 2

Tractor mounted fertiliser spreaders x 3

New Holland Boomer 25 compact tractors x 2

New Holland Boomer 40 tractor

Hardi tractor mounted sprayer

Redexim Charterhouse Verti-Quake



Happy in their work from left to right: Oliver Makin, Luke Russell and Kevin Marotta

Level 3 in Sports Turf Management, and currently holds an NVQ Level 2 Sports Turf, PA1 PA2 and PA6 spraying certificates and First Aid certificates.

On a weekly basis, Oli reports to John Ledwidge, to discuss the playing surfaces, budgets and fertiliser programmes. "We are

regularly in contact via text messages and phone calls, just to keep each other updated with what is going on. I send him pictures every now and then to keep him in the loop with how everything is looking. John leaves us to get on with our work and do what we see necessary to keep the pitches to as high a quality standard as possible."

Oli's team includes Deputy Head Groundsman Luke Russell (25), and junior grounds person Kevin Marotta (21); both joined a little over seven months ago. "We also have Leon and Chile, two volunteers who are permanently based at the training ground. They are a great help to us. We also use a local contractor, Wim Fluyt. His knowledge of Belgian regulations is a great help when it comes to knowing what products we are allowed to use here in Belgium."

Together, they look after the stadium pitch, which is a Desso PlayMaster carpet on top of a few sand bands into a clay soil. At the training ground, there is a Mixto carpet pitch which is constructed entirely on a substructure, with a full drainage system and undersoil heating. There is also a brand-new Fibresand constructed pitch which is fully drained, and two grass surfaces which





I think we are slowly becoming more valued as groundsmen as the demand for better playing surfaces all year round increases

have been sand banded into sandy soil. All the pitches are fully irrigated. There are also two artificial pitches which are open to community use.

Oli explains the general maintenance of the pitches at the stadium and training ground. "During the summer, we cut the stadium pitch between 23-25mm using the Cub Cadet Infinicut 34s. With it being a hybrid carpet, we regularly rake the surface with a tractor mounted rake. Rotary mowers

are used; either the Honda rotaries or our new Dennis PRO 34 rotaries. We aerate with a Charterhouse Verti-Drain down to a depth of 8-10 inches, and we have a Toro ProCore which we use at varying depths and speeds. We mark out with a Pitchmark hybrid marker with Eco Line+ paint. We have a problem with rabbits, so we spray the artificial track with a natural deterrent to keep them away."

"At the training ground, we mow with a Baroness triple mower at 25mm in the

growing season, then up to 28mm in the winter months. We will use the Dennis rotaries and Infinicuts on the main show pitch. We rake the carpet pitches with the tractor mounted rake. Aeration is carried out on the pitches with a Verti-Drain and, occasionally, we will transport the ProCore over from the stadium. Cleaning out of the artificial surfaces is undertaken with a Charterhouse Verti-Top."

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Getting Personal

Oliver Makin - finding a wife, chilli con carne and all things Europe

Who are you? Oliver Makin, Head Groundsman at OH Leuven, Belgium.

Family status. Single no children.

Who's your hero and why? Andrew Flintoff. I'm a big cricket fan and played for Rochdale CC before I moved to Belgium.

What would you change about yourself? Have smaller feet as it's so difficult to get trainers in my size that I actually want!

What's your guilty pleasure? Genuinely can't think of one.

What's been the highlight of your career so far? There's been a couple; one would be when I was at Rochdale Football Club. We were the only game on in the whole division and also went through the whole season without having a game called off; which had never been done before at Rochdale. Also, being head groundsman here in Belgium is the best decision I have ever made. In my cricket career, it would be playing for Hampshire 2nd XI away at Surrey at Wimbledon Cricket Club and taking eight wickets in one innings.

What are your pet peeves? People who just walk on your pitch thinking it's a public park.

If you could go anywhere right now, where would it be? Sri Lanka or Barbados to watch England cricket.

What's the best part of your job? Cutting the pitch in the summer in shorts and T-shirt. Also, having the opportunity to prepare a surface for a sport you love and seeing the overall outcome of your hard work.

... and the worst? Frost covers!!!

Do you have a lifetime ambition? When I was younger, I lived in Milan for three years and I just love the San Siro. So, I suppose one day, I would love to be the head groundsman there.

Favourite record, and why? Cavorting by the Courteeners. I'm from Manchester and they're a local band. I'm into my Manchester music big time.

Who would you choose to spend a romantic evening with? My Mrs; when I find one!!

If you won the lottery, what is the first thing you would do? Pay off my mortgage and go on holiday around the world for a couple of months.



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

Sergio Aguero, Kevin De Bruyne and Andrew Flintoff.

Do you have any bad habits? I like crisps a bit too much!

Do you go to bed worrying about the next day's workload? Normally no, as I like to think I have everything planned. The only time I will go to bed worrying is if the weather forecast is bad and we have a game the next day!

What are you reading at the moment?

Joey Thompson's autobiography (Rochdale AFC player).

What's the best advice you have ever been given? Respect others. You never know when you may need to call upon them.

What's your favourite smell? Home cooked chilli con carne cooking away in the oven!

What do you do in your spare time?

Socialise with family and friends, play cricket and travel to different places in the world (mainly in Europe).

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

When it's been frosty, can you not just pump hot water into the sprinkler pipes to thaw it out?

What's your favourite piece of kit? It's got to be the new Dennis Rotaries or the Toro ProCore.

What three words would you use to describe yourself? Hard-working, sociable, easy going.

What talent would you like to have? To be able to sing.

What law/legislation would you like to see introduced? To be allowed to use Carbenazim again.



SGL lighting rig

pitches, and to cope with changing weather conditions which include a few touches of frost and a lot of rain, plus a shade problem on one side of the stadium, there are two SGL MU150 and two SGL LU120 lighting rigs, plus a MacLeod CoverMaster dome cover at the stadium, and a full set of Matchsaver frost covers for the Mixto pitch at the training ground.

Oli explains; "Working in Belgium is not much different to working in England as the climate is very similar. I sometimes don't realise I'm in another country until someone tries to speak Dutch to me and I reply to them English. Sorry, one day I will learn the language. The way of life is quite laid back here, which I like, as I think I am also quite laid back. In addition, Leuven itself is a beautiful city."

The club is currently using ICL products for all their fertiliser and liquids. These are presently being bought through a Belgian distributor, Taymans, with a rep from ICL making visits every now and again.

Renovation of the pitch is undertaken at





the end of each season, and this includes taking the top off all the pitches with an Imants Koro Field Topmaker, topdressing, overseeding and fertilising. “Hopefully, next season, the stadium pitch will be fully reconstructed, and we are also looking at reconstructing a pitch at the training ground. From there, we will look at different options



To help transform a very run-down training ground and stadium into what we have today has been a great experience so far

for the renovation of our remaining pitches.”

Recent projects at the training ground have included a new groundsman’s shed, which also consists of a 20,000 litre underground tank into which rainwater is collected from the roof, and a washdown area for machinery has recently been completed.

Last summer, all pitches got an extensive renovation and new pitches installed. The work on the pitches was carried out by EuroSportsTurf, and, for the smaller projects, local contractor Wim Fluylt was used.

The club supports the groundstaff with continued training and education. “We are currently in the process of putting Kevin on a Sports Turf course to aid his development. He is an incredible part of our team, and he’s learning so quickly for someone who has never done this sort of work before. Maybe, in the future, we will look to add another apprentice to our team.”

All machinery is bought outright from

Platts Harris in the UK. “We have recently purchased two new Dennis Pro 34Rs which are great pieces of kit when it comes to cleaning up the pitch. The Charterhouse Verti-Drain and Toro ProCore are invaluable. Alongside our aeration programme, we will have Wim Fluylt come in twice a year with the big Verti-Drain.”

Oli has a few items on his wish list for the future. These include a second Toro ProCore, Dennis G860s with cutting and verti-cut cassettes, three sarel roller cassettes for the Infinicuts and few more lighting rigs.

Oli believes our industry is on the up and is always moving forward with innovative ideas and new machinery, “I think we are slowly becoming more valued as groundsman as the demand for better playing surfaces all year round increases. If we keep doing what we do and are always willing to learn and support each other as an industry, our profile will grow.”

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PROUDLY BRITISH



Fleetwood Town Football Club

Cod's Law!

Ten percent of the town's residents regularly attend Fleetwood's home games, a measure of the club's continued success. Lee Williams met up with their new(ish) Head Groundsman, **Nick Hyndman**, to discover what recent developments have taken place in this remote corner of Lancashire



On a very wet and windy day on the Fylde coast, I'm on my way to Fleetwood Town Football Club to look around their new £8m training base at Poolfoot Farm, a state-of-the-art sports and leisure village, in Thornton Cleveleys.

I met up with Head Groundsman Nick Hyndman, behind the training ground at the impressive purpose-built groundsman's shed, which includes an office, brew room, toilets and shower. Before we look around the facility, we decide to sit down in the office and have a brew and a chat hoping the rain will ease off before we go out. Unfortunately, this doesn't happen at any point that day so, once my tour of the training facility was over, myself and Nick were soaked to the bone.

The training ground was officially opened on Wednesday 20th April 2016, by Sir Alex Ferguson. The main building has a fully fitted gym, fitness studio, physiotherapy suite, dedicated classrooms, meeting rooms, a top-quality bar and restaurant, seven changing rooms, offices, reception and club shop.

Outside there are Elite pitches One and Two. These are a Fibresand construction, with an automated pop-up irrigation system, and are used only by the first team. Pitch Three is a goalkeeper area (drained and sand slit). Pitches Four and Five is one divided eleven-a-side pitch used for under 18s and 23s (drained and sand slit). Pitch Six is a five-a-side grass pitch, mainly used as a warm-up area (drained and sand slit). Pitch Seven is a seven-a-side grass

pitch used by the academy (drained and top drained.) Pitches Eight and Nine are eleven a-side pitches used by the academy (drained, no secondary drainage). 3G pitches - two eleven-a-side and four five-a-side pitches (named Highbury, San Siro, Nou Camp and Bernabeau) complete the pitch line-up.

The facility is also open to the community, with hundreds of local children having already enjoyed the use of the 3G pitches, be that local junior clubs, schools or other organisations. The club hopes the new facilities will help persuade talented young local players to develop their skills closer to home.

The first team play their home games at Highbury Stadium, which has a capacity of 5327. Nick explains the pitch construction;

What's in the shed

- TYM T503 tractor
- New Holland Boomer 2030 tractor
- Imants Shockwave
- Charterhouse Redexim Verti-Drain
- Hardi Sprayer
- Team pedestrian sprayer
- Toro triple mower
- Billy Goat x 2
- Tractor trailer
- Dennis Mowers x 5, with 5 x cutting units, 4 x brush unit and 2 x verti-cutting unit
- Mulcher mowers x 2
- Stihl strimmers x 3
- Stihl blowers x 2
- Fertiliser spreaders x 4
- Tractor mid-deck mower
- Spray linemarkers x 3
- Wheel to wheel linemarkers
- Rotary mowers x 4
- Tractor mounted artificial brush
- Pedestrian artificial brush



From left to right: Michael Swann, Ashley Roche, Liam Scott-Rattray, Nick Hyndman, Oliver Vincent and Max Knapman

"It's a natural soil surface with a 100mm 80/20 rootzone. A lot of that has been diluted since it was constructed ten years ago. The pitch is very inconsistent now. We have a lot of localised spots that are now more sand than rootzone, giving us problems with stability. It's on its last legs."

To help with stability problems more than shade, Nick has an SGL MU50 lighting rig and a homemade contraption. "Mainly, we move the MU50 up and down the weakest side of the pitch to help keep the grass

healthy and to keep the roots growing; the instability is based on the rooting of the pitch with it being rootzone."

"One thing I have noticed over the years is that the Highbury doesn't seem to suffer from many matches being called off for frost." I asked Nick why he thinks this is; "We do have frost covers, in case we do get a frost forecast. It may have something to do with being near the sea. It seems to be a few degrees warmer, but I don't know. It's strange; I live in Blackpool, thirty minutes



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away, and it can be so different there. Just where we are on the coast, we seem to get away with it. We do get frosts, but never like the clubs more inland.”

Nick has worked for Fleetwood Town for eight years. He started as Deputy Head Groundsman then, eighteen months ago, became Head Groundsman. His qualifications include a Foundation Degree Sportsturf Science and Management, National Diploma (Level 3) in Sportsturf, NVQ Level 2 in Landscaping and PA1, PA2 and PA6 spraying certificates.

Helping Nick look after the large training facility and the Highbury stadium pitch are Liam Scott-Rattray, Deputy Head Groundsman, whose qualifications include a Foundation Degree Sportsturf Science and Management, Level 3 Extended Diploma in Sportsturf and PA1, PA2 and PA6; Ash Roche, Skilled Groundsman, NVQ Level 2 & 3

in Sportsturf and PA1, PA2 and PA6; Max Knapman, Assistant Groundsman, Level 2 Diploma sports turf; Oliver Vincent, Assistant Groundsman, Level 3 extended diploma and PA1 and Michael Swann, Assistant Groundsman, Level 3 Sub Diploma Sportsturf.

It’s good to see that the lads have all qualified. I asked Nick if the club support his staff with ongoing training. “I’m trying to get everybody up to a standard. I would eventually like to get all my staff through their spraying certificates. It’s a process I’m currently going through with the club.”

Nick is responsible for the fertiliser and machinery budgets for the Stadium and training ground. These are put through with the accounts manager for approval. On a day to day basis, he works under the chief executive.

Walking on the first team Fibresand constructed pitches in early December - in what I



Head Groundsman, Nick Hyndman



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Getting Personal

Nick Hyndman - talking 6 packs, poor pitch etiquette and fried bacon

Who are you? Nick Hyndman, Head Groundsman at Fleetwood Town Football Club.

Family status. Married to Stevie with two children; Riley and Lola.

Who's your hero and why? My parents, because they gave me everything I needed growing up.

What would you change about yourself? Change my 6 pack to an 8 pack. (We're not sure if he means stomach muscles or beer).

What's your guilty pleasure? Love songs.

What's been the highlight of your career so far? Being offered the head groundsman position at Fleetwood.

What are your pet peeves? Poor pitch etiquette.

If you could go anywhere right now, where would it be? Las Vegas.

What's the best part of your job? Working with a good group of lads.

... and the worst? WINTER!!!!

Do you have a lifetime ambition? To retire in Florida.

Who would you choose to spend a romantic evening with? The wife, but if she's busy, Rita Ora or Ariana Grande.

If you won the lottery, what is the first thing you would do? I would take all the family on a world cruise.

If you were to describe yourself as a musical instrument, what would you be and why? Drums, because I love a bang.

Which three people, living or dead, would you invite to a dinner party? Charlie Sheen, Freddie Mercury and Donald Trump. I reckon they would all have some top stories.

If you could be anyone for a day, who would it be and why? I'd be my wife and stop nagging at me for one day.



Do you have any bad habits? Flicking my nose, which I've done since I was a kid.

... or any good ones? I'm too nice.

Do you go to bed worrying about the next day's workload? Not so much the workload, but I do feel the pressure if the weather forecast is bad before a game for instance.

What are you reading at the moment? Nothing at the moment, but I do like true crime novels.

What's the best advice you have ever been given? Give people a second chance ... but not a third!

What's your favourite smell? BBQ or fried bacon.

What do you do in your spare time? Being a groundsman and married with two kids I don't have much spare time to be fair! Whenever I do get a minute, I tend to do nothing ha-ha.

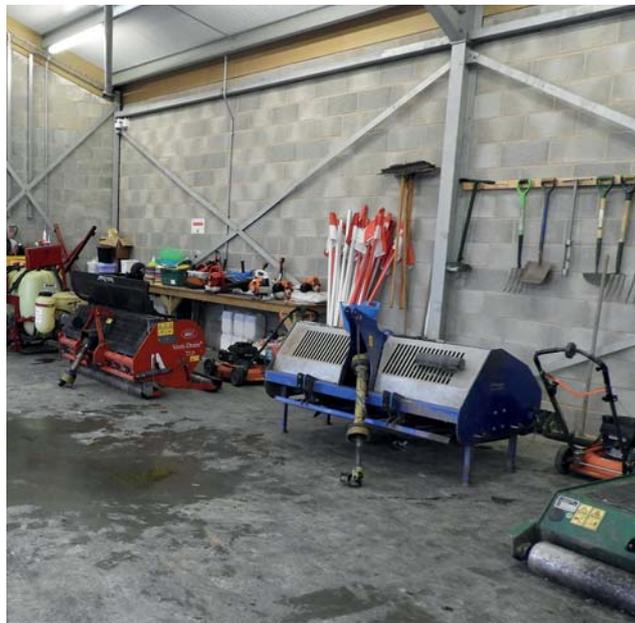
What's the daftest work-related question you have ever been asked? Do you have summer off when the season finishes?

What's your favourite piece of kit? The Dennis G860 is a decent bit of kit.

What three words would you use to describe yourself? Witty, direct and sarcastic.

What talent would you like to have? I would love to be able to sing.

What law/legislation would you like to see introduced? All tuition fees should be free if you achieve your qualification. You should only be made to pay if you drop out or fail.



can only describe as biblical rain - I was impressed with how healthy the pitches looked and the amount of grass cover for this time of year - at least 90%. Another thing that stood out was that there was no standing water with the amount of rain that was falling.

Nick explains; "When it comes to cutting heights and maintenance, we try and keep it pretty similar to the Highbury pitch. I know they are different constructions, but we like to keep it as similar as possible. In summer, we will cut at 23mm; in winter, we will try and get as close to 30mm as possible

without upsetting the manager. It's just about trying to find that balance where it's still playable but, at the same time, doing what we can to protect the pitches."

Verti-draining is carried out every 6-8 weeks at a depth of around 8 inches and they will verti-cut when required. Nick tells me that, if budgets will stretch into March, he likes to oversee with Johnsons 4turf grass seed, again emulating what they do at the Stadium.

Nick explains that maintenance of the surrounding soil pitches is pretty similar to what they do with the Fibresand





Left: Training ground officially opened by Sir Alex Ferguson, April 2016



I do feel, 100%, that we are undervalued. We never get many thanks or a pat on the back when the pitches are good but, when they are struggling, we seem to get the bad press

pitches. “We will cut at 25mm in summer, rising to 30mm in winter. I like to swap between the Verti-drain and Shockwave at least once a month and we will verti-cut if we get the chance. The 3G pitches we brush once a week.”

Nick tells me he is lucky to have a good fleet of machinery to enable him and his team to undertake all their own maintenance

throughout the season. “I’m given a machinery budget which can vary each year, then it’s up to myself to assess what we need. I want to invest in a SIS Litamina next to help with clean-up after training, as I don’t feel we get the chance to do this enough.” Nick mainly sources his machinery from Campey Turf Care or Cheshire Turf Machinery. They carry out the servicing on

the machines, and also use a local mechanic for the smaller jobs. The machines are utilised between both sites.

Nick likes to have regular soil samples taken every six months on both the Highbury pitch and Fibresand pitches. “Once the results come back, we will base our fertiliser plan on that, we will also assess how the pitches are performing throughout the year

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When it comes to cutting heights and maintenance, we try and keep it pretty similar to the Highbury pitch



About the Club

Fleetwood Town Football Club is a professional association football club based in the town of Fleetwood, Lancashire, England. Established in 1997, the current Fleetwood Town F.C. is the third incarnation of the club; it was first formed in 1908. The team compete in League One, the third tier of English football.

Their home strip is red shirts with white sleeves and white shorts. The home ground is Highbury Stadium in Fleetwood, and the supporters are affectionately known as the Cod Army. The club won the 2011-12 Football Conference and played in the Football League for the first time in its history in the 2012-13 season.

In May 2014, at Wembley, Fleetwood won the promotion play-off to League One, the club's sixth promotion in ten years.

and adjust accordingly.”

“On the Highbury pitch in June, we used Sierrablen plus Renovator and Greenmaster Zero Phosphate. In July, Greenmaster Spring/Summer, Primo Maxx, Seamax, Step Hi Mag and Pro Turf 20:0:7. In August, Sierrablen mini 0:0:37, Seamax and Stress Control 15:0:28. In September, Proturf 15:5:15, Seamax and step Hi-mag. In October, Anti-stress, Seamax and Proturf 15:5:20 and, in November, Proturf 15:5:20.”

“On the Fibresand pitches we have used Greenmaster Renovator and Zero Phosphate, Step Hi Mag, Sierrablen Active and Pro Turf 20-0-7 and Pro Turf 20-0-7 stress control. We do fertilise the soil-based pitches, but this is on an as and when necessary basis as we don't have the same fertiliser budget for those pitches.”

Alongside his fertiliser programme, Nick likes to be pro-active rather than reactive when it comes to disease management of the Highbury pitch. “We suffer now and again with leaf spot, but we do have good airflow, so it's not too bad to be fair. I put the fungicides on for prevention with it being the stadium; it takes away that risk factor,

if you will.”

“At the training ground, it is rare for us to use a fungicide, due to cost, we tend to let it grow out if we get a dose of leaf spot.”

As well as the club giving the local community access to their training ground facilities, Nick and his team help with local community projects throughout the year, “One project we have been doing is at a local park. The playing fields have just been drained, so we have been helping them grow it back in, and now we will help it get through the winter months.”

Nick seems to be well supported by the club, and they understand his needs when it comes to the pitches. I asked him if he ever feels undervalued? “I think groundsman are getting more recognition as a professional sort of job, although we will always be seen as just grass cutters. People are realising there is a lot more science that goes into keeping the pitches playable and healthy. But I do feel, 100%, that we are undervalued. We never get many thanks or a pat on the back when the pitches are good but, when they are struggling, we seem to get the bad press.”



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Newport County AFC

Trying to make his Mark



After an early start and a long drive from Oldham, Lee Williams pulls up outside Rodney Parade Stadium situated in the centre of Newport, South Wales. At the time of writing this, Newport have just reached the fifth round of the FA Cup. Lee met with **Mark Jones**, Head of Operations, to discuss developments and his time at Rodney Parade

When I head to a local coffee house, Hortons, which Mark regularly frequents to take a break from his hectic schedule, and he tells me that, when he left school, his first thoughts weren't to become a groundsman and manage his own ground; like many of us who end up in the turfcare industry, fate led him here. "When I was fourteen, I signed with Sheffield United FC to be an apprentice footballer, however, it was short-lived as, at sixteen, I was promptly released and the dream of being a professional footballer vanished. I returned home knowing I didn't want to work in an office or factory and was adamant that I wanted to work outdoors. Before too long, I managed to get a job at a local golf course, before swiftly following

my passion of football with a move to Cardiff Athletic Club. It was here, at just nineteen, I was approached about the position of grounds manager at Newport Athletic Club. At such a young age, the opportunity was brilliant; the position came with a three bedroomed house, however there was a big but; I didn't want to leave home! My boss at Cardiff, Albert Francis, immediately told me I had messed up and that I should take the job whether I wanted to live in the house or not. I quickly realised my mistake, only to be told by the club secretary that they had already appointed someone else. The funny thing was, the job was already sort of paved out for me and they took me on. So, in 1985, I joined with excitement about the future ahead and the rest, as they say, is history. Back then, it was called Newport





I believe all stadia are struggling, especially in the lower leagues, and you normally find that the grounds part of the operation is the last department to get any overspill of money



Athletic club and I was responsible for the maintenance of the cricket field and square, grass hockey pitches, grass tennis courts, bowling greens and rugby pitches which provided a great variety and foundation for all things turf."

Mark's role at the club has evolved over the thirty-four years he has been at Rodney Parade, and he has gained a wide range of qualifications to support the varied roles he carries out as the Head of Operations. "I took lots of my turf qualifications early on. I have done lots of Stadium & Safety

Management courses as I oversee all the stewarding and safety procedures on site. I'm also responsible for all capital expenditure budgets, special projects, bars, catering, cleaning and pretty much everything else."

Mark has three groundstaff, who work tirelessly on the pitch doing their best to cope with the heavy fixture schedule. James Stuart, Head Groundsman, who has been at the club for about twenty-six seasons, Jon Raymond, Grounds and Facilities Supervisor, eight years' service and Josh Edwards,

Groundsman/Maintenance and Response Team Supervisor on match days.

It's fair to say that Rodney Parade has had many critics over the last few years, when it comes to the playability of the pitch in winter, and this was no different recently when they beat Middlesbrough in the FA Cup replay. But, with a League Two football team and two rugby teams playing their league matches, plus added pressure of cup games and youth cup games on the pitch over a season, you can clearly see this gives Mark and his team a massive challenge at any time of the year.

"The original pitch was natural grass with drainage installed in one half, and I had a minimal budget to work with. The football came over to us seven years ago, so now do the maths; three teams, two of them being rugby, brings me over seventy fixtures a year and you can't do that on a pitch that is not built to do it."

It's early February and, in my opinion, the pitch isn't looking too bad. Especially given there have been over fifty fixtures so far this season, with some not played in preferred weather conditions. Mark commented on the recently installed Desso PlayMaster hybrid surface. "When we were taken over by the Welsh Rugby Union, we were lucky to get the Desso system (complete with a full irrigation system), as they realised straight



Head of Operations, Mark Jones

What's in the shed

- Kubota tractor LA514
- Charterhouse Verti-Drain 7316
- Dennis G860 x 3
- Toro Reelmaster 3100-D
- Honda Pro roller mowers x 5
- Toro ProCore 648 - loaned from Chris Hopkins at Celtic Manor
- Bowcom GMX spray marker



away the pitch we had wasn't fit for purpose. They went into the market and did their research before they pressed the approval button. They felt the PlayMaster would be best for us and was laid for the start of last season - I believe it's got about a three year shelf life. We have seen a big difference since it was laid, which is a testament to the performance of the carpet as, last year, we managed to get to the end of the season with grass cover. But, we still have our problems; at this time of year, we suffer from shade under the main stand and compaction at the very top of the carpet, purely down to the vast number of games." This prompted me to ask if he had considered lighting rigs to help with the shade issues. "I don't think there is the budget for lights. I'm always envious as pretty much every ground you

see these days on social media has them, and I see people still cutting in January - even taking boxes of grass off their pitches. Honestly though, if we had them, I feel by the time we got them out we would be taking them off again because the next fixture would be coming."

Whilst at the stadium on a cold Monday morning, the lads were on the rotaries cleaning up the pitch from the weekend's fixtures in preparation for another fixture on Tuesday night. I asked Mark what maintenance he carries out in such a short space of time between fixtures? "To be honest, I think it's absolute dedication from my groundstaff. I can only imagine what it's like for the lads getting up day in day out, knowing every single week what you're facing. If we have one fixture a week, it feels like a holiday camp because



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Getting Personal

Mark Jones - he's a busy guy who can't live without his phone

Who are you? Mark Jones, Head of Operations at Rodney Parade - home of Newport County FC, Dragons Rugby Club and Newport Rugby Club.

Family status: Married to Sonia with two children - Calum 29 and Brogan 21.

Who's your hero and why? My mum, who died twenty-five years ago. She taught me a good work ethic, to treat everybody with respect and good manners.

What would you change about yourself? I'd be a little more organised.

What's your guilty pleasure? I've got seventy bottles of gin in my collection ... but I don't feel that guilty about it lol.

What's been the highlight of your career so far? As the Head of Operations, I'm responsible for lots more than just the pitch. I sold the idea of utilising Rodney Parade as a police hub for the NATO summit and we served nearly 30,000 meals in two weeks whilst making the most money that has ever been made.

What are your pet peeves? People who make negative and ill-informed comments on social media.

If you could go anywhere right now, where would it be? Probably Dubai, it's the first place I look at when booking a holiday.

What's the best part of your job? Job satisfaction, operating a stadium that hosts three teams and completing a seventy-game fixture list.

... and the worst? The stress, pressure and number of hours it takes to complete the seventy deadlines mentioned above.

Do you have a lifetime ambition? To be around to see my children fulfil theirs.

Who would you choose to spend a romantic evening with? That's obvious; my wife. I always look forward to a nice quiet night in on the sofa (with a gin of course).

If you won the lottery, what is the first thing you would do? Relax, because I won't have to worry about my children's futures.

If you were to describe yourself as a musical instrument, what would you be and why? I'd like to say a saxophone because it's seen as the sexy instrument, but I think I'm more like a keyboard due to its versatility.



Which three people, living or dead, would you invite to a dinner party? Billy Connolly, Chris Evans and Will Smith.

If you could be anyone for a day, who would it be and why? My Chairman, David Buttress. I'd write a nice new contract for that really special chap called Mark Jones.

Do you have any bad habits? Replying to emails in the middle of the night.

... or any good ones? I like to look out for people.

Do you go to bed worrying about the next day's workload? Definitely.

What's the best advice you have ever been given? Whatever you do in life, don't cheat, do it properly.

What's your favourite smell? My dog Lola's paws.

What do you do in your spare time? I've just got a new dog so I like to take her out to unwind and I do love our holidays.

What's the daftest work-related question you have ever been asked? A rugby player once asked me about the fitness of the groundstaff whilst they were using a Ransomes Mastiff. I answered with "Yes they walk a long way" to which he replied: "But they must be strong to be able to push the mower." Think you'll agree that's fairly daft.

What's your favourite piece of kit? Nowadays, I couldn't do without my mobile phone, but pitch-wise the good old divotting fork.

What three words would you use to describe yourself? Dedicated, sarcastic and caring.

What talent would you like to have? Bilingual.

What law/legislation would you like to see introduced? A five day working week would be nice.



normally we have two or three fixtures, and it's tough! It's the monotony of clean-up straight after the game, the divot forks come out, then we go through some aeration processes and, before you know, it they're starting again. Between those fixtures, you are trying to feed in any way possible; just trying to get through the season. It would be lovely to plan out and have a fertiliser programme, but it just doesn't work like that here. When we installed the PlayMaster, we sat down and were told we are going to give you a feeding and maintenance programme. I said, hang on a minute; before you do any of that, take a look at my next year's fixture list. They were shocked as they didn't realise we had so many games, so a bespoke programme was put together."

Mark likes to keep the height of cut as long as he can at the start of the season, to help him keep as much grass cover as possible. "What we tend to do, on a match day early in the season, is get a





Left to right: Jon Raymond, James Stuart and David Wall (pitch assistant)



If we have one fixture a week, it feels like a holiday camp because normally we have two or three fixtures, and it's tough!

Ransomes Mastiff out, roll it without cutting and get some water on it beforehand. We find this gives us the pace on the ball for the Newport County games. To try and free up the lad's time, I use a contractor, Nick Rawlings, Floyd Turfcare and Weed Solutions Ltd, who carries out my fertiliser

programme and will apply fungicides when required - he is a great help to us."

With limited machinery at hand, Mark is grateful to have a great relationship with Jim McKenzie and his greenkeeping team at Celtic Manor, who are more than happy to help him out when he needs a machine or

even an extra pair of hands on match days, if required. He can also call upon the help of the Welsh Rugby Union. "I have great relationships with local clubs who are very good to me; they're normally on the end of the phone if I need a piece of equipment. I'm also lucky to have a good relationship



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Club history

Rodney Parade is a stadium in the city of Newport, South Wales, owned and operated by the Welsh Rugby Union. It is located on the east bank of the River Usk in Newport city centre. The ground is on Rodney Road, a short walk from the city's central bus and railway stations via Newport Bridge or Newport City footbridge. There is no spectator car park at the ground, but many multi-storey car parks are nearby.

Rodney Parade is the home ground of Dragons regional rugby union team and rugby union club Newport RFC. It is also the home ground of Newport County AFC, and is the second-oldest sports venue in the Football League, after Deepdale in Preston. Capacity is 8,700, however, stadium capacity is reduced for football matches to 7,850.



His first thoughts weren't to become a groundsman and manage his own ground; like many of us who end up in the turfcare industry, fate led him here

with Ted Hopkins, and I'm happy to provide hospitality and sponsorship in exchange for the servicing and supply of machines. We certainly don't have an abundance of machinery, but I would love to invest in a Toro ProCore, as it's lightweight and enables us to get holes through the carpet in the winter months; most of the compaction is in the top couple of inches."

"With us being the first stadium to install a Desso PlayMaster, I feel last year we were a little bit light on the renovations and I would certainly like to see a higher level at the end of this season. We are currently taking some counsel on that now; in mid-February, Dan Duffy and Sion Bennet from Desso will come down and discuss the way forward."

To add to the wear on the pitch, Mark has to fit in community games before any

renovations can commence. "I try and push them all to the end of the season, but this is getting shorter. This season will finish in the middle of May and football will want to be playing again by the middle of July. That only gives us a period of six to eight weeks to achieve everything we can."

Mark shares his thoughts on the turf industry going forward. "I can see the future being more multi-use stadia, with less money being around. I believe all stadia are struggling, especially in the lower leagues, and you normally find that the grounds part of the operation is the last department to get any overspill of money; so I can see more people ground sharing. It's tough - I think a lot of groundsman would say the same."

"One of the big gripes for me nowadays involves social media. I have staff who work a ridiculous number of hours every weekend, only to have derogatory comments made towards them, which are sometimes very personal, almost always ill-informed and can be very hurtful.

I'm now trying to be a little more proactive on social media, in a bid to educate fans how much the team do throughout the week as they are doing it."

After chatting with Mark and having seen first-hand what his team cope with week in week out, I can only commend the dedication they have; to try and produce a quality surface each game, with such a huge fixture list and testing conditions in winter, is no mean feat. Keep up the good work and good luck for the rest of the season.





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Grasscutter

A bloomin' good read



Our anonymous, and somewhat grumpy groundsman, **Mr AKA Grasscutter**, sings the praises of Pitchcare, Andy Murray and revenue earners

I have to say that I thoroughly enjoyed reading the 'NorthWest Powerhouse' series of articles in the last issue of Pitchcare's excellent magazine. I think it was born out of the frustrations that their 'new man' Lee Williams experienced whilst at Oldham Athletic, but to see the plight of four of my colleagues recognised in print was somewhat consoling.

Of course, this is nothing new for Pitchcare; they have been 'championing' causes for as long as I can remember - goalpost safety, the health and environmental concerns surrounding artificial grass, and the usage of agricultural fertilisers spring to mind... if only they could do something about our wages!

What struck me about this series of articles was the dedication all the lads show in the face of considerable financial restraints, staffing levels and basic equipment (at best), regardless of age; the two lads at Tranmere Rovers deserve special praise, in my opinion.

And then there's the UK's weather to contend with. As I write this article, we have just come out of a period of snow, hard frosts and minus temperatures to, literally overnight, heavy rain and an upward surge to plus 8°C - a swing of over 10 degrees Celsius - or 50 degrees Fahrenheit in old money!

The weather in my area is currently mild and dreary. I am expecting a disease outbreak at any moment. The pitch is already struggling and this is the last thing I need right now. The only saving grace is that the frost covers are not needed; a thankless task at the best of times. My small team of volunteers still turn up to help where possible. Spiking the goalmouths in an ongoing effort to keep some grass has been important this winter especially.

With only a few weeks to go until the end of the season, I think I might just get through, as long as Mother Nature plays ball. This time last year the 'Beast from the East' had yet to arrive. If she's reading this, perhaps she could provide a 'normal' spring; whatever that might be these days!



Mind you, the weather has always been our biggest challenge for as long as I can remember. The forecasters remind us, at every event, about where it stands in the record books, so no weather event is actually as unusual as some would have us believe; there just appears to be more of them!

Mind you, the weather has always been our biggest challenge for as long as I can remember. The forecasters remind us, at every event, about where it stands in the record books, so no weather event is actually as unusual as some would have us believe; there just appears to be more of them!

And I've got worms; not me personally, but the pitch. More specifically, worm casts are an issue at the moment. I'd hoped that the cold snap would have sent the critters down, but they are back casting again. I'm torn between finding something to rid me of the problem and accepting the benefits they bring to the soil.

Reading the extensive thread on the Pitchcare website, and also those on social media, it is clearly a problem we are facing across the industry. I must say I've enjoyed some of the more 'off the wall' control suggestions; and I thought mustard was to put in my ham sandwiches!

The management here have been very understanding about the challenges I am facing and have kept pitch use to a minimum in recent weeks, which has been helpful, but it still cuts up at the drop of a hat in wet conditions. Once I've tidied up post-match, it doesn't look too bad though, if I'm honest.

I've been promised a decent budget for renovations, and I'll decide nearer the time how

far that will stretch and I what I will be able to achieve. More than the minimum is required this summer.

The corporate events that follow the end of the season are a bit of a pain, but the revenue generated helps with my budget allocation, so it's a double-edged sword (pun intended).

One final comment. As you may know, Mrs Grasscutter and myself enjoy tennis and we were both saddened to hear of the impending retirement of Andy Murray. I for one hope he can do so at Wimbledon but, if not, we should remember that the 'Surly Scot, as he is often referred to, has been one on the UK's greatest sportsmen of the 21st century.

He has won forty-five titles, including three Grand Slams - and been the losing finalist in another eight - and won two Olympic gold medals, all the time wearing his heart on his sleeve.

That level of commitment deserves our deepest respect and certainly not some of the tripe spouted on social media platforms ... probably from the comfort of the sofa in front of the television.

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Felsted School

Howzat for a job title?

To provide sporting excellence over a number of years takes certain skills and qualities. Often these qualities need to be present not only in the athletes but the coaches and everyone who contributes to the nurturing of them. At Felsted School, Essex, teamwork has become a tradition and it is at its most prevalent in the Grounds Department, run by **Nick Lockhart**. Blair Ferguson reports

When you drive through the small village of Felsted towards the vast school campus, the visible part is the sports fields. On this rare cold January morning, the frost had almost finished lifting and the perfect green surface led the eye to the stunning Manor House at the front of the school.

Ready and waiting to give a tour of the 90-acre site was Cricket Professional and Head of Grounds and Gardens, Nick Lockhart. With pleasantries exchanged, a quick first question was needed, an explanation for a slightly unusual job title.

“The combined role has always been part of my job,” Nick explained. “I coach boys and girls during the academic year ages 13-18 and run a team as well. I’m not completely sure how the combined job role came about. I have managed to acquire various coaching certificates in cricket, hockey and rugby and graduated a two year course in Sportsturf Management so, for me, the two jobs went hand in hand. There was a job offer at King’s Bruton which I took, and I was there for eight years before coming here to work with Jason Gallian, who is Felsted’s Director of Cricket.”

Nick is now into his twenty-third year at the school, but he has some competition when it comes to time in service to Felsted. Head Gardener, Nick Day, has been a part of the set-up for forty-three years and Deputy Head, Kevin Cresswell, for forty years.

Clearly, this is a place that attracts and keeps staff for a long time. After a brief chat to Nick and meeting his grounds team, Kevin, Simon Little, Brian Turner and Michael

Morreale and gardens team Nick, Steve McCarthy, Harry Prior and Jamie Robinson, it becomes clear why.

They are a group who take great pride in their work and, as a result, regularly produce something for them all to be proud of. From the outside, there appears to be a dynamic of respect and trust in place that encourages staff to improve through training and education, whilst those with decades of experience, like Head Gardener Nick Day, are allowed to carry out their own vision.

“Nick and I work closely together, but he runs the gardens department on a day to day basis,” Nick explained. “We have regular meetings about what’s needed and what’s coming up, like an open day for instance, but he and his team do a very good job and take great pride in their work and are a good team.”

“Developing the staff is something that we consider annually. We get magazines like Pitchcare and The Groundsman. We visit Saltex, and there are also training days we can attend which are normally informative and thought-provoking which all helps.”

“We have Harry, who is our gardens apprentice, and Michael, who are both doing their Level 3 in Sports Turf Management at college, and they are trying to improve their understanding of their respective roles.”

“Getting young people into the industry is an interesting one because it depends on what your priorities are. If you want to earn lots of money, then you don’t go into groundsmanship and probably don’t go into education. If you’re looking for job satisfaction and reward, then this takes





Nick Lockhart, Cricket Professional and Head of Grounds and Gardens



The Felsted School team l-r: Brian Turner, Kevin Cresswell, Michael Morreale, Nick Lockhart, Simon Little, Steve McCarthy, Harry Prior, Nick Day and Jamie Robinson



You see an area that looks shabby and you spend time and money on it and, in the end, it looks pristine and you can look at it knowing you've had something to do with it - that's the job satisfaction

some beating, because you can see the end product.”

“You see an area that looks shabby and you spend time, energy and money on it and, in the end, it looks pristine and you can look at it knowing you've had something to do with it - that's the job satisfaction.”

“I'd say trying to get as many places as possible looking as good as possible for as long as possible is the satisfaction for me. Taking that home with you and thinking my staff and I have had something to do with that end product is a good feeling. Hopefully, people who come to Felsted, be it a prospective parent, an old pupil or an opposing sports team, will look at it and think it's been well looked after by a team of groundsmen and gardeners who take great care and pride in their work.”

A lot of the pride Nick and his team have derives from the importance of the first impression. It isn't just the job of the Grounds Team to give Felsted's young sportsmen and women the surfaces to achieve sporting excellence, but to be a selling point for the school at all times.

As we began our tour around the back of The Front cricket square towards the school chapel, small signs of attention to detail were everywhere and Nick is clearly aware the impact his team has on the impression the school gives to visitors.

“I'm a great believer in how important that first impression can be. Before a prospective parent or visitor speaks to anyone, they drive through the Stephenson Gates and that may well be the first opportunity they have of seeing Felsted in the flesh.”



The Front cricket square



Grass tennis courts beside the chapel

“That impression has to be a good one because if they look and see the grass, gardens, drainpipes, doors and windows are all in good condition, then hopefully they get the impression that everything else is done properly here too.”

“As a team, we have tried to impress the importance of presentation. Whether you’re in catering, domestic services, works or teaching, we’re all marketing the school in

one shape or form.”

Whilst marketing isn’t officially in Nick’s already full job description, his team do a fine job of fulfilling it. A major selling point for Felsted is their sports teams. They have produced a number of internationals over the years, including England Test cricketers Nick Knight, Derek Pringle and John Stephenson.

Rugby, netball, hockey and tennis are also

catered for on three grass, eleven hard and fourteen artificial tennis courts, nine netball courts, fifteen rugby pitches, nine cricket squares, three artificial wickets, ten outdoor cricket nets, two astro hockey pitches and three football pitches.

During Nick’s twenty-three years at the school, the number of pitches has grown, along with increased pupil numbers and the demand for different sports. Like most

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We've had some very good sportsmen and women through the school in the last fifty-odd years and we've produced international cricketers and hockey players, and rugby players who have had good careers in the game



One of the grass hockey pitches



The school chapel

successful institutions, the school is very aware of the world around them and adjust what they offer accordingly.

"There's been gradual change since I arrived at the school. We've expanded the number of tennis courts, artificial hockey pitches, cricket squares, football pitches, and the number of rugby pitches has grown from eight to fifteen, which reflects the growth of the school."

"I think the number of students and needs of the school have been the main motivation behind the expansion. For instance, boys and girls both play cricket now, which means we needed more facilities."

"There's more demand for tennis, so we added more courts, and the Prep school has expanded along with the senior school, so there are more hockey players which led to the second artificial pitch."

"Sport is very important to Felsted and, over the years, a number of people have helped build the reputation of the school resulting in the overall level of sport being very good, and the school has recently been

nominated for TES Sports School of the Year."

It isn't only the sports side of the grounds that have developed with time, but the gardens as well. On the tour route, we walked behind the chapel to the Bury Garden where Nick Day grows a vast majority of the school's plants from seed inside two greenhouses.

When he first joined the school in 1975, there were only vegetable plots, but a desire to improve the aesthetics and a promotion to Head Gardener in 2001 gave him the opportunity to apply his vision.

"We've really developed the gardens because it all used to be grass and vegetable gardens when I first joined. Now they are a feature of the school."

"When I first joined, there were no hanging baskets, but we slowly introduced them and, as one department saw them, the demand increased and now they are all over the site; we've got fifty hanging baskets and forty flower tubs around the school."

Growth in pupil numbers has meant a



When he first joined the school in 1975, there were only vegetable plots, but a desire to improve the aesthetics and a promotion to Head Gardener in 2001 gave him the opportunity to apply his vision



Bury Garden - a lot of the school's plants are nurtured here



Cricket nets area



When I first joined, there were no hanging baskets, but we slowly introduced them and, as one department saw them, the demand increased and now they are all over the site

surge in sports activity and the use and rotation of pitches has to be carefully managed to ensure quality. 551 senior pupils and 509 prep pupils use the pitches and courts on a regular basis, as well as lettings in half-terms and over the summer. Such a full schedule dictates that a plan is in place to keep matches on where possible and have all areas in peak condition for as long as possible.

"September is a very busy month for us as we look to maintain fifteen rugby pitches, three football pitches and two artificial

hockey pitches. We also have some fine turf areas such as cricket squares and tennis courts to topdress."

"The rugby pitches get used at least three to four times a week from September to December, apart from half-term, so we have to try and plan ahead. We have an open day in early October as well, which is very important for the school, and there is a programme involved for that, but the pitches have to be up and running during the summer period to give us the best chance."

"Rounders is now gone, and cricket has

become the major summer sport for boys and girls in both the senior and prep school, with some also playing tennis. In an average summer term, we'd look to host over 160 games of cricket in a ten-week period!"

"Brian Turner spends virtually all of his time during that period in his cab on a John Deere cylinder mower and he will be gang mowing every day for ten weeks around the campus. It would take three to four days to cut the entire site, so we try and cut inside the boundaries on a Friday for matches on a Saturday and Sunday. If things go really



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This year, we've been appointed to host the prestigious Bunbury Festival. There are various plans in the pipeline for that and, nearer the time, we'll have a better idea of what we need to do



The Prep School



Phillips Pitch - the new artificial hockey pitch

well, it could take three days and then Thursday and Friday he focuses on just cricket."

"Once the summer term finishes, we have an annual International Cricket Festival which is played over the course of three days with three touring teams. Our former pupils come back in the second week of July for a week and then we have various lettings on the main cricket field known as "The Front"."

"This year, we've been appointed to host the prestigious Bunbury Festival - which is the top sixty U15 cricket players in the country - for a week in August. There are various plans in the pipeline for that and, nearer the time, we'll have a better idea of what we need to do depending on the weather."

Like most independent schools, lettings has become an important area of income for Felsted, but it has reduced the time for renovations and other more invasive maintenance. Some of the smaller cricket squares on site will get renovated in July

and August, with other areas getting attention when time and scheduling allows at other times of the year, such as early autumn.

Half-terms are generally used to feed the pitches and mild weather throughout January 2019 meant a more extensive aeration operation took place on the cricket squares, outfield, rugby pitches and tennis courts with a Wiedenmann Terra Spike.

Nick regards the Wiedenmann as one of the most important machines he has because it opens the ground up and gets air into the root system, reducing compaction and improving drainage at the same time. His next most important machine is the Sisis drag brush which he uses to keep the leaf dry to reduce the risk of disease.

Away from machinery, an irrigation system for the rugby pitches and cricket squares is the next step for improvement. Like most turfcare professionals in summer 2018, Nick was faced with the stifling heat and the challenges it brought. A lack of irrigation is becoming a growing issue, but the school



Prep School cricket



The grounds are used for football, rugby and cricket at various times



At the moment, the plan for irrigation is ongoing. We have a meeting coming up which will hopefully mean we can take it a stage further and I very much hope that, in the next year or two, the irrigation will be improved

has recognised it needs to be addressed.

“At the moment, the plan for irrigation is ongoing. We very much hope that, in the next year or two, the irrigation will be improved because, with climate change, it will be of paramount importance to Felsted as we are in one of the driest parts of the country.”

“Last summer, we had a period where we didn’t have any rain for eight or nine weeks and that had an impact on our grass tennis courts, cricket wickets and cricket outfield.”

“Once the impact of irrigation is seen in one area, we hope there will be a desire to have it across all of the pitches.”

“In terms of development, we had the sand filled artificial hockey pitch rejuvenated last summer and all of our cricket squares were upgraded a few years ago.”

“I think you’re always trying to improve things if you can but, at the end of the day, a lot comes down to what your budget is and what you can allocate to that.”

Seeing the grounds of Felsted and hearing Nick talk passionately about his work goes a long way to explaining the high standards in place and the progress that has been made in his time there.

It is an educational establishment that excels in every area it has ventured into, be it academic, student welfare or sport. For a number of years, Felsted has been run the correct way by the right people and, with Nick and his eight staff working on the grounds and gardens, progress and excellence will continue.



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Hockey pitches



Felsted celebrated its 450th anniversary in 2014, one of only a handful of schools in the country who can claim this historic milestone.

A wide variety of celebratory events were held to mark the wonderful occasion. The celebrations got off to a majestic start in March 2014, as the entire school community (Prep & Senior) descended upon St Paul's Cathedral in London. The service also saw a number of VIPs in attendance, such as the High Sheriff of Essex, Julia Able-Smith, and Robert Finch,

former Lord Mayor of London and former Felstedian.

Other events throughout the year included an OF Anniversary Dinner at Middle Temple Hall, a CCF & Corps of Drums Reunion Dinner and a Family Day - which saw the whole school and local village community come together to celebrate the 450 year legacy - an anniversary cricket match, and a celebratory 450th Winter Ball.

Felsted enjoyed its crowning moment of the celebratory year when Her Majesty The Queen and HRH The Duke of Edinburgh visited the school in the May of that year. Following in the footsteps of Her Majesty The Queen Mother, who visited for the 400th anniversary, it was an extremely special occasion.

During an extraordinary day, Her Majesty unveiled two plaques commemorating the 450th anniversary and also the rebuilding of Follyfield House. The plaque unveiling was followed by the presentation of a number of gifts, including a boot scraper made by Felsted pupils and staff.



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Penshurst Park Cricket Club

A Place in history for a village ground



Cricket has been played ‘in the back garden’ of one of England’s foremost stately homes for nearly 300 years.

Neville Johnson paid a mid-winter visit to a village club whose ground is one of the oldest active venues in the country. It is one of only one hundred clubs to feature in *Remarkable Village Cricket Grounds*, published last year

Sir Philip Sidney has been described as the ultimate Renaissance man. Some say, if cricket had been played in the 16th century he would have been a CB Fry, the late-Victorian and Edwardian academic, writer and sports star who was good at everything. Sir Philip would have captained England at cricket if there had been such a thing, so said author Pete Langman in *The Country House Cricketer*.

As it was, he was a celebrated poet and scholar, Elizabethan courtier, and died a hero at the age of thirty-one fighting for Queen and country. He was the first commoner to be honoured with a state funeral. He was also owner of Penshurst

Place in Kent, which Henry VIII had gifted to his father. I’m here on this chill January Sunday morning to get a feel of the history that pervades this lovely village cricket ground and talk to its secretary-cum-groundsman Jake Cheeseman.

Surely, few - if any - village cricket clubs have a more impressive backdrop than Penshurst Park Cricket Club.

Penshurst Place, first built in the mid-14th century, has a stately presence not far beyond the boundary along one side of the ground. It is acknowledged as one of the finest examples of a fortified medieval manor house in England. It was a favourite hunting lodge used by Henry VIII, and conveniently close to Hever Castle, the





Jake Cheeseman, very much the club's all-rounder. Its soon-to-be electrified pavilion in the background



Rolling, rolling ... maybe not. The club's 70s roller stays put on this damp winter Sunday

home of Anne Boleyn.

Penshurst Place Estate these days belongs to the De L'Isle family, whose 18th century ancestors inherited them through the Sidney family's female line. The 2,500-acre estate is open all year round, but the house and its celebrated Elizabethan walled gardens, much like it was in Sir Philip Sidney's day, can only be visited between Easter and October. There is a full calendar of year round events that also bring thousands of visitors here annually. At summer weekends, you can also see village cricket at its best.

Penshurst Park is a busy cricket club to say the least. It has two Saturday league teams and a Sunday side with a full fixture list of friendlies. More than fifty games are played each season in what was once part

of Sir Philip Sidney's back garden. A pretty decent standard of cricket is played here because the club has enjoyed an unbroken spell in the top division of Kent's County Village League since 1996, with a hat trick of titles in 2012, 2013 and 2014.

It is easy to imagine a balmy summer afternoon of cricket in this setting. But today is anything but a cricket day. A chill wind and sleet stinging your face every now and then does test the imagination more than a little. One constant that surely is there during the playing season is the sound of baaing sheep grazing beyond the boundary fence, more of which later.

Another reliable constant, at what is said to be the oldest privately-owned cricket venue in the country, is the aforementioned Jake. The club's 10-strip square had its first

cut since the autumn a couple of weeks earlier and he's there with half a mind on a first rolling of the year. The surface is too wet though, so he turns his mind to other things, puts on his 'club secretary hat' and chats to me out of the wind in the visitors' changing room.

"Cricket was first played on this ground in 1724, and though it's not clear when the club itself first got started, records show there have definitely been matches against visiting sides here since 1752," he says.

No arguing, it's well and truly been home to generations of cricketers, a lot more than virtually any other club.

As well as his secretarial and groundcare duties, Jake is club fixtures secretary and its Sunday captain. As a player, he bats and bowls. A 99 at rival club Southborough was



Dramatic skies: dramatic backdrop. A village cricket setting second to none



Contractor Jason Carr aerating the 10-strip square earlier in January



The club found out about this potential income source of funds just a couple of years ago because another local club had tapped into it. Last year, Jake did likewise and managed to get £3,000 to upgrade its boundary fence

a last season high spot for him, but he admits it was an annoying near miss. He is a true all-rounder, on and off the field.

“The ground belongs to the Penshurst Place Estate, and the club pays a peppercorn rent of £140 a year,” he says. “The club has an excellent relationship with

the Estate.”

“Only occasionally do we have meetings with Estate Manager Ben Thomas and then only if there’s an issue to resolve. He’s a cricketer himself, though actually for another local side, so he knows all about club life.”

The pavilion we’re sitting in dates back to

about 1900 and was formerly a cow shed. It too is owned by the Estate but, by default and usage over many decades, it has come to be regarded as the club’s.

In recent times, the club has spent a lot of money on the pavilion, more than £30,000, says Jake, on increasing the size of the changing rooms, extending the equipment shed, a new kitchen, and having the whole building relined and painted. The next major project is to bring electricity to the pavilion and a grant of £8,000 from Sport England means there’s every chance it should be in place by the start of the coming season. I

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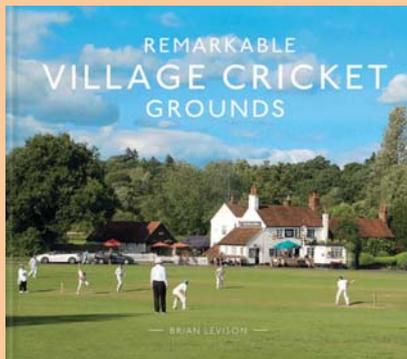
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Published in autumn 2018, Remarkable Village Cricket Grounds is a splendid book to dip into, even if you have only a passing interest in cricket.

Featuring stunning photography, courtesy of David Major, it is authored by Brian Levison and comes hot on the heels of his *Remarkable Cricket Grounds*, published in 2017, which was shortlisted for Sports Book of the Year.

As you might expect, a number of the grounds feature castles and stately homes as their backdrop, but the majority are simply just rural grounds in glorious locations.

Amongst these are Ambleside in Cumbria, Old Town in Yorkshire, Leigh in Kent, Valley of the Rocks in Devon, and Abbotsbury in Dorset, a ground I played at on a number of occasions, usually without success!

Of the more 'stately' variety, Bamburgh Castle in Northumberland, Stoneleigh Abbey in Warwickshire and Raby Castle in Co. Durham ooze grandeur.

If I have a personal favourite, it is Goodwood where its quaint thatched pavilion faces up to the magnificent house in some quirky architectural stand-off. It is here that I used to watch my uncle and cousin play, both of whom captained the home side.

So, keep it on the coffee table and open it up when Brexit news becomes too tiresome. It is guaranteed to lighten your soul.

Remarkable Village Cricket Grounds is published by Pavilion and is available from all good bookshops and online for £25. www.pavilionbooks.com

About the author: Brian Levison has a lifelong interest in cricket and played club cricket for several years. His books include the highly acclaimed cricket anthology *All in a Day's Play* (Constable, 2012) and *Amazing & Extraordinary Facts: Cricket* (David & Charles, 2012). He was one of six writers and commentators selected for the MCC's 'Cricket's Crown Jewels' exhibition in the Lord's Museum celebrating 150 years of the Wisden Cricketers' Almanack in 2014.

Review by Peter Britton



The square looking good after its first cut since autumn

now realise why we're relying on shafts of outdoor light through the shutters!

Though not a trained groundsman as such, Jake is a bit more than a typical keen club doer. Level 3-trained at Hadlow College, he is a horticulturalist by profession, working as a gardener on the 1000-acre Fairlawne Estate at nearby Shipbourne, long-associated with racehorse training. Outdoor work is his life and he loves it. It's just a matter of arranging tasks at the ground to fit in with his working day at Fairlawne.

Jake tells me the square generally drains quite well and, during the season, irrigation is by good old-fashioned hosepipe and moveable sprinkler. A job not too far away is giving the outfield a trim as he knows it can quickly get out of hand pre-season. He has a couple of decent, but seasoned 36-inch cylinder machines for this; one a Ransomes Mastiff, the other a Dennis. They still do a very good job, he says.

However, he is busy right now trying to get other grant funds to upgrade his mowers

as well as restarting a club junior section.

The club owns all its kit and Jake has a couple of reliable club mates to help him with upkeep routines: Graham Nicholls for the outfield and John Boyden on the square.

A few weeks earlier, Jake had called in local pitch contractor Jason Carr to aerate the square, but he is definitely looking to get a new square mower with drop-in cassettes that would enable him to do his own spiking. An up to £5,000 annual grant from Gatwick Airport, available to organisations and clubs like Penshurst Park CC inconvenienced by low flying jets coming in and out of London's second airport, would do the trick and Jake is very much on the case.

The club found out about this potential source of funds just a couple of years ago because another local club had tapped into it. Last year, Jake did likewise and managed to get £3,000, courtesy of London's second airport, to upgrade its boundary fence. Several Jumbos flying in from far distant parts certainly loomed large on the skyline in the hour or two I was there, a passing



The roll-on roll-off covers courtesy of an ECB Grant



The Gatwick Grant funded boundary fence. You have to fly over it to get a six!



Not far away, the magnificent Elizabethan gardens of Penshurst Place

distraction if you want a single for a half century, but not really much of a nuisance.

The ground has had a complete boundary fence since the 1950s, probably to keep out the sheep, though Jake is not sure. It gives rise to a local rule, which many a village club has to adopt to cover unusual ground positioning and surrounds. You have to clear it completely to get a six. If you strike it anywhere, on the full or otherwise, it's a four.

Another quirk at Penshurst is that it is not

allowed to use site screens, as decreed by the Estate and Natural England. At one end, in your eye line is the magnificent Penshurst Place, and it's been there for over 500 years, so not much movement behind the ball!

An ECB grant this year for new benches is yet another welcome input for this resourceful club. An earlier one footed the bill for covers for the square.

The club's first home game is on 20th

April and, later in the summer, it will be welcoming the Singapore Cricket Club, over here to watch some of the Ashes series. Electric power in the pavilion will help it be even more hospitable.

The sheep are still baaing and another jet flies over beneath leaden clouds. Roll on the cricket season!



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Ludlow Racecourse

Ludlow's road to progress

They say that new brooms sweep clean but, at Ludlow Racecourse, **Tom Moreland** - in his first groundsman role - aims to keep a balance between the latest science and techniques and traditions which have seen the course through the last 294 years. Jane Carley reports

When Ludlow Racing Club was looking to recruit a new head groundsman in 2017, Tom Moreland was already well known to the team, as a supplier of marquees for functions and racedays.

"I'd always liked the racecourse and said that I'd be interested in any groundsmanship roles that came up. But it has been a steep learning curve to step into the head groundsman's job," he explains.

As well as being familiar with working outdoors and leading a team, Tom had the benefit of a family background in agricultural engineering and connections with the machinery trade. Industry training, plus the support of Clerk of the Course Simon Sherwood and groundsmen Roger and Chris Jones, who between them have more than seventy years' service at Ludlow, have helped him develop his skills to shape and improve the popular Shropshire course.

Tom explains how the team works together: "As a former leading jockey and trainer, Simon can relate to how the ground will ride from experience, so his input is massive. He's really supported me in this new role - I'd never even been horseracing and, after twenty years doing marquees, it was a big change."

Simon adds that he comes from agricultural background, so is used to more traditional groundsmanship but is keen to embrace the latest science and techniques that Tom wishes to apply.

Apart from its distinctive road crossings,

the course itself is a traditional national hunt track, flattish, with just a couple of undulations. The tight, fast layout suits a particular type of horse, suggests Simon.

With a few Grade 2 races, but mainly Grade 3, Tom comments that Ludlow attracts a higher standard of runner because it is renowned for generous prize money.

"I have done a bit of research and found a huge number of horses that have run here and gone on to do well at Aintree or Cheltenham," he says.

The personal touch is another attraction - Tom liaises with trainers bringing their runners overnight before racing - some of which travel from as far as Ireland - and keeps an eye on the horses as they arrive.

Ludlow also presents unusually favourable winter conditions: "The racecourse is on a gravel bed, so is very quick draining - after this dry winter I was still watering in January," comments Tom.

Simon points out: "In a wet year, we do very well when other courses are struggling, as trainers look for better ground to run their horses on. Irrigation is key in the autumn and we often need to put on three to four inches a day."

"We started irrigating about twelve days before racing in 2018. Because of weather, we couldn't ever get it soft, but could produce safe, consistent footing," adds Tom.

Ludlow has its own reservoir for water, pumped out of the river and a borehole. It is applied to the wide expanse of track using a Briggs boom pulled out twice down the home straight, with two further Briggs outfits





Surrounded by picturesque countryside and with a long history, Ludlow Racing Club is now looking to add modern groundsmanship techniques to meet the demands of the 21st century sport



The home straight, with the Victorian grandstand in view



Head Groundsman Tom Moreland (left) and Clerk of the Course Simon Sherwood



Chris (left) and Roger Jones have more than seventy years' experience between them



Low loading trailers carry the rubber mats for the road crossings and save multiple trips with the mats on pallets

on the back and far side.

"We've also added sprinklers on the chase course with the first ones going in just before I started, and last season I had another lot put in over the far side under the woods - they are a godsend," says Tom, who lives on site and has taken charge of irrigation and the early starts required.

The main B4635 road divides the course and there are no less than seven road crossings in total, which provide a challenge: "The road is covered on racedays with a system of mats for the horses to run over - rubber underneath and coir on top. We have two trailers with rubber mats on for the main crossing and a team of eight men put them down on the morning of the meeting. They pull the rubber mats out onto the road, unroll the coir mats over them and put sand in the joints. At the end of racing, they roll the coir mats up, lace them up again and take the rubber mats away," explains Tom.

"It is labour intensive, but we use the same team of eight men at every meeting and they work well together. During racing

they attend the fences nearest the crossings so they are on hand for the removal."

Rubber mats were previously kept on pallets, transported one at a time, but investment in the low loading trailers has made the job a lot easier, he points out.

Simon comments that there is quite a cost involved - the coir mats are replaced on a rolling programme at cost of £20,000 per year and the edges of the course have to be returfed each summer due to the added wear.

There are other practical implications too - the road means that service vehicles can't follow horses the whole way round the course, so a quad and a UTV are used to keep an eye on the runners as they race.

The track also surrounds Ludlow Golf Club, which has an impact on the turf as the fairway crossings become compacted by golfer traffic. On racedays, the club is closed, and racegoer cars parked on the fairways.

"When I started, I knew that quite a few changes were needed to the groundcare

regime," explains Tom. "Ludlow Racing Club is run by a board of directors rather than a single manager, so I can make decisions, discuss them with Simon and then action them, unless major investment is needed."

Tom has worked closely with Tom Weaver from turf specialist ALS Amenity, undertaking soil sampling to assess nutrient needs, although the track is already showing improvements from updates made to the fertiliser and seeding regimes.

A move from agricultural granular fertiliser to specialist products has had a significant impact on the growth and condition of the turf, with Generate 12:3:9, which contains seaweed, applied in spring to support the end of season fixtures.

During the closed season, overseeding with Action Replay, which includes a number of new ryegrasses, brought rapid establishment and good cover ready for the start of the autumn 2018 season, when slow release fertiliser Lebanon ProScape 12:6:24 was applied.

"This has helped the turf keep its colour



The mats in place the day before racing, ready for unrolling ahead of the first race



A distinctive feature of Ludlow Racecourse is that it is dissected by road crossings, which have to be covered with rubber and coir mats for racing



Chase fences are a mixture of traditional and modern: spruce is used to give an inviting appearance, but the wooden take off board on open ditches has been replaced with rubber for safety



The track surrounds Ludlow Golf Club, and the traffic from golfers causes compaction where the fairway crosses

over winter, with little of the yellowing that you would expect," comments Tom. "You can see a difference between the surrounding fairway and the course."

He explains: "Tom Weaver and I discuss our requirements and he comes up with solutions. It's a challenge to keep racecourse turf performing well because it gets cut up so much. If we get a lot of rain on a raceday, it can look like a ploughed field afterwards, and we have to get it back to as near perfect as possible for the following week."

Tom also instigated a programme of aeration which had not previously been considered a priority - he rescued the slitter from some nettles and fitted it with new tines!

"The Verti-Drain was predominantly used on the bad areas where the golfers cross, but I use it a lot more, and do the whole course two or three times a year. We also have a Cambridge roller to level the course - it's controversial as we want to avoid compaction, but I believe it is the best way

to smooth out the hoofmarks and it's a matter of balancing it with aeration."

"All the equipment was here, but a lot of it was tired," he comments. "In discussion with Simon, I came up with a wishlist and one of the first purchases was a tractor. We looked at a premium brand second-hand, but the cost with loader and turf tyres was prohibitive. My contacts at dealers Farol managed to find us a 2009 Kubota M8540 which fits the bill."

Tom also sourced a John Deere X740 lawn tractor and collector for fine turf areas such as the parade ring and lawns. Its predecessor, a domestic lawn tractor, is retained for back up!

Much of the work remains manual, such as moving hurdles, requiring a team of four part-time staff to resite them on fresh ground after each meeting.

Steeplechase fences also move after four to five meetings - they are mounted on steel frames so can be towed with a tractor - better than the old wooden frames, which needed regular maintenance, points out

Chris Jones.

Padded hurdles are another innovation which have reduced maintenance costs considerably - at the first January meeting, just two were damaged, compared to as many as twenty of the old-style hurdles which could need repair after each meeting.

"They are much safer too, reducing the risk of injuries to horses," comments Chris.

Expecting breakages, Tom purchased a supply of spares for the new hurdles, but they are all still in the shed!

The steeplechase fences have had a facelift. One of Tom's first jobs was to update the water jump to meet BHA standards which require it to be no more than 3in deep, and line it with rubber.

Spruce is sourced from local estates to give the front of the fences their traditional, inviting appearance, but Tom has replaced the wooden guard rail on open ditches with rubber, to prevent injuries should horses strike it on take-off or when falling.

"I'm looking to make changes and modernise, but retain the character that



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A new recycling initiative has cut waste and saved on labour costs

War on waste

Integrating Ludlow into the community as part of the BHA's Racing Together initiative is another goal for Tom, and an early project has been to work with Zero Waste Events to improve recycling rather than just using skips for raceday rubbish.

After touring the site with Ali Thomas of Zero Waste, Tom introduced bin sets comprising a bin each for non-recyclable rubbish, plastic/cans and paper. For the kitchens and outside caterers, he opted for a food-waste bin, a sack for recycling and a bin for non-recyclable packaging.

Skips were swapped for 1100 Euro bins, with food waste bins collected separately.

Zero Waste Events collect the waste front and back of house and litter pick to keep on top of the inevitable betting slips.

Ludlow now recycles 85% of the waste produced on a race day and has seen that racegoers use the bins well with far less litter dropped.

"The day after the meeting, stands are much cleaner and tidying up after racing is easier. Recycling also makes commercial sense: previously skips cost £960 alone, with two members of staff needed for two days giving a total labour cost of around £420."

"Using the Zero Waste team, a managed wheelie bin system with collections after each meeting costs a standing charge of 0.10p per day (large bins x 8) and the bin collection at £170, for trade waste, cardboard, and food waste. The cost of the Zero Waste team was £350, plus £320 for staff to clear up the day after."



This machinery shed was apparently used as a dance hall when the racecourse did duty as a POW camp in WWII. The John Deere ride-on is a new addition to speed up preparation of lawned areas

makes Ludlow what it is. It can take a lot for management to realise that a train of thought will work, but we're getting there."

One area that has seen a reshuffle is how the grounds team work on racedays. The three full time groundsmen are supported by a crew of regular casual workers, many of whom are retired.

"I've altered what the men do on a raceday, who goes where, and split the team up to look after different sections - it seems to work well and meet the demands of modern racing. For example, we have four attendants to each fence now, to deal with the safety warning flags etc."

All course repairs are carried out by local part-time staff, who also come in the day before racing to sweep and tidy up in the grandstand and enclosures.

"I have one who arranges the treaders-in, so I negotiate with him how many treaders are needed depending on how badly the surface is cut up, and then delegate the management of that team to him. Once you've got a system in place that works well, it's just easy," comments Tom.

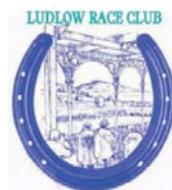
Simon comments that, in common with other leisure activities, racegoers' expectations are ever higher: "They appreciate the friendly, professional atmosphere, and trainers have confidence that we can present consistent ground and will be honest about it. We're always looking

at ways to develop, with an increasing number of themed days, such as a charity day, our new sponsor Wye Valley Brewery's Day and Ladies Day at the end of the season."

Much of the grandstand dates back to Victorian times and adds to the course's charm, but updates have recently been made to owners' and trainers' hospitality to improve comfort, with the weighing room and winners' enclosure next on the agenda for an upgrade.

"We've made lots of small improvements, such as replacing gas bottles dotted around the buildings with underground tanks, tidying up and saving costs. We have conferences and events to think about, so the course has to be kept looking good year round, and in the closed period we plan for the future as the new season soon comes round," explains Tom.

"This summer, the parade ring will get some attention to tackle moss, and we will scarify the course to open up the top layer. We plan to do this in house; we have a rake but need to find way to collect the debris. It's always the aim to use the core team and trusted casuals; for example, we recently hired in digger to do a construction task ourselves."



Steeplechase fences are moved onto fresh ground after four or five meetings each season



Irrigation has proved vital over the winter, with the track's own reservoir storing water from the river and a borehole

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Tim Johnson, Course Manager, Worsley Golf Club

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Birds of Prey

In the face of competition

Despite breeding and reintroduction programmes, the UK's birds of prey still face threats from unscrupulous individuals and syndicates out for personal gain. **Peter Britton** reports on the current state of play.

Even for the most armchair of conservationists, the sight of a hovering kestrel or a soaring buzzard is still a delight. For the keen ornithologist, a stooping peregrine, a hobby catching a dragonfly on the wing or an osprey plucking a fish out of a lake are truly sights to behold. The hunting prowess of the UK's birds of prey is simply nature at its finest.

And yet, even while we watch these spectacles in awe, many birds of prey are being deliberately persecuted by a small, yet ignorant minority out for personal gain, either by stealing eggs or young, destroying nests, or simply killing them to 'protect' their own interests. And all this whilst breeding and release programmes are in place for some of the rarer members of this remarkable family.

The family comprises falcons, hawks, owls and eagles. The smallest falcon is the merlin

- no bigger than a blackbird. Kestrel, hobby and peregrine complete this group. The largest group is hawks, comprising sparrowhawk, goshawk, red kite, common buzzard, honey buzzard, rough-legged buzzard, osprey and three harriers - Marsh, hen and the extremely rare Montagues; there are thought to be just a handful of breeding pairs in the country.

Two eagles regularly breed in the UK; the golden and white-tailed (also known as the sea eagle or even the white-tailed sea eagle). Owls complete the family, of which the little owl, as its name implies, is the smallest, and the short-eared owl is the largest. Tawny, barn and long-eared complete this group, although there is a case for including the huge Eurasian eagle owl, many of which have escaped captivity and are believed to be breeding in the wild, and the snowy owl, an occasional but regular visitor to the northern-most reaches

of Scotland. The eagle owl has the most piercing eyes of any bird of prey, in my opinion.

All groups see passing and rare migrant birds into the UK. These are too infrequent for mention here, although each one is a magnet for ornithologists when they do arrive on our shores.

So, what are the issues facing birds of prey? Put simply, competition. Land owners, farmers and gamekeepers are the main culprits, despite their cries of innocence, whilst unscrupulous individuals and organised syndicates steal eggs and young for considerable financial gain. Peregrines, for example, have been known to change hands for £200,000 in the Middle East, where falconry is still a very popular pastime.

By contrast, here in the UK, all birds of prey used for falconry are bred in captivity and are strictly monitored from 'source to hand', whilst birds of prey sanctuaries are heavily involved in breeding and release programmes. Flying a bird of prey in public is both educational and engaging.

Where birds of prey compete with humans is through the killing of livestock - lambs especially - and the taking of 'precious' game birds, and their



Many birds of prey are being deliberately persecuted by a small, yet ignorant minority out for personal gain

Right: a buzzard killed by poisoned bait, in this case a rabbit which could have been eaten by other wildlife or even a domestic pet



The handsome peregrine falcon, the fastest animal in the world. It can reach 200mph during a stoop





Many grouse moors are bereft of breeding raptors, even though the terrain is ideal for them. Nest destruction is the likely cause, along with shooting and poisoning

chicks, bred specifically for shooting. Grouse shoots are particularly seen as the enemy where the red grouse compete with raptors within the natural habitat.

Many grouse moors are bereft of breeding raptors, even though the terrain is ideal for them. Nest destruction is the likely cause, along with shooting and poisoning. Two ringed, named and tracked hen harriers went ‘missing’ on the ‘Glorious 12th’ (of August). Coincidence? Probably not.

The shooting fraternity say that, whilst they acknowledge that some incidences are from within their own ranks, it is the few that are giving the sport a bad name. The RSPB (Royal Society for the Protection of Birds) say that their map of known incidences is just the tip of the iceberg, and that actual figures are considerably higher.

The map shown here details 97 cases across the UK from 2017 (2018 data is not yet available). The majority are shootings. Next comes poisoning. This latter method is considerably worrying as any poisoned bait will enter the food chain and not specifically target raptors, thereby endangering many other species from smaller birds, crows, stoats, weasels, badgers, foxes and even domestic animals.

I won't go into the whys and wherefores of countryside pursuits here, suffice to say that working ‘within the law’ should be the



minimum requirement for anyone involved in hunting, shooting and fishing.

Much like fox hunting, where hunting with dogs still continues even though it was banned in 2004 (2002 in Scotland and still legal in Northern Ireland), birds of prey have been protected by law since the Wildlife & Countryside Act of 1981. Penalties are in place for anyone breaking the law, ranging from heavy fines to prison sentences. Sadly, even though most police forces have wildlife crime officers who perform a difficult task

within stretched resources, penalties handed out rarely match the crime and will often go unpunished, again due to lack of resources.

Now, whilst it is important that a crime against nature is dealt with according to the law, it is perfectly understandable that crimes against fellow humans take precedence. That is how it has to be. Yet, as the laws are in place, surely maximum fines and sentences should be handed down to act as some sort of deterrent to those hell



A ten week suspended prison sentence for this crime against nature

bent on breaking the law for personal gain.

One fairly recent high profile case highlights the problem rather well:

A gamekeeper who was guilty of one of Britain's worst ever cases of killing birds of prey was spared an immediate jail sentence because the judge heaped blame on his employees rather than the individual.

The man had poisoned hawks with banned pesticides to stop them eating pheasants which were due to be shot for sport on the estate where he worked.

He was convicted of killing ten buzzards and a sparrowhawk and could have been jailed for up to six months.

But the district judge gave him a ten week jail sentence, suspended for a year, after criticising his employers for failing to properly supervise and train him.

The judge said the man had lost his job, his home and his good name by using out of date and banned pesticides "in a deliberate way to reduce the population of birds of prey".

He added: "The only motivation I can see for this is to protect the birds the estate breeds for its shoot. "No doubt, like many in his position, he appears to have largely been left to his own devices in his day to day duties."

"There is some disagreement as to the level of supervision given by his employers, but even if he was subject to some form of annual appraisal, that was clearly not enough."

The judge clearly thought that the employers were to blame, yet no charges were ever brought against them. So a sentence of one week for each buzzard killed was deemed satisfactory. That is no deterrent whatsoever.

It is expected that the number of RSPB 'known' incidences will rise above the 100 mark this year, whilst a much larger number will simply go undetected.

A red kite recently found dead in Castle Douglas, Scotland was found to be a victim of poisoning. The location of this latest death was just a few miles from The Galloway Red Kite trail, a main tourist attraction for the area as well as being home

Red Kites poisoned in Co Down



CASE STUDY

Last summer, police appealed for information after the death of a pair of protected red kites through poisoning in Co Down.

It was the latest in a series of incidents involving red kites, which were reintroduced to Northern Ireland ten years ago.

The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds said it had been alerted to a male bird in distress, which died a short time later, close to a known nest site.

When a RSPB NI project officer arrived at the scene she found a dead female parent bird. A rescue mission was then launched to save three orphaned eggs found in the nest. This included attempts to get other birds to adopt the eggs.

There was mixed success, with one failed attempt and the other with inconclusive results.

Subsequent toxicology tests on the dead birds revealed that both died from Carbofuran poisoning.

Claire Barnett, RSPB NI Conservation Team Leader, said they were "shocked and saddened by what is the loss of a generation of red kites."

She added: "With only around twenty breeding pairs in Northern Ireland, our red kite population is particularly vulnerable to persecution."

"Carbofuran is an illegal and deadly poison and should not be used in our countryside. It

is such an incredibly dangerous substance."

"We would like to once again make it clear that red kites are mostly scavengers and feed on roadkill and other dead animals they find on their foraging flights. During the breeding season, adults will often hunt young crows, magpies, rats and rabbits. They are no threat to livestock or game."

Police Service of Northern Ireland (PSNI) Wildlife Liaison Officer, Emma Meredith, added: "Incidents such as this give rise to concerns, as poisons are generally very dangerous. We would have serious concerns over any poison but particularly over Carbofuran."

"We are disappointed that we are still dealing with cases involving Carbofuran, an incredibly dangerous substance and one which can kill birds of prey but also a child, family pet or any adult coming into contact with it."

"We would remind the public that if they discover a bird of prey that they suspect has been poisoned or killed in any other suspicious circumstances to leave the bird/s and/or bait in situ and call the PSNI as soon as possible."

"If anyone has information about the use of Carbofuran and/or the death of these protected birds then we would be really keen to hear from them. The person responsible needs to be identified to ensure that no further risk is posed to other wildlife, domestic pets, or even humans."

Red kites, along with all birds of prey, are protected in Northern Ireland under the Wildlife (Northern Ireland) Order 1985, as amended by the Wildlife and Natural Environment (NI) Act 2011. Carbofuran is a highly toxic pesticide which has been banned across the EU since 2001 due to its high toxicity towards wildlife and humans.



This poisoned red kite was a released individual fitted with a tracking device

Birds of prey and the law

The Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 is the primary legislation which protects animals, plants and habitats in the UK.

Under the Wildlife and Countryside Act, a wild bird is defined as any bird of a species which is resident in or is a visitor to the European Territory of any member state in a wild state.

Game birds however are not included in this definition (except for limited parts of the Act). They are covered by the Game Acts, which fully protect them during the close season.

Basic protection

All birds, their nests and eggs are protected by law and it is thus an offence, with certain exceptions to:

- Intentionally kill, injure or take any wild bird
- Intentionally take, damage or destroy the nest of any wild bird while it is in use or being built
- Intentionally take or destroy the egg of any wild bird
- Have in one's possession or control any wild bird, dead or alive, or any part of a wild bird, which has been taken in contravention of the Act or the Protection of Birds Act 1954
- Have in one's possession or control any egg or part of an egg which has been taken in contravention of the Act or the Protection of Birds Act 1954
- Use traps or similar items to kill, injure or take wild birds
- Have in one's possession or control any bird of a species occurring on Schedule 4 of the Act unless registered, and in most cases ringed, in accordance with the Secretary of State's regulations.
- Intentionally or recklessly disturb any wild bird listed while it is nest building, or at a nest containing eggs or young, or disturb the dependent young of such a bird.

Fines

Penalties that can be imposed for criminal offences in respect of a single bird, nest or egg contrary to the Wildlife and Countryside Act 1981 is an unlimited fine, up to six months imprisonment or both.

For further information

For detailed information, it is advisable to consult the Act itself, which you can find on the UK Legislation website (www.Legislation.gov.uk).

Please also note that, because of devolution, there are now some significant differences in the law between the constituent countries of the UK.



Falconry is still a popular pastime in the Middle East, where birds can change hands for up to £200,000

to numerous other birds.

Sadly, birds of prey share many habitats that we humans like to utilise for ourselves. Whether it be the lowlands, uplands or forests, there is always something we want, usually to shoot, or to rear animals purely for shooting. Because of this, raptors of the UK find themselves the main competition for some individuals in our society.

Raptor persecution is a vendetta that almost feels like a right of passage within some social groups. The reasons individuals object to raptors are no longer 'reasons' but excuses; excuses that mask a deeper hatred for these magnificent birds. It's been going on for centuries, and has been illegal for decades. The rate of crime however, is still alarmingly high.

How do we bring the culprits to task? Well, how long is a piece of string? Until the deterrents are stronger, the punishments greater and the public more aware, this age-old problem will not go away.

How can you help?

Many greenkeepers and groundsmen will be working in rural areas and will have an understanding of what is going on around them.

Apart from the obvious use of bird boxes - for barn owls and kestrels especially - maintaining your grounds in an ecological manner to attract small mammals and insects will help to keep our raptors supplied

with a readily available food source.

Not only will you be helping out the UK's raptors, your members/students/end users will enjoy seeing these wonderful specimens going about their daily work.

It is vitally important that you note any change to sightings. Has a buzzard or red kite suddenly disappeared? What happened to that kestrel you used to see every day? Where did that barn owl go?

If something seems suspicious, please report it. You can do this simply enough by using the RSPB's 'Report a wildlife crime' page on their website (<https://www.rspb.org.uk/birds-and-wildlife/advice/wild-bird-crime-report-form/>). It will only take a few minutes to complete. You should also inform your local police if you believe a crime has been committed. This obviously applies to all wildlife protected by law, not just birds of prey.

Remember, to kill a bird of prey is a crime committed by humans against nature. That the perpetrators feel able to continue to carry out these appalling acts is a sorry indictment of the current state of affairs.



It's been going on for centuries, and has been illegal for decades. The rate of crime however, is still alarmingly high



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Surveying your trees

A common sense approach

In the present climate of litigation, many clubs are now afraid of the words health and safety. However, with a common sense approach to surveying your trees, an efficient and cost effective strategy can be put in place which should cover your legal requirements

It should be noted that relatively few accidents per annum arise from trees; most of these occur where adjoining highways when vehicles are moving at speed. For instance, in the past decade an average of four deaths a year have occurred as a result of roadside trees falling on vehicles or from collision's with fallen trees. The risk of being injured or killed by a falling tree is therefore low.

A new approach to tree surveys has recently come to the fore, which involves identifying areas of high and low risk. This allows the land owner to concentrate his efforts on key areas.

A tree survey plan should be put in place incorporating zones of high and low risk and the amenity importance of any notable trees.

Zoning

A landowner or manager can define areas of use, prioritising the most used areas or those which have a definite target, such as an adjoining property. This is a cost effective approach to tree surveys and can focus resources on appropriate areas. It contributes to sensible risk assessment and a defensible position in the event of an accident.

There would typically be two zones - high risk and low risk - high risk being an area which has a target (a house or building) or is used by many people every day. On a golf course, this could be a tee or green or, in general terms, could be a public footpath, road, children's playground or railway line.

Who can assess in the first instant?

An assessment should take into account all trees on the property, looking at the location of trees in relation to levels of use. A basic

assessment of risk can then be made.

This initial assessment is best done by the landowner or manager of the site as local knowledge is essential. A specialist should not be required at this stage.

Once the preliminary assessment is undertaken and areas of high and low risk are identified then a plan of monitoring can take place, taking into account the former.

Trees in low risk areas

Trees in areas of low public use, or without a target, may only require irregular inspection by a visual survey; these areas need to be recorded as part of the zoning plan. An annual visual inspection should suffice.

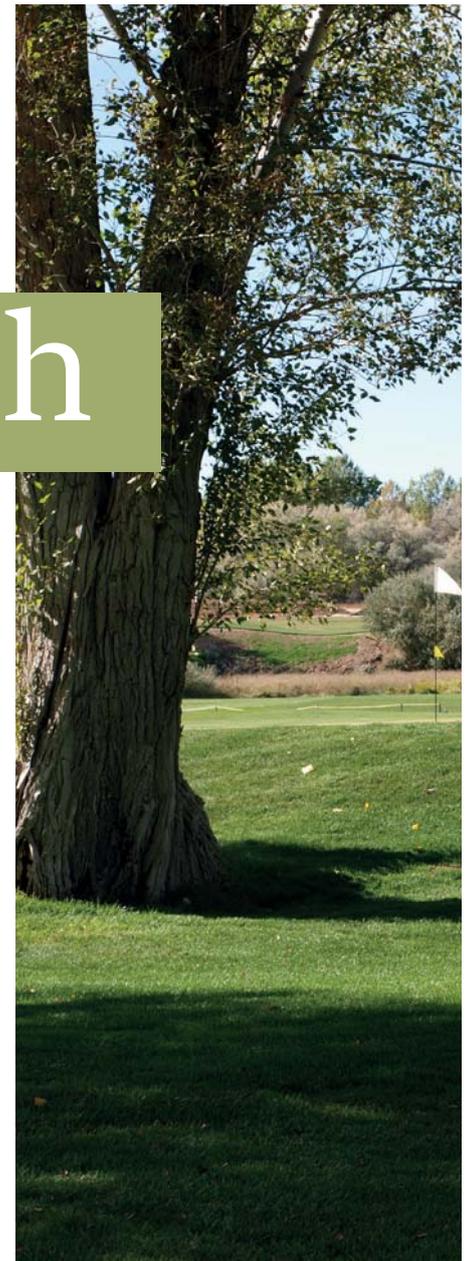
Trees in high risk areas require monitoring

An owner/manager should decide a policy appropriate to their site, which is influenced by levels of use and the importance of the trees. Trees with structural faults which are valued for their amenity value will, of course, require greater monitoring and possibly specialist advice.

It is reasonable to inspect trees within falling distance of well used areas, such as roads, footpaths or on golf course greens and tees. Zoning allows resources to be allocated to areas of high risk.

An inspection may take the form of informal observation, formal or detailed inspection.

Following zoning, it is necessary to identify the type of inspection required. Initially, this can be carried out by walking the site. Trees that require further inspection can be identified depending on their location in relation to risk, their size and condition. If there are any doubts at this stage, then specialist advice should be



There is no substitute for experience, as the drill provides evidence of only the area where it is used. The arborist's experience will tell him where the greatest likelihood of failure is liable to be



Oregon maple tree in Library Square, Trinity College

sought. Assessment should also take into account the species of tree. For example; as a rule, poplars are far more likely to fail than an oak. Ground conditions should also be assessed if an area is wet, as there is more likelihood of a tree suffering from wind blow. It may be wise to involve a specialist in the zoning process. However, once the plan is in place then annual informal visual inspection can be undertaken in-house and, any trees which are of landscape or amenity

value that show symptoms of disease or potential for failure, can then be monitored by a specialist. This ensures resources are allocated cost efficiently.

Technology can be used where the retention of important amenity trees is desired (see detailed inspections).

Informal Inspection

In certain areas of low risk, informal observation may be all that is required

and, given the general low risk posed by trees, this may be considered reasonable and appropriate. However, choosing to implement a system of informal inspection is not justification to do nothing. Informal inspections should take place and be recorded.

An informal inspection should take the form of a visual assessment of a tree's general health, structural stability and position with regard risk. Any observation which causes concern should then be acted upon and a formal inspection made.

Likewise, any reports regarding tree issues by either staff or the general public will require action, this would normally involve a formal inspection by a competent member of staff or by a specialist.

Informal surveys can be carried out by a person with good local knowledge regarding usage of the site (owner, greenstaff, consultant) and, therefore, identify areas of high risk. This does not require a specialist, although any potential problems that are identified should be acted upon.



Trees at Monkstown Golf Club



An assessment should take into account all trees on the property looking at the location of trees in relation to levels of use. A basic assessment of risk can then be made



A new approach to tree surveys has recently come to the fore which involves identifying areas of high and low risk



species to measure growth rings and bark diameter. The stability and health of the tree can then be assessed much more accurately.

As the micro drill enters the tree, the resistance of the wood changes the rotation speed of the drill. These variations are translated into a graph. The tiny drilling hole closes itself up without any damage to the tree. This then provides written evidence which, combined with the experience of the arborist, allows a rational decision to be made.

There is no substitute for experience, as the drill provides evidence of only the area where it is used. The arborist's experience will tell him, depending on the pathogen, where the greatest likelihood of failure is liable to be. Different fungal bodies attack different areas of the tree; some favour roots and butts, whilst others may favour branches or limbs. It is, therefore, important to ensure the arborist you use has sufficient experience to assess the tree before detailed surveys are under taken.

Article by John Nicholson, Independent consultant on habitat and landscape management.

Formal Inspections

A formal inspection is one where a person visits a tree for the sole reason of assessing that tree, for either inventory or health and safety purposes. This will normally take the form of a ground level inspection looking at the general health and stability of the tree; assessing die back, uprooting or structural defects.

This provides a cost effective means of identifying trees which present a risk and require a detailed inspection.

In order to undertake a formal inspection, a general knowledge of trees and the ability to identify poor health or structural weaknesses is required. Further, the capacity to assess the height and falling distance of the tree is also essential in order to establish the element of risk the tree provides. The ability to identify visible signs of ill health or structural weakness, such as cavities or heave (root plate movement), is also necessary as they may cause the tree to fail.

Detailed inspections

Detailed surveys should be carried out by a qualified specialist who is experienced in the field of investigation. The landowner should satisfy themselves of the specialist's qualifications and experience and ensure that they have the necessary insurance to carry out the tasks required.

Generally, an initial ground level visual assessment will take place to identify signs of structural failure. This may result in the need for further specialist investigation comprising either soil and root assessments, aerial surveys or the use of diagnostic tools such as resistograph drill.

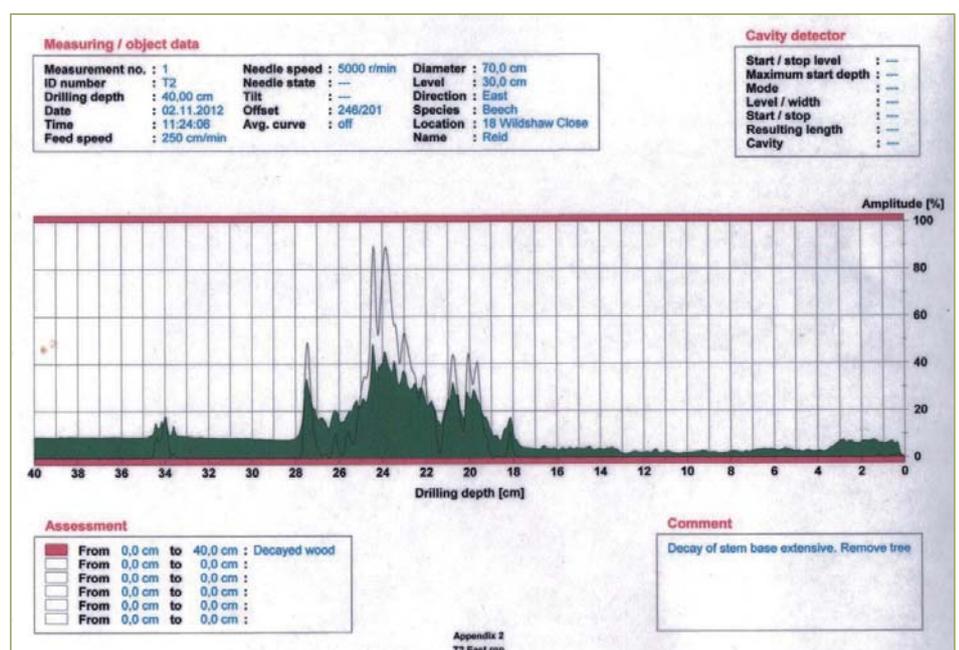
Detailed surveys are generally confined to trees of high amenity value to the landowner.

Recording details

Records should be kept to provide evidence of due care and attention. They should not be onerous, but should record date and type of inspections and any actions required and subsequent remedial works as appropriate. They do not need to include every tree, but it would be advisable to list individual trees that present risk listing and identifying them and their location, the findings of detailed inspections and the actions taken to minimise risk.

Resistograph testing

The resistograph is an instrument that detects decay and cavities in trees and timber. The arborist is able to detect wood decay, stages of rot, cavities, cracks and ring structure. It can also be used in certain





The Pannal Sports team I-r: Club Chairman Nick Viles, Club Secretary Graham Barker and Project Lead Mark Taylor

Pannal Sports Junior FC

The Pannal Game

On the outskirts of the North Yorkshire town of Harrogate, a huge project is coming to fruition to provide a 'homeless' junior football club with their own dedicated grounds to boost community sport.

Greg Rhodes reports

Pannal Sports Junior Football Club is a Charter Standard Club founded in 1966. It runs twenty-three squads ranging from U5s to U18s and currently includes more than 490 players and some 100 coaches and helpers among its ranks.

Run by a small, dedicated committee of volunteers since 2007, the mission to find a place to call home after more than fifty years as a 'wandering' club is nearing its end as recontoured and prepared former farmland turns green as the prospect of year-round sport nears.

The club's U5s, U6s and U7s train on Sunday mornings, U8s and upwards on

Saturday mornings - not on a single coordinated site, but a merry-go-round of hired public and private pitches across Harrogate. But that's all about to change in 2019.

Work started last May on Pannal Community Park, a sporting hub for the district's grassroots provision and a permanent home for Pannal Sports JFC.

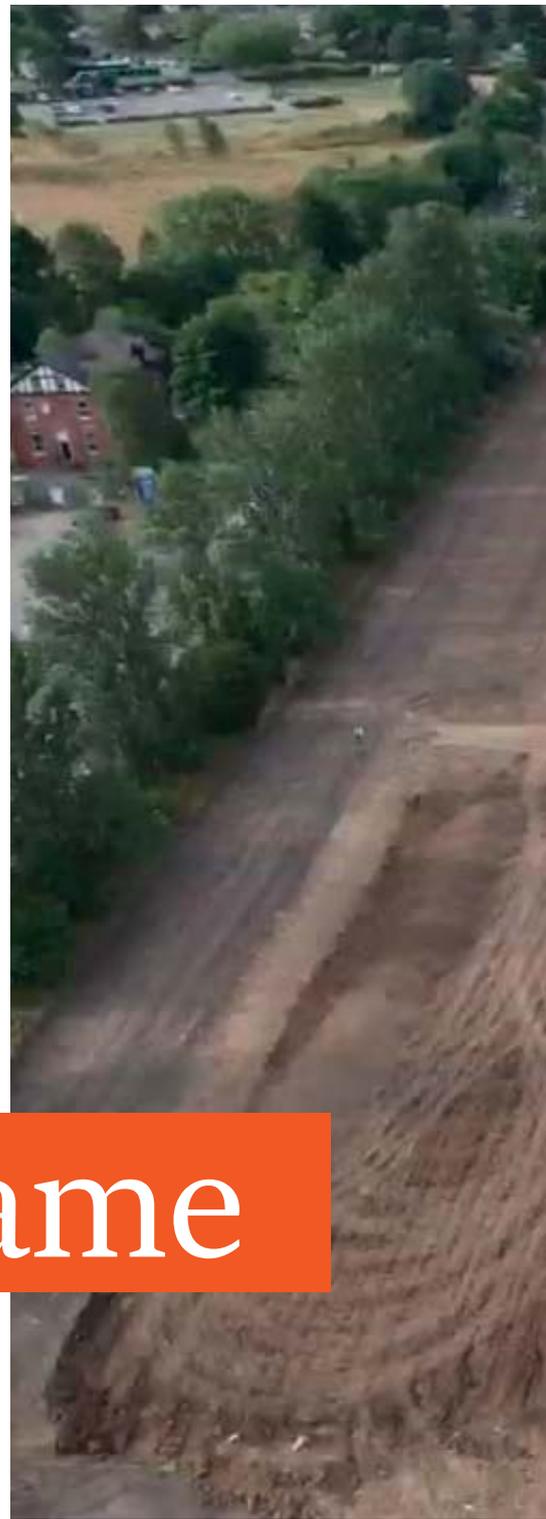
The oldest, continually active junior football club in Harrogate, it is witnessing a dream come true after ten years searching for and negotiating terms on its new headquarters.

Made possible by Premier League & The FA Facilities Fund, Football Foundation and Harrogate Borough Council grant awards,

Pannal Community Park is an impressive expanse of sporting commitment - 3.25 hectares of a total 4.29 hectares devoted to playing surfaces on three purposely-fashioned terraces, the stages for junior and senior football and cricket.

Committee member Mark Taylor is the ground's team leader steering the £1.45m undertaking, which embraces eight natural pitches, pavilion, function room and facilities for other sports clubs and community groups - oh, and a 1.5m wide, 760m long trim trail skirting the perimeter of the Park.

"Phase 1, constructing the pitches and cricket square, complete with drainage, is complete," he says, "and the spring and





summer will see the maintenance programme progress to prepare the surfaces for sport.

Phase 2 comprises building and fitting out the clubhouse and constructing the car park at the lower end of the park. Funding for this is ongoing but, once it is in place for that, work will begin."

Pannal Sports JFC worked in partnership with the Football Foundation and the County FA to secure a grant of more than £350,000 from the Premier League & The FA Facilities Fund.

Chairman Nick Viles said: "Having a place to call home has been the club's dream since I joined sixteen years ago. We would never

have realised it without the hard work and dedication of our grounds team, led by Mark Taylor, and the expertise and guidance of the Football Foundation, as well as the support of Harrogate Borough Council, club parents and the local community."

Encouraging grassroots sports is a major priority for the club, Mark adds: "We want this to be a facility that benefits the wider community. It has taken more than ten years to reach this stage, with the first seven of those taken up with searching for a site.

"The last three years have been extremely busy," he explains, "designing the scheme, gaining planning permission, securing a long-term lease and appointing a contractor."

A number of challenges had been overcome before the work could start, he continued "but we are all looking forward to being able to use the new pitches this autumn".

Football Foundation chief executive Paul Thorogood adds: "Funding from the Premier League, the FA and Government, through Sport England is playing a vital role in making the project a reality. Thanks to their investment, Pannal Sports JFC is one of the many clubs and organisations across England set to benefit from a state-of-the-art facility."

This was a ten-year mission that "picked up speed over the last four years", states Club Secretary Graham Barker. "Constructing the



pitches was our first priority and, although we had attracted the funding necessary for the work to be completed, in part from Harrogate Borough Council, along with club funds that have been raised over the last ten years.”

“S106 money [arising from building gains] is released to the council at pre-set times rather than as a lump sum, which creates an issue as 90% security of funding has to be in place as a condition for the project to proceed. This is hampering Phase 2, but we will continue to secure other funding sources.”

A field on the edge of Pannal village was identified as a potential home. Former arable land leased from the council, it had last been farmed up until 2017. “The club wished to retain its Pannal heritage,” Graham continues, “and we had been in talks with the council for more than ten years.”

Pannal Sports JFC has expanded dramatically since its formation in 1966 - a seminal year for English football, when the national team lifted the FIFA World Cup on

home turf at Wembley. Their growth made the mission for a club base all the more critical.

“There is a lack of quality natural grass pitches in the area and our twenty junior teams play on several different sites currently, so everyone relishes the prospect of consolidating games at a purpose-built ground, with all facilities to hand and professionally maintained high-quality surfaces.”

A crowded calendar and other sporting commitments will prevent Pannal Community Park from hosting all club fixtures though. “County cup competitions will be staged there, and it will form a permanent base for our U5s to U8s and U9s, with all other teams rotating through the site,” says Graham, whose three sons have all played for the club.

One of Pannal Sports JFC’s priorities in attracting funding was to expand its mixed and female teams and to ensure the club has at least one Level 1 FA qualified coach per

team, Graham explains.

Another requirement restricted playing times to daylight hours. “No floodlighting is permitted in the valley in which the land sits,” says Graham, “which limits community use. Ideally, we would have wanted to create a 3G synthetic area as well as the natural grass pitches. That said, Harrogate Town AFC plays on a 3G, St John Fisher Catholic High School runs one, as does Rossett Sport Centre locally.”

STRI are consulting on the project, laying out requirements and specifications for the site following initial soil sampling. “They have worked with us on putting together a programme of ongoing maintenance to ensure the continuing quality of the playing surfaces,” says Graham.

“The club has to show evidence to the Football Foundation that it has the cashflow to meet maintenance costs for the pitches and the clubhouse and we have to set up a sinking fund for this purpose.”

“Within the plan, we intend to recruit a part-





time facilities manager who will liaise with the grounds contractor on what work they are to undertake.”

Responsible for the first year’s grounds maintenance is principal contractor CLS, who clinched the project after a competitive tendering process.

Just over two miles south of Harrogate town centre, what is now named Pannal Community Park saw the redevelopment of a now fallow arable field to include natural pitches catering largely for junior age groups.

With a heavy natural soil profile, a 100mm to 200mm clay loam topsoil layer overlies an orange/grey clay subsoil to depth of at least

850mm to 900mm, then medium and high strength sandy, gravelly clay down to at least 2.75m, according to national surveys.

The STRI, in its tendering document for the project, notes that the soil locally is “slowly permeable and, without artificial drainage, is seasonally waterlogged for long periods of the winter”.

From this sloping site has arisen a series of three terraces, each the platform for sportsturf. CLS moved 15,500m³ of earth to fashion the foundation for a cricket square and outfield, two full-size football pitches, U11/U12 areas and a small training zone at the top level, two seven-a-side pitches on the

mid terrace and a further two 5-a-side pitches on the lower end near the site earmarked for the car park and clubhouse.

A large clay-lined attenuation pond created on the middle plateau is intended to drain the clubhouse, car park and other areas. “Control of waterflow into the pond and out of it into Crimple Beck, which meanders along the north-western boundary, is via concrete conduits and inlets,” explains CLS operations director Brian Dunn.

Plant brought in to cut and fill the site included a Komatsu PX61i GPS bulldozer CLS bought specifically for the project, and Hydrema dump trucks, fitted with low ground

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pressure tyres, he adds. A total of 8,000m³ of topsoil was stripped from the site and progressively replaced as the terraces were created.

"We ripped the surface to reduce compaction then reapplied topsoil, followed by cultivation, stone raking and final grading, before installing 80mm lateral drainage at 4m centres beneath all the playing surfaces, as well as cut-off drains to catch water off the banksides. These connected into outfall silt chambers then from there to the attenuation pond."

Top drains at 500mm centres, lying 90 degrees to the laterals, followed using a Koro Topdrainer to trench and backfill, again across all playing areas on the three plateaux.

"A 25mm sand layer, lightly cultivated into the topsoil, further aids drainage from the surface to the playing surfaces, providing medium fine amelioration before we seeded with Barenbrug Bar 7 sports ryegrass mix."

Around April time, CLS kicks off the initial

ground maintenance, removing any remaining stones, rolling the surface then mowing. "For the first eight cuts, we'll use our Iseki ride-on rotary fortnightly, starting when the grass reaches 60mm height and cutting down to 50mm," Brian explains. "Then the Ransomes ride-on triple cylinder mower comes into play in the growing season and we'll reduce cut height to 35mm with weekly then twice weekly runs, ready for handover of the site at the end of September, applying further dressings of fertiliser and sand topdressing as required, together with overseeding, selective weed control and verti-draining."

Already in place is the perimeter maintenance access track to the pitches and the main access road to the clubhouse and car park areas. Still to be laid is the trim trail, running just inside the boundary fence. "Open to the public, it'll be timber-edged, with type 1 stone and a grit binding layer," Brian confirms.

Reflecting on the project, he concludes: "The weather was with us last year in what was the hottest summer on record. We lost only eight or nine days in our four and half months on site.

"This was a large quantity of earth to shift, but the cut and fill process balanced out nicely and other elements of the job fell into place."

"Working closely alongside a grassroots sports club makes you appreciate just how much voluntary work is necessary to see a project like this come to fruition."

Football is not the only winner here. A 6-wicket county standard cricket square is greening up ready for the first work on it. "After a light trim around April or May, we'll import and lay a 100mm layer of cricket loam, prepare the surface for overseeding and apply pre-seed fertiliser," Brian explains.

The contractor will have to cross the football playing areas to reach the square, laid out on the top platform. "We'll use a mini





excavator, compact tractor with low pressure tyres and laser grader for applying the loam, then a dimple seeder," he adds.

Ready for irrigating the square, 32mm piping links a water hydrant at a corner of the square to a supply source at the other end of the site, where the clubhouse will be built.

When the time comes, the club will mark out then roll the wickets - hiring turf machinery from the local rugby club for

the maintenance programme stipulated.

On its website, the club quotes Edson Arantes do Nascimento - Brazilian world football legend and ambassador Pele. "Success is no accident. It is hard work, perseverance, learning, studying, sacrifice and most of all, love of what you are doing or learning to do."

His words form a timely and appropriate reminder of the level of commitment needed to bring on high-quality sports facilities at grassroots level.



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Pesticides

A brief history and analysis



In part one of a two part article, Maxwell Amenity Technical Manager **John Handley** provides a brief history and analysis of the current situation surrounding pesticides



It is useful to define what we mean by the term pesticide. The Health and Safety Executive within the Code of Practice for Using Plant Protection Products define pesticides as: any substance, preparation or organism that is prepared or used for controlling any pest.

The term Active Substance is further defined as any substance or micro-organism (including a virus), that has a general or specific action against harmful organisms or on plants, parts of plants or plant products. 'Active ingredient' is often used to mean the same thing.

For most professional individuals working within amenity horticulture, i.e. turf managers, who possess a pesticide application licence

or are responsible for deciding how a site is managed, the term pesticide currently equates to the following broad categories: a herbicide, be it a total herbicide, e.g. glyphosate (Roundup), or a selective herbicide e.g. 2,4-D (Depitox); an insecticide, such as chlorantraniliprole (Acelepryn); or a fungicide, such as fludioxonil (Medallion).

Changes in regulations have resulted in the loss of Active Substances brought about by the British government's adoption of the Water Framework Directive. Diffuse pesticide pollution is a problem for the environment, but it also presents a challenge for water companies managing treatment infrastructure to produce drinking water (Dolan et al. 2012).

It's easy to become bored with the



immediate situation derived, as it is, from directives, regulations, laws and legislation. However, with a little historical perspective it's easier to see past the regulations and understand the bigger picture and why things are changing.

A brief history of pesticides...

Our knowledge of the earliest forms of pest control, after the development of agriculture approximately 10,000 years ago, is limited to the evidence that has survived to the present day. Nevertheless, we know that more than 4,500 years ago the Sumerians were using sulphur compounds to control insects and mites, that 3,200 years ago the Chinese were using insecticides derived from plants and, by

2,500 years ago, had appreciated the role of natural enemies and the value of adjusting crop-planting times to avoid pest outbreaks, and that the Greeks and Romans understood the use of fumigants, mosquito nets, granaries on stilts, sticky bands on trees and pesticidal sprays and ointments - although throughout this period and long beyond, such sophisticated practices were accompanied by widespread reliance on offerings to the gods and other superstitions.

The Chinese continued to develop their pest-control technology and, by AD 300, they were using biological controls, establishing nests of ants in citrus orchards to control caterpillars and large boring beetles. Meanwhile, the Europeans, after the fall of

the Roman Empire, relied increasingly on religious faith rather than biological knowledge. This decline was reversed by the Renaissance, and the 17th century saw an awakening of interest in biological control and the rediscovery and/or introduction into Europe of a variety of natural pesticides (figure 1 overleaf).

The period from 1750 to 1880 in Europe was a time of the agricultural revolution, but this brought in its wake some of the greatest pest-driven agricultural disasters ever recorded: the potato blight in Ireland, England and Belgium (1840s); the epidemic of powdery mildew in the grape-growing areas of Europe (1850s); the outbreak of fungus leaf spot disease of coffee, after which Ceylon



Their success was immediate. They were cheap, effective in small quantities, easy to apply, and widely toxic. They seemed to be truly ‘miracle insecticides’

switched from coffee to tea production; and the invasion from the Americas of an insect, the grape phylloxera, (*Viteus vitifoliae*), which almost destroyed the wine industry in France (1848-1878).

Not surprisingly, over this period there was a surge of interest in developing pest-control techniques and, by the turn of the 19th century, there were five main approaches to the control of pests which were well established and in common use: (i) biological control; (ii) chemical control (inorganic chemicals, especially sulphur and copper compounds, or plant-derived alkaloids, especially nicotine); (iii) mechanical and physical control (e.g. tree-banding with sticky substances); (iv) cultural and sanitation controls (like crop rotation); and (v) the use of resistant varieties. The first forty years of the 20th century was a period of steady progress in pest control, in which all of these five approaches played an important part.

Pest control was revolutionised, however (especially insect pest control), by the Second World War. Driven by the need to control insect vectors of human disease in the tropics, hundreds of manufactured chemicals were screened for insecticidal properties. In the USA, the breakthrough came with dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane (DDT), manufactured in Switzerland, followed by other chlorinated hydrocarbons. In Germany, another equally toxic group of compounds was developed, the organophosphates, whilst a third group of synthetic organic insecticides, the carbamates, was also discovered in the 1940s, by Swiss workers. The initial targets of the organic insecticides were the vectors of human disease, but after the war there was a rapid expansion into agriculture. ‘Their success was immediate. They were cheap, effective in small quantities, easy to apply, and widely toxic. They seemed

to be truly ‘miracle insecticides’ (Flint and van den Bosch, 1981).

During the 1930s and 1940s too, the first organic selective herbicides were being developed, originally as a result of work on chemicals to regulate plant growth: 2-methyl-4-chlorophenoxyacetic acid (MCPA), 2,4-dichlorophenoxyacetic acid (2,4-D) and 4,6 dinitro-o-cresol (DNOC). The immediate impact was on cereal crops and, to a much lesser extent, on peas and grassland. An expansion into a much wider range occurred from the 1960s onwards (Lockhart et al. 1990).

The period from 1946 onwards has been described as the ‘Age of Pesticides’, divided by Metcalf (1980) into three phases: the Era of Optimism (1946-1962), the Era of Doubt (1962-1976) and the Era of Integrated Pest Management (IPM) (1976-). Whilst it would be easy to quibble with Metcalf’s dating and terminology, this division captures the changes in the scientific climate over this period. In the heady days of the 1940s and the early 1950s, it was widely believed that generous doses of simple organics could entirely eradicate pests and the problems they caused.

Doubts that had been voiced by entomologists Strickland (1945) and Wiggleworth (1945) were decades ahead of the publication of Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* in 1962, which challenged the notion that chemicals brought benefits but negligible risks. These doubts grew steadily until the XVth International Congress of Entomology in 1976 firmly rejected the widespread use of broad-spectrum and persistent pesticides in favour of an IPM approach.

The problems with chemical pesticides

Widespread toxicity

Chemical pesticides are generally intended for particular pests at a particular site, nevertheless, problems arise because they are

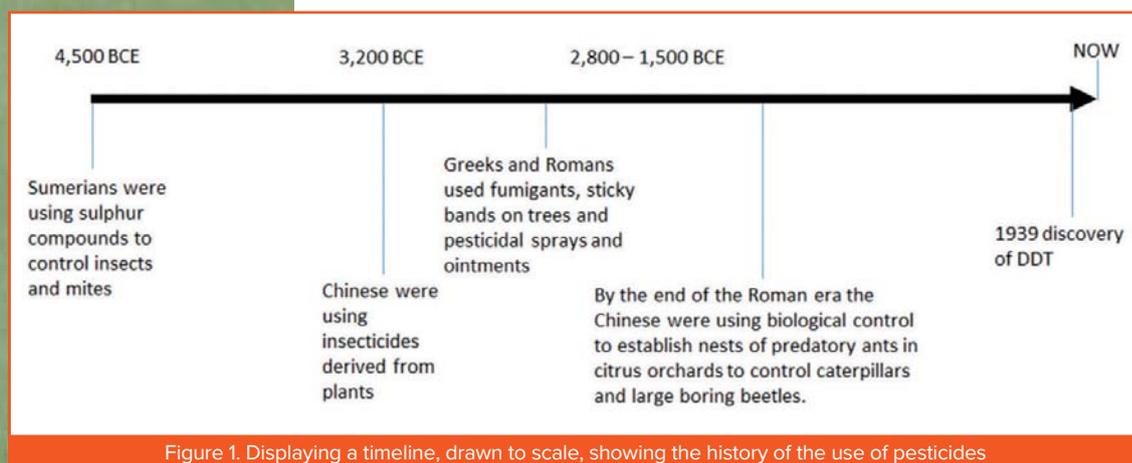


Figure 1. Displaying a timeline, drawn to scale, showing the history of the use of pesticides

usually toxic to a broader range of organisms and also persist in the environment. The problem is made more difficult with chlorinated hydrocarbons especially, because of their susceptibility to biomagnification: an increasing concentration of insecticide in organisms at higher trophic levels, as a result of a repeated cycle of concentration of the insecticide in particular tissues in a lower trophic level, consumption by the trophic level above, further concentration, further consumption, and so on, until top predators which were never intended as targets, suffer extraordinary high doses. Figure 2 shows the process of biomagnification in the context of DDT. The DDT concentration is in parts per million. As the trophic level increases in a food chain, the amount of toxic build up increases. The x represent the amount of toxic build up accumulating as the trophic level increases. Toxins build up in organism's fat and tissue. Predators accumulate higher toxins than prey.

The broadly toxic effects of herbicides have generally not been considered as great a problem as those of insecticides. One important reason is that many herbicides have a quite specific effect on plant physiology which has no exact equivalent in animal physiology. There are, though, a number of herbicides, for instance diquat and paraquat, which have high mammalian toxicity and where great care is therefore required in handling (especially in these cases there are no known antidotes). Furthermore, in the 1960s, a controversy began over the possible effects to human health of 2,4,5-T and 2,4-D, which were used in combination ('Agent Orange') between 1962 and 1970 to defoliate swamps and forests in South Vietnam.

Of course, most weed-control practices affect a wider range of plants than the target species. The result has been the disappearance of many attractive ones that have never been serious weeds. Species such as wild delphinium (*Delphinium ajacis*), pheasant's eye (*Adonis annua*), corn cockle, (*Agrostemma githago*) and cornflower (*Centaurea cyanus*), have come to the verge of extinction in Britain and can now only be found in abundance in the peasant agricultural systems of Eastern Europe.

Target pest resurgence

Of particular importance are the effects of insecticides on the natural (arthropod) enemies of an insect pest. This, in itself, may not appear too serious, apart from the regrettable loss in the natural diversity of harmless species. However, it can - and often has - had two extremely serious consequences.

The first, target pest resurgence, refers to the rapid increase in pest numbers following some time after the initial drop in pest abundance caused by an application of insecticide. This rebound effect occurs when treatment kills not only large numbers of the pest, but large numbers of their natural predators too (with any survivors likely to starve to death because there are insufficient pests on which to feed). Then, any pest

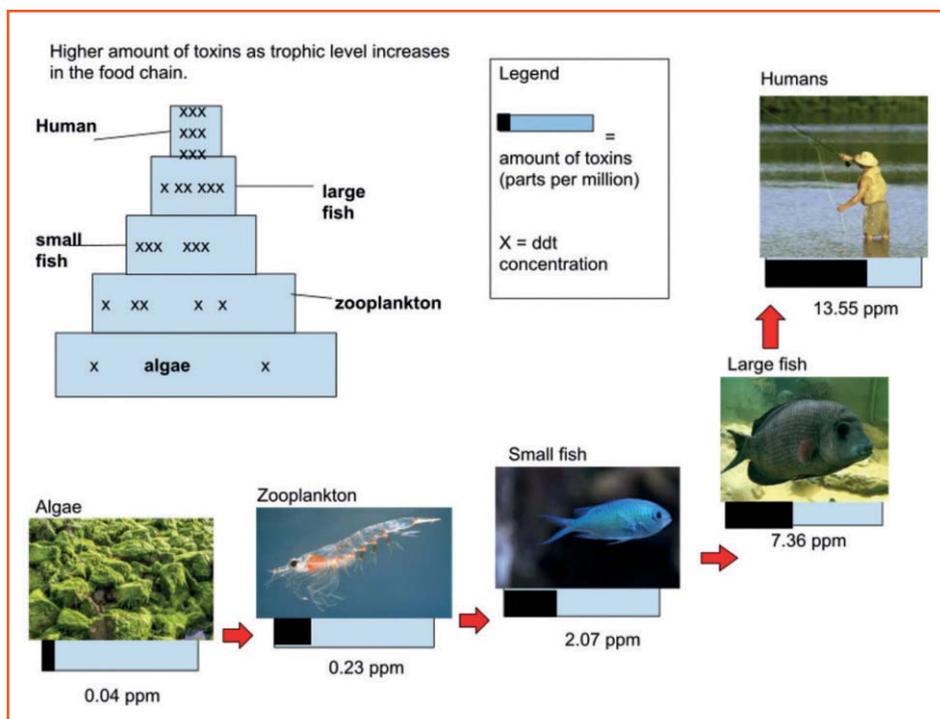


Figure 2. Illustrating the problem of biomagnification that some of the early pesticides created by Øystein Paulsen - https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Meganyctiphanes_norvegica2.jpg, CC BY-SA 3.0, <https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=69446831>

individuals that survive (either because of resistance or good luck) or that migrate into the area, find themselves with a plentiful food resource but few if any natural predators. A population explosion is the likely outcome because the predator requires the pest to be present to support population growth, but the pest certainly doesn't need the predator. Another reason is tied into what makes a pest: they are likely to be able to reproduce rapidly when food resource becomes available and they have the ability to locate these resources, i.e. good dispersal ability. Hence, pests are likely to be good at resurging.

Secondary pest outbreaks

When the natural predator cycle is broken, it is not only the target pest that might resurge.

Alongside any actual pest are likely to be a number of potential pest species, which are not pests only because they are kept in check by their natural enemies. Thus, if a primary pest is treated with an insecticide that destroys a wide range of predators and parasitoids, other species may realise their potential and become 'secondary' pests.

A dramatic example of this took place in Central America in 1950; when mass dissemination of organic insecticides began, there were two primary pests within cotton production: the boll weevil and the Alabama leafworm. Organochlorines and organophosphates applied fewer than five times per year initially had apparently miraculous results and yields soared. By 1955, however, three further pests had emerged, cotton bollworm, cotton aphid and





Pesticides have provided distinct benefits and, until now, the pesticide manufacturers have managed, broadly speaking, to keep at least one step ahead of the pests

the false pink bollworm. The application rate rose to 8-10 times per year. This reduced the problem of the aphid and the false pink bollworm, but led to the emergence of five further secondary pests. By the 1960s, the original two-pest species had become eight. There were, on average, twenty-eight applications of insecticide per year (Flint and van den Bosch, 1981).

On a broader scale, changes in the overall pattern of weed infestation can be seen as an example of the outbreak of secondary pests. The herbicides in use until the 1960s, when they were selective at all, tended to be most active against dicotyledonous weeds. The result has been an upsurge in the importance of grass weeds (monocots), and the 1970s therefore saw the beginnings of a new drive towards the production of herbicides selective against grasses (Lockhart *et al.*, 1990).

Evolved resistance

The final problem is, in many ways, the most serious one of all. Even before the advent of the organics, occasional examples of resistance to an insecticide had been found. For instance, A. L. Melander in 1914 showed that scale insects demonstrated resistance to lime-sulphur sprays. Between 1914 and 1946, eleven additional cases were recorded. The development of organic insecticides, such as DDT, gave hope that insecticide resistance was a dead issue. However, by 1947, just one year later, housefly resistance to DDT had evolved in Sweden.

The evolution of pesticide resistance is simply natural selection occurring more rapidly than usual and on a particular obvious character. Within a large population subjected to a pesticide, one or a few individuals may be unusually resistant (perhaps because they possess an enzyme that can detoxify the pesticide). If such individuals exist at the outset, resistance can begin to spread in the population immediately; if they arise subsequently by mutation, then there will be a lag in the evolutionary response before this

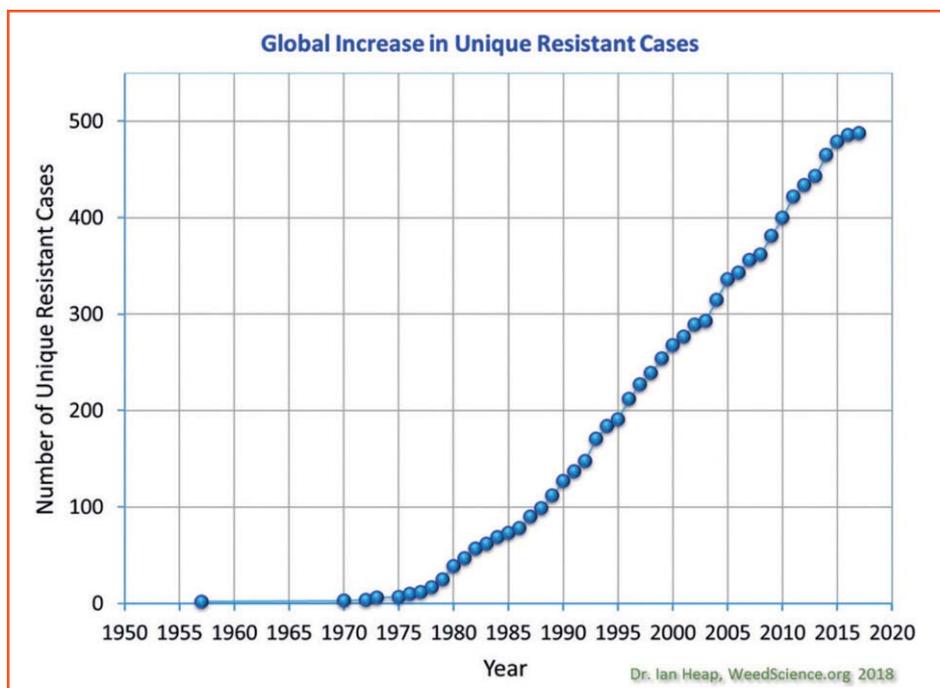


Figure 3. This graph presents the chronological increase in unique cases of herbicide resistant weeds. A unique case is a SPECIES x SITE of ACTION. So, if a *Coryza canadensis* becomes resistant to atrazine (Group C1), it is listed as one unique case, if another population of *Coryza canadensis* becomes resistant to ALS inhibitors (Group B), then it is counted as a separate "unique" case, but if a third population is found with multiple resistance to ALS and Triazine herbicides it does not count, as the other two already cover the sites of action. <http://www.weedscience.org/>

chance event occurs. In either case, the resistant individuals have an improved chance of surviving and breeding and, if the pesticide is applied repeatedly, each successive generation will contain a larger proportion of resistant individuals (figure 3).

One answer to the problem of pesticide resistance is to develop strategies of 'resistance management'. This consists of two approaches; reduce the frequency with which a particular pesticide is used, thus depriving the pest of a series of generations over which resistance may evolve. This may be done by using a range of pesticides in a repeated sequence, especially when they have different target sites or modes of action. The second strategy is to ensure that pesticides are applied at a concentration high enough to kill individuals heterozygous for the resistance gene, since this is where all the resistance genes are likely to reside when resistance is rare.

Thus, together, the problems of resistance, target pest resurgence and secondary pest outbreaks have frequently met with a predictable but, in many ways, regrettable response: the application of more and more pesticides, leading to further resistance, further resurgence and further secondary pests, and so to more pesticide, more problems and more expense; what has become known as a pesticide treadmill which managers can find difficult to get off.

Whilst these problems exist within the amenity sector, e.g. fungicide resistance within sports turf, our concerns are dwarfed by those of our close relative, agriculture, where there is a greater understanding of these problems, because there has been a greater reliance on utilising pesticides to

provide cheap food for growing populations. Talk to any cereal grower in the south east about Blackgrass (*Alopecurus myosuroides*), and they will be all too aware of the strategies that are continually changing in order to maintain reasonable yields (figure 4). Much of the discussion around pesticides throughout this article has been focused on agriculture, with good reason: it is as a result of changes or innovation within this sector that utterly dictates the agronomic approach to pesticides within the amenity sector.

However, turf managers currently have just one insecticide available to them - Acelepren - that will hopefully be provided Emergency Authorisation once again this year. This product is also administered via stewardship, clearly indicating an increased level of control is expected to maintain the availability of this product for the foreseeable future.

The virtues of chemical pesticides

Pesticides have provided distinct benefits and, until now, the pesticide manufacturers have managed, broadly speaking, to keep at least one step ahead of the pests. Pesticides themselves are being used with increasing care. Many are now used as an integral part of a more varied armoury. In spite of the steadily rising costs of pesticides - the result of increasing complexity (rising development and production costs) and of oil price rises, the cost/benefit ratio for the individual facility has remained in favour of pesticide use.

Pesticides have also worked, in the past at least, as disease control agents. For instance, the chlorinated hydrocarbons, despite all their attendant problems, have saved at least seven million lives since 1947; or, to take one specific example, more than one billion

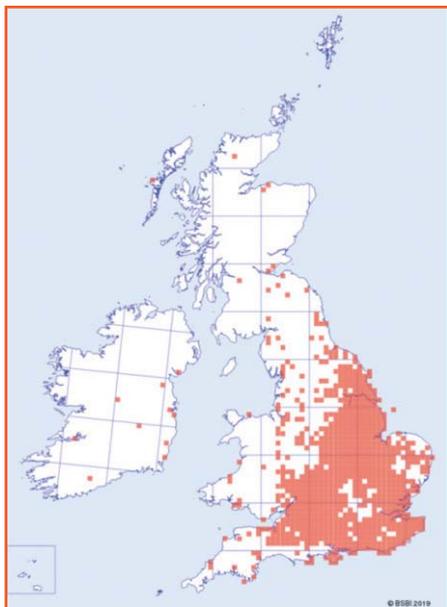


Figure 4. The records for blackgrass (*Alopecurus myosuroides*) within Britain and Ireland since 2010. Map provided by the BSBI 2019 (Botanical Society for Britain and Ireland)

There are also particular situations where the cost/benefit ratio is loaded especially heavily in favour of chemical pesticides by social circumstances and human attitudes. For instance, customers in richer countries have become conditioned to demand that their foodstuffs are unblemished. This means that pests have to be eradicated rather than simply reduced to a level where nutritional, rather than aesthetic or cosmetic harm is negligible.

In summary then, the case in favour of chemical pesticides is that they have worked in the past, as judged by objective measures such as 'lives saved', 'total food produced' and 'economic efficiency of food production' and that they are continuing to do so as a result in advances in the types of pesticide produced and the manner in which they are used. We have also seen though, that many of the disadvantages of chemical pesticides - widespread toxicity, secondary pests, resistance, escalating costs - are undeniable, such that the case for chemical control can only ever be one in which the advantages are shown to outweigh the regrettable disadvantages. These disadvantages are also, and perhaps most significantly of all inherent, i.e. newer and better pesticides may postpone or reduce the effects of these disadvantages (although potentially at increased cost e.g. Acelepryn vs the organophosphate alternative chlopyrifos - Cyren), but they are most unlikely to overcome them. The question, therefore, is

whether or not there are alternatives to replace or use alongside chemical pesticides, and that will be the subject of a subsequent article: pesticides of the future.

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people have been freed from the risk of malaria (Miller, 1988), although, since 1970, malaria has made a remarkable come-back, owing in large part, to the insecticide-resistant strains of mosquitos, leading to an increased emphasis on possible biological control measures.



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Frank Newberry

Dolphins and Sharks



In this, the first of a two-part article, Communication Skills Trainer **Frank Newberry** reports on the perils of giving people feedback on their performance at work. In Part 2 (next edition), with more and more people now suggesting we should stop giving feedback altogether - Frank tries to find other ways of getting feedback across – and accepted by people

Many years ago, when I was a training to be a management consultant, my boss (Mike) felt moved to give me some feedback about my behaviour.

All my adult life I have given people the impression that I am a very happy and confident person who does not need feedback. As a consequence of this, I hardly got any feedback, so this was going to be exciting for me.

Too friendly and too nice

Mike made it clear to me at the outset of our discussion that I was way too friendly and too nice to people. He explained that our team of consultants was made up of dolphins and sharks.

Dolphins were happy and friendly, and everybody loved them. Sharks were ruthless and predatory, everyone admired them but were also scared of them.

He explained that I was very much a dolphin. In fact, one of the lead dolphins. He feared that I would not be tough enough for the job in his unit. He believed that a consultant's main job was to challenge senior managers and 'speak truth to power'.

Now, our organisation had a very impressive set of values and policies, but my boss was convinced these were values in name only. He felt that we had a 'said policy' (what we say we do) and a separate 'done policy' (what we actually do).

Saying one thing and doing another

It was, therefore, my job as an internal management consultant to point out to senior managers in the organisation where I felt they

were being hypocritical. Saying one thing and doing another. Before sending me on my way, Mike gave me warning. He said that if he heard from a senior manager, that I was charming, - and I was welcome to come back any time - he would sack me.

If, however, a senior manager called him and complained about me and said s/he never wanted to see me again - Mike would take me out for a slap-up meal and praise my efforts at the next meeting of the whole division.

So, I duly went about my work and, over the years, had a few run-ins with senior managers. None of them ever gave negative feedback about me to Mike.

However, I once felt it necessary to give Mike some personal feedback, in front of everyone, at a divisional meeting. He had just been rude to a visitor at the meeting and I raised my concern about his rudeness after the visitor left. When Mike tried to diminish the feedback that I had given him, I immediately dismissed his assertion - and he gave way.

No more talk of dolphins and sharks

This impressed everyone at the unit meeting - especially me and Mike – I was surprised at what I had said. On reflection, I was only doing as he had previously told me that I must do to keep my job. From then on there was no more talk of dolphins and sharks.

Fast forward to last year when I was running the ninth of ten seminars for GP Surgery Reception teams. The topic was on dealing with difficult (especially angry) patients.

Part of my 3-hour programme was to share with trainees 'mystery patient' feedback I had obtained on what each reception team did well and where they needed to improve.

Previous teams I had trained had endured some pretty fierce mystery patient feedback. This included being called 'arrogant', 'ignorant' and 'incompetent'. And I have to say they all took it well.

The feedback of a critical friend

However, this ninth team, even though I warned them that they would be getting the feedback of a 'critical friend', did not take the feedback at all well. A number of team members instead became abusive towards the (absent) mystery patient and tried to diminish or

change the meaning of the feedback. The session promptly over-ran, and I had to call a break.

During the break, the practice manager (who had not heard the mystery patient feedback) asked me to pack up my kit and leave immediately. She would pay my fee, but her team felt at this point that the training was 'not of value'.

As I was leaving, another of the team approached me to express her disappointment that the training had been cancelled. She confided that she was leaving the practice soon to work nearby. I wished her well and asked why she was leaving. Her reply? Because 'they don't care about patients here'.

I think Mike would have been pleased. It took me over thirty years to get kicked out of my own seminar - by speaking truth to power. I am not sure where my old boss Mike is now but, in his absence, I bought myself a slap-up meal to celebrate.

More and more people are suggesting that we should stop giving feedback at work because it can lead to lower morale and no improvement in performance.

In Part 2, Frank will try to find other ways of getting feedback across - and accepted by its recipients.

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FUNGICIDES

Future of Fungicides

The availability of turf fungicides and the way that we use them is changing rapidly. Syngenta Turf Technical Manager, **Glenn Kirby**, reviews how the situation is evolving, and implications for the future

New technology continues to develop at an incredible pace in all aspects of life and, for the most part, gets better with every iteration. They do the same job, only better, faster and more efficiently.

Turf fungicides are no different, but it is important to understand why they are currently changing so quickly, and what the implications of that are.

The developments we are seeing is the industry moving to the position with fungicide use of: 'as little as possible; as much as necessary'.

That means, as turf managers, all other tools and agronomy skills will have to be fully utilised to maintain clean and healthy turf. But, when the pressure is on and the players' demands are for higher quality, then fungicides will play a crucial role to protect and present playing surfaces at every level.

Over the past few years, pesticide legislation has changed and all active ingredients have been exhaustively reviewed. The criteria for these products has tightened, along with increased data becoming available. Furthermore, analysis has become far more sophisticated in detecting residues at minute quantities; where chemists used to talk in parts per million, it is now parts per billion.

If assessed and deemed unsuitable, the active ingredients may be withdrawn completely, or sometimes the amount that can be used will be reduced to a point that the product is no longer effective for the situation it was previously used.

These legislative changes started around ten years ago, but have taken until recent years to impact the turf industry. A whole range of key products have been removed from the armoury, with iprodione and, more recently, the announcement of the loss of propiconazole over the coming months.

Some of the "go to" products we used in the past did have significantly more active ingredient than was needed to control diseases in some instances. With iprodione, for example, that did give some degree of flexibility and a 'get out of jail' capability if applications were late or conditions not ideal.

However, the positive news is that significant investment has been made in the last decade which is bringing in new active ingredients that can be even more effective. These will meet even tighter safety criteria, to help ensure they will remain available for the future.

The new actives coming through are extremely potent on target turf pathogens, however the amount that is permitted to be included in the products sold is typically less. So, whilst the approved dose is set where the products have been shown to achieve reliable and consistent control across the majority of disease pressure instances, there remains the possibility they may not achieve full control in extreme situations.



Therefore, the way these new fungicides are used to get consistent control is changing too - right product; right time; right place.

The nature of the new fungicide actives currently being developed do mean that better results are always achieved when used in a preventative programme. That doesn't mean more routine use, but the need to get better at assessing all the conditions for disease risk to predict when it will strike, and to apply proactively as close as possible to infection periods.

Getting better at predicting and modelling disease pressure will enable optimum timing to be achieved. There are some very good five-day disease forecasts available on GreenCast to support decision making, for example, but they do still require the experience and local knowledge of turf managers to interpret and apply the knowledge in their own situations.

STRI trials have shown that, over the course of the season, better turf quality can be maintained using fewer fungicide applications timed according to disease risks, compared to routine treatments or application at the first signs of visible disease. The key element of that is to fully utilise all options to maintain better core turf health, and to build fungicide use into an effective Integrated Turf Management plan.

Also, we will need to pay closer attention to physical application to get the best performance out of new fungicides. That means identifying suitable spray windows at an appropriate time, and using the right nozzles, pressure ranges and water volume to hit the target and get the product where we want it.

Where 'stretching' a hectare application across

1.2 hectares of greens could have given adequate results in the past, that would effectively result in 20% under dosing, for which there will be precious little margin in future.

Accurate measuring of areas, regular sprayer calibration and maintenance will be crucial. The role of the professional sprayer operator is going to be more important than ever.

It's an ongoing process, with frequently moving goalposts, but we have a dedicated regulatory team who specialise in studying this area. They are constantly looking forward to see how products, both current and in development, will sit within these new and projected future criteria.

Syngenta continues to invest in turf specific R&D to ensure a range of products will be available to the turf industry. Following on from the introduction of Instrata Elite, there are hopes to launch another new fungicide early in 2019. Based on innovative new chemistry, it is already in the regulatory authority registration process.

Trials show the new active delivers effective and broad spectrum activity with lower active ingredient loading and offers a reliable replacement for propiconazole products.

Along with strong technical support and funding of independent industry research, turf managers can be confident of the continued capability to maintain high quality playing surfaces in the future.



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CRICKET PREPARATION

Pre-season rolling advice

By the time you read this, some of you may have already started your pre-season rolling. I have completed four passes to date, but many may not have even started as we are experiencing a very slow transfer from winter into spring. **Gordon Gill** gives us an insight into why it's important to carry out pre-season rolling

Why do we do it?

During the winter months, the soil soaks up the rain and fills the pore spaces within the profile. As this happens, the clay soil swells.

As grass growth picks up, the roots start to pull the moisture out of the profile. The days get longer, increasing soil and air temperatures and, driven by warmer sunshine, this help to dry the surface of the profile and also pulls the moisture out; thus shrinking the clay profile and leaves empty spaces - like an Aero bar of chocolate. These spaces need to be closed down to achieve the solid block that we need to create the consistent pace and bounce that we all desire to play our cricket on.

When to start?

Science has already informed us that the profile has to be drying and that we have to be experiencing drier weather. My way of checking whether the soil surface is drying, is to push my thumb and finger tips into the soil. If they come back wet and glistening, it's too wet. You cannot compact water, so there is no point in trying. My other rule of thumb, though the type of loam used may play a part here, is that I need at least a dry week before I even contemplate getting a roller out

How do we do it?

Again, the science report on rolling explains that we need to start with a lightweight roller and, during the programme, increase that weight quite quickly. I mow my square all winter using a 30 inch Hayter Senator which must be twenty-



five plus years old, but I love it. This is quite a heavy machine, so I only consider this when my light rolling is done; just as soon as the ground conditions appear to be right.

If, when rolling, the roller is getting wet, then I get off the square. If the roller shows the odd damp patch, then I consider that to be fine. Remember, you will need a small amount of moisture in the profile to act as an adhesive to actually stick those pore spaces together.

Now, how fast do we go?

You aim to travel at half a mile an hour; this equates to taking approximately one and three quarter minutes to get from one end of the pitch (wicket end) to the other. You roll in all directions, union jack style, I leave any rolling in the line of play until I am rolling my first pitch for play and actually prefer to roll on the diagonals.

Many groundsmen still talk about how many hours they roll for; that's fine, but how many pitches do they have on their square? It's bound to take longer to roll a twenty pitch square than say a ten. Today, we talk in passes; up and down the same line counts as two passes using a twin drum roller. Science again informs us that, carried out in the right conditions, 20 to 22 passes is sufficient.

So how long does it take?

Take a ten pitch square with ten foot wide pitches using a four foot wide roller; it will take three runs to cover a pitch with the overlaps.

With the best will in the world, it will be extremely difficult to get the exact speed correct. So for ease of maths, let's assume each pass takes one and half minutes and, that it takes ten minutes to cover a pitch. So, it should take approx 100 minutes to roll your square.

If you only have a three feet wide roller, it will take four runs to cover a pitch, so it will take three minutes longer per pitch. In this case, it will take approximately 12 to 13 minutes per pitch, making a total of say 120 minutes.

So, a ten pitch square using a four foot wide roller and doing twenty passes will take approx 100 minutes per pitch, three and one third hours and sixteen and two third hours to roll the square. Job done; nowhere near the eighty to one hundred hours that we used to hear about.

To sum up

A rolling programme is very important, but it is not the be all and end all in achieving the required soil bulk density; a drying profile is. When carrying out the pre-season rolling, don't just roll every day because you can (unless the temperature is 20°C plus). Leave two or three days in between each operation, allowing the profile to dry, so that there are some pore spaces to close down.

Remember, if the profile is too wet the roller cannot push down on the soil - it will only sink into the profile and push the soil forward. This will often create a break within the profile which will, in turn, absorb the force of the ball instead of rebounding it, and is often the cause of slower, lower pitches.

So, despite having good intentions we can easily do more harm than good. The perfect soil profile needs to be a lot drier than the average person thinks, but too dry and there will not be enough moisture to stick the pore spaces together.

Remember this; to achieve the best, there is no hurry. You will only achieve the optimum for your ground, as the ground conditions become right, whether that be in March or April or even May.

The fact that the fixture secretary or the league has arranged your first match is not going to change the weather. If a game has to be played in less than ideal conditions, use your mower as the roller, it will be plenty heavy enough. A very apt saying is this, LESS IS OFTEN MORE. Happy rolling!

The original article can be viewed by visiting: www.wiltshirecricket.co.uk



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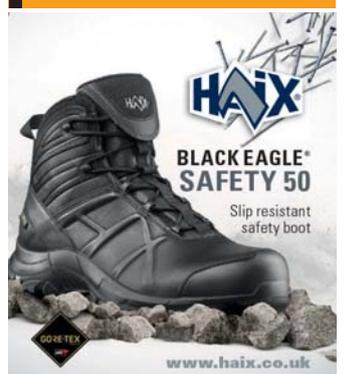
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BOWLS

Spring maintenance of bowling greens

The joys of spring soon come round each year. The Bowling Green fraternity will soon be seen out practicing and playing on their bowling greens up and down the country. This article gives us an overview of spring maintenance

The first operation is to firm up the greens, particularly after a period of frosts when the ground has been lifted. This is carried out by rolling the green using your mower in the disengaged mode (no cylinder blades working), walking slowly in several directions over the surface of your green.

Subsequent rolling can be carried out using a 50 kilo weight roller, better still a Sisis Trulevel hand roller, again in many directions. Think of a clock face; the first run starting at 12 o'clock and finishing at 6 o'clock, then starting at 3 o'clock and finishing at 9 o'clock. Work around the clock to firm evenly when conditions allow, not when the soil is saturated or frosted. Ideally, perform this operation when the surface is drying out and the sub surface is moist. This will help firm the playing surface. Turf Irons and specially designed turf rolling machines help to improve the speed of playing surfaces and allow the woods to roll smoothly across the green with less effort from the bowler.

A programme of surface aeration is beneficial, particularly to help drain away any surface water or address any surface compaction resulting from recent rolling activities. This can be achieved using a Sarel roller or a set of micro tines attached to a pedestrian mechanical spiker. Most of your deeper aeration works should have been completed during the winter months, i.e. November to February. Try to avoid the use of slit tines during the spring and summer as these types of aerators can lead to surface disruption, thus affecting surface playability. If you need to aerate during the playing season, use solid tines.

Daily brushing and switching of greens should continue to keep the greens clean and remove any early morning dew. Keeping the sward dry, particularly in the spring, helps prevent

the likelihood and disease attacks. However, if you do get an outbreak of disease, there are a number of professional fungicide products now available to help control or reduce the damaging effects of disease pathogens. Worm activity will increase as the soil temperatures begin to rise and the soils remain moist.

Ideally, you should have carried out a soil analysis to establish the soil nutrient status and soil pH of your green. The results of this test will help you determine an effective fertiliser programme for the coming year.

Mowing

Mowing is one of the most important practices and should be carried out on a regular basis. Cutting frequencies will depend on the weather and ground conditions. During the playing season, March to October, the greens should be cut at least three times a week, if not daily. Mowing machines should be at least 7 to 9 bladed cylinder mowers that are kept well maintained and sharp. Height of cut will range from 3.5mm to 5mm during the playing season.

Aeration

Macro pores generally allow movement of air and the drainage of water and are large enough to accommodate plant roots and micro-organisms found in the soil. The ability to retain a good balance of macro pores in the soil structure is essential for maintaining grass plant health. It is when these macro pores are either reduced in size by compaction or filled with water that we see deterioration in pitch playability and resistance to wear.

However, the main contributing factor that reduces and damages pore spaces in soil is

compaction caused by compression forces normally associated with play and use of machinery, particularly during wet weather periods. Over time, these compression forces reduce the pore spaces so that air, water and nutrient flow through the soil profile is restricted, thus leading to many problems associated with compaction.

Fertiliser Application

To maintain optimum growing conditions for the grass plant, a planned fertiliser programme should be implemented. Ideally, a soil analysis should have been carried out to ascertain the nutrient status of your soil. Once known, an effective NPK fertiliser programme can be applied to maximise plant growth.

Fertilisers now come in many forms, both granular and liquid. It is important that you understand how these products work and how to apply them. If in doubt leave it to a professional company to do it for you. Many greens are damaged and affected by poor fertiliser applications, using the wrong product or over or under dosing. This often leads to visual and physical problems on the surface.

Irrigation

All grass plants are a continuum of water movement. Over 90% of the plant's water requirements are transported through the plant from the soil profile, via the roots and stem tissues, into the leaves and out into the atmosphere. Knowledge of these relationships is important when designing and operating irrigation systems. The main aim is to achieve a water balance within the soil profile ensuring that the grass plant is able to access available water from the soil.

Other Activities

Other than the main core activities mentioned above, there are often several other tasks or activities that can be implemented during the playing season. These will include keeping the surface clean and free of debris and other extraneous materials, possible use of wetting agents to prevent dry patch forming and help improve soil moisture contents.

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Machinery and Supplies

Product Update

A round-up of the latest product news announced in recent weeks



Bringing a new level of consistency to pedestrian mowing is Toro's new Greensmaster 1021 with patent-pending features to improve the operator's experience without affecting the quality of cut.

Part of a new series of fixed-head pedestrian greens mowers, the 21-inch mower benefits from a number of features designed to take performance cutting to the next level, according to the company. The handle and suspension have all received the Toro touch and together mean operation is simpler, cut is more consistent and adjustment is even easier.

The most significant design development comes from the new telescoping loop handle which can be easily adjusted to comfortably accommodate operators of all heights and skill levels, while handle isolation mounts give the cutting unit constant contact with the ground throughout the mowing process.

New operator controls in conjunction with a shorter distance between the roller and the drum also means handling is more precise in turns and on undulating ground.

www.reesink.co.uk



Etesia has launched two new 46cm cutting width professional pedestrian rotary mowers ahead of the 2019 season which extends their range of mowers already available on the market.

The PHTS3 is a single speed self-propelled mower, while the PHE3 is a push variant.

Following the same concept of the PRO46 range of pedestrian mowers first launched in the early 1990s, both models feature Xenoy cutting decks for increased strength, shear washer crank protection, individual height of cut adjusters, a new 22mm handlebar design, the latest Honda GCV170 engine and are supplied complete with 80 litre grass box and rear deflector as standard.

The Honda GCV Series of engines provide best in class power and torque with easy and reliable starting with reduced noise and vibration levels. Easy service and maintenance with large petrol filler cap allowing operators to view the fuel level while filling, extended oil dip-stick makes filling easier and a host of other features expected from a professional machine.

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Charterhouse Turf Machinery has launched a new machine into their Aeration portfolio - the OxyShot. Produced in response to industry demand for a machine similar to the popular 'Robin Dagger' air-injection unit, the new machine promises to relieve compaction, improve drainage and revitalise growth.

The new OxyShot uses a single 25mm probe to inject air into the soil in four directions, at a pressure of up to 110psi and to a maximum depth of 500mm (20"). It can also be fitted with an optional 14mm probe, to reduce the working depth to 250mm. The compact, highly manoeuvrable pedestrian unit can be easily transported to the desired location or problem areas to lift the soil, thus relieving compaction and improving drainage without the need for chemical applications.

The OxyShot is an ideal tool in the armoury of groundsmen and greenkeepers alike and is ideal for use on high traffic, high footfall, areas including walkways, bunkers and greens. Perfect for 'on the spot' treatments, it is most effective when used in conjunction with other methods of aeration..

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The cassettes are 'bottom mounted', bolted in place, which reduces the risk of the unit

oscillating when in use. The FX also offers the ability to parallel the whole machine on the rear traction roller which keeps the machine cutting well and true.

As with the INFINICUT® FL, the new fixed head machine can utilise the interchangeable ATT TMSYSTEM™ cassettes. In addition to the accuracy and cleanliness of cut achieved with the SMARTCut™ cassette, the operator can easily switch this out for another cassette from the range to aerate, brush, de-thatch, scarify, topdress, groom, level or mow, all with a single machine.

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Machinery and Supplies

Product Update

A round-up of the latest product news announced in recent weeks



Toro's new hydraulics-free Greensmaster eTriFlex with Lithium-ion battery cuts noise by 50 percent for quiet, leak-free, clean cutting has been launched in the UK by Reesink Turfcare.

The eTriFlex is a classic example of Toro responding to customer demand by creating a machine which significantly reduces noise. The big benefits to this are that it allows work to start earlier and may circumvent noise regulations. It will help avoid complaints from area residents and prevent having to delay mowing certain greens early in the morning or during the day. Plus, with greens ready earlier, it could enhance revenue by allowing earlier tee times.

Alongside the Lithium-ion battery is a proven Kawasaki twin cylinder 14hp air-cooled engine with a reduced speed of 2400rpm, shrouded in venting. It's this design that ensures perceived bystander noise level is reduced by half.

It's quiet, and with no hydraulics it delivers clean and leak-free cutting. It ticks the green credentials box with its all-electric components and brings an estimated 22 percent saving in fuel, in comparison to say the Greensmaster 3320, thanks to its efficient power supply.

www.reesink.co.uk

The Mountfield MB48Li 48V brushcutter is versatile and easy to use and will allow you the pleasure of no more worries about a mains cable snagging in plants or garden furniture! Lightweight and ergonomic, with a loop handle and harness for best possible control, this tool will suit all gardeners.

The MB48Li is so easy to start and you'll get up to 40 minutes trimming time with the 4 amp-hour battery fitted too, which is more than enough for most gardens. The MB48Li comes with a Tap and Go bump feed head and a 4-tooth metal brushcutter blade with a 35cm working width. It has a Hi/Lo power switch to alter performance according to the conditions.

The Mountfield MB48Li is part of the Freedom48 cordless range. One powerful 48V battery, multiple garden tools!

www.mountfieldawnmowers.co.uk



EGO say they have tackled the problem of reloading line with its new ST1510E - Power+ Line Trimmer featuring Powerload technology.

The product, which won an Innovation Medal at GaLaBau in October last year and a Technology Innovation Award at Bologna's EIMA exhibition, is described by Ego as the industry's first line trimmer tool with a fully automatic line re-loading system.

To load the ST1510E, users insert the trimmer line through the head of the tool. After a push on its activation button, the Powerload system then winds the line onto the spool in less than five seconds.

The company says the quick-adjust handle offers optimum balance and control with a 38cm cutting swathe. In addition, they say the line trimmer's soft-start function and constant speed control ensures consistent trimming.

As with all EGO Power+ products, the ST1510E is powered by their 56v Arc Lithium battery.

www.egopowerplus.co.uk

Toro's new Lynx Smart two-wire System is an adaptation on the already successful GDC control system controller. It provides the flexibility of a satellite controller with the cost savings of a two-wire system.

It's a backwards and forwards compatible add-on tool which provides back-up and operation should connection to the central control be interrupted, so irrigation continues.



It comes with attachments to expand the capabilities of the Lynx central control system to another level. The Module makes irrigation smart - add it to a GDC system, for example, for extra precision and speed.

Meanwhile, the pedestal or wall-mounted Smart Hub enables the system to be segmented into manageable areas by strategically placing up to nine Smart Hubs over the site for simplified maintenance. This allows for in-field manual operation or troubleshooting and creates a convenient point of connection for the soil, flow and status sensors.

The Hub controls up to 1000 sprinklers. It comes with 20 percent lower installation costs and is ten times faster than other two-wire systems in reducing diagnostic test times. Plus, it's available in either hard wire format or digitally for communication between the Lynx controller and Smart Hub to offer the possibility of further reductions in cabling costs.

www.reesink.co.uk



John Deere's 2750 PrecisionCut and E-Cut hybrid triplex mowers offer more precise control of performance and cut quality than ever before, at lower operating costs.

Featured as an industry exclusive on the hydraulic model for the first time (and also available as standard on the hybrid unit), the frequency of clip can be programmed by altering parameters on mowing speed, reel speed and number of blades on the reel. Once programmed, the settings cannot be changed by the operator and automatically adjust with ground speed, ensuring uniformity from machine to machine.

Clean-up pass mode, another John Deere exclusive, is a preset operating mode that the operator can engage to automatically reduce mowing speed on perimeter passes to increase accuracy, with less scalping or missed strips. This setting allows the operator to focus on the task, rather than on manually feathering the speed.

Adjustable turn speed allows the course manager to control how fast the operator is able to turn, which minimises the risk of turf damage. In addition, by selecting Eco Mode, engine speed can be electronically controlled to conserve fuel. In this mode, engine RPM are automatically adjusted based on the load, which can save up to 30 per cent on fuel and reduce operating sound levels.

www.JohnDeere.co.uk



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OFFSIDE

The not so serious side
of the industry

Boozy burglar caught after falling asleep

A barefoot man was caught sleeping in a golf course shed after he allegedly broke in and raided the fridge of booze.

Kabe Goddard, 22, was found taking a nap in the greenkeeper's shed at the Palmerston Golf Club, Australia.



When staff arrived the next morning, he was fast asleep at the scene, said Greenkeeper Scott Trembath.

Once Goddard woke up, he didn't offer much of an explanation and simply put his shoes back on and tried to leave.

Police were called and Goddard was taken to the station where he was charged with property damage, aggravated unlawful entry and stealing.

Moral of the story... don't drink and fall asleep in places you shouldn't!

London gnome protest

Four in ten homeowners have had items stolen from their garden - including bikes, plant pots and garden gnomes.

A demonstration (by gnomes) recently took place outside City Hall, London and called on homeowners to do more to protect their dwellings and their gnomes.

Tom Guy, global product director at Centrica Hive, said: "We have carried out research which revealed a significant number of people have experienced theft or damage to possessions outside their home. With everything from bicycles to garden tools to



plants being targeted. Sadly, even the much beloved gnome is under threat."

Keep your gnomes safe guys!

Escaped rhea stays at Evesham Golf Club

An escaped rhea looks set to make its home at a golf course it has been roaming for more than two months.



The 6ft, flightless bird arrived at Evesham Golf Club, in Worcestershire, in October and staff have so far been unable to catch it.

Golf club workers said it has become "a star" since its arrival and is "more than welcome to stay".

The club said it was a pet which escaped from the village of Harvington.

Due to its speed the bird was nicknamed Linford, after sprinter Linford Christie.

Club secretary Fraser Williamson said it was "monitoring" the bird's welfare adding the club had liaised with animal charities after it arrived in October.



Nike new shoes; a cut above the rest?

Have you ever been walking through a field and thought 'I wish my feet would just blend right in with the grass like camouflage'?

No, me neither, but no matter, we can all now live that fantasy thanks to the folk at Nike, who are launching a new Air Max trainer made of fake grass.

They're called the Air Max 1 Golf, and to be fair, they might look pretty darn snazzy on a golf course, which is what they're loosely designed for.

Nike's fuzzy new footwear will be irresistible to the touch and set you back £110.

Gone with the wind!

The wind wreaked havoc at Millom as Red Star Belgrade's first half kick-off went backwards.



A 50-yard kick was made from the resulting penalty. Red Star went on to lose 38-10 in the first round of the Rugby League Challenge Cup.

If you spot anything you think might give readers a chuckle send it to:
kerry.haywood@pitchcare.com

DIARY DATES

MARCH

2nd: Cricket - West Indies v England, 5th ODI, Darren Sammy Cricket Ground, St Lucia (ecb.com)

4th-17th: Tennis - BNP Paribas Open, Indian Wells Tennis Garden (bnpparibasopen.com)

5th: Cricket - West Indies v England, 1st International Twenty20, Darren Sammy Cricket Ground, St Lucia (ecb.com)

8th: Cricket - West Indies v England, 2nd International Twenty20, Warner Park, St Kitts (ecb.com)

9th: Rugby Union - Scotland v Wales, BT Murrayfield (sixnationsrugby.com)

9th: Rugby Union - England v Italy, Twickenham Stadium (sixnationsrugby.com)

10th: Cricket - West Indies v England, 3rd International Twenty20, Warner Park, St Kitts (ecb.com)

12th-15th: Horseracing - Cheltenham Festival, Cheltenham Racecourse (cheltenham.thejockeyclub.co.uk)

16th: Rugby Union - Wales v Ireland, Principality Stadium (sixnationsrugby.com)

16th: Rugby Union - England v Scotland, Twickenham Stadium (sixnationsrugby.com)

23rd onwards: Cricket - Vivo Indian Premier League (iplt20.com)

31st: Football - Check-a-Trade Cup Final, Wembley Stadium (efl.com)

APRIL

5th-8th: Cricket - Opening round of County Championship matches (ecb.co.uk)

6th: Horseracing - The Randox Health Grand National, Aintree (thejockeyclub.co.uk/aintree)

6th-7th: Football - FA Cup semi-finals, Wembley Stadium (thefa.com)

9th-10th: Football - UEFA Champions League quarter-finals, first legs (uefa.com/uefachampionsleague)

11th: Football - UEFA Europa League quarter-finals, first legs (uefa.com)

11th-14th: Golf - The Masters, Augusta (masters.com)

13th-14th: Football - Scottish Cup semi-finals (scottishfa.co.uk)

16th-17th: Football - UEFA Champions League quarter-finals, second legs (uefa.com/uefachampionsleague)

18th: Football - UEFA Europa League quarter-finals, second legs (uefa.com)

19th-21st: Rugby Union - Champions Cup and Challenge Cup semi-finals (eprugby.com)

20th-21st: Football - Women's Champions League semi-final first legs (uefa.com/womenschampionsleague)

27th-28th: Football - Women's Champions League semi-final second legs (uefa.com/womenschampionsleague)

30th-1st: Football - UEFA Champions League semi-finals, first legs (uefa.com/uefachampionsleague)

MAY

2nd: Football - UEFA Europa League semi-finals, first legs (uefa.com)

3rd-4th: Rugby Union - Pro14 quarter-finals (pro14rugby.org)

4th: Football - Women's FA Cup final, Wembley Stadium (thefa.com)

5th: Cricket - England v Pakistan Twenty20, Cardiff (twenty20.com)

7th-8th: Football - UEFA Champions League semi-finals, first legs (uefa.com/uefachampionsleague)

9th: Football - UEFA Europa League semi-finals, second legs (uefa.com)

11th: Rugby Union - European Champions Cup final, Newcastle (eprugby.com)

18th: Football - FA Cup final, Wembley Stadium (thefa.com)

24th: Rugby Union - Premiership semi-finals (premiershiprugby.com)

25th: Football - Scottish Cup final, Hampden Park (scottishfa.co.uk)

25th: Rugby union - Pro14 final, Glasgow (pro14rugby.org)

25th: Cricket - One-Day Cup final, Lord's (lords.org)

25th-26th: Rugby League - Super League Magic Weekend, Liverpool (rugby-league.com)

30th-15 July: Cricket - World Cup in England starts (cricketworldcup.com)

31st: Horseracing - Oaks, Epsom (www.epsomderby.co.uk)

To have your event included in this magazine diary section, please email details to kerry@pitchcare.com

QUOTE ME HAPPY

"Each time a chapter is closed I show my deepest respect and I don't make any comments about my former colleagues" – **Mourinho gives his thoughts after being sacked by Manchester United.**

"I know he's your captain but you can't seriously like him as a bloke?" **Tim Paine, sledging an India batsman in the second Test – which Australia won – after clashing with Virat Kohli.**

"I was happy to be sacked" – **Wayne Bennett's spell at Brisbane Broncos ends on a sour note.**

"Let me put it this way, it's going to go on a part that only (my girlfriend) Grace will see. The worst decision I made all week" – **Thomas Bjørn on promising to get a tattoo of the winning score should Europe win the Ryder Cup. He kept his word.**



Bjørn tattoo

"At the same time, when you get to March, the days are longer, the sun is out, the training sessions are in better conditions and you can take a coffee outside." **Manchester City boss, Pep Guardiola, believes this season's Premier League title race won't be decided until the last fixture or two.**

"Every tackle, carry, breakdown is almost like a car crash. Big men smashing into each other. The sheer force can never be doubted." **Former Scotland captain, Kelly Brown, before the opening round of the Six Nations.**

"Before, I used to choose the team with my two assistants, now I do it in collaboration with thousands of people so that's the big difference. They make plenty of decisions that a normal coach would make." **Julien Le Pen turns to more than 2,000 virtual managers to make decisions. Brave!**

"You could have a cat playing the piano on YouTube that gets 53 million hits, but what does that mean if it's just chasing numbers?" **A four-minute mockumentary starring Tommy Fleetwood, Henrik Stenson, Eddie Pepperell, Thomas Bjorn and Lee Westwood promoting the European Tour.**

"When I sit down for my first morning wee ('cos that's what we all do right), my quads really hurt." **English international cricketer James Anderson tells DJ Greg James about the effect that cricket has on his body.**

It's about obsessing over the little things, the details no one else sees. It's never tolerating anything less than the best. Perfection is a mindset. And that's worth being proud of.



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