

PITCHCARE

The turfcare magazine from pitchcare.com

April/May 2021

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DON'T MISS

Have you got worms?
What are companies doing to bring through a safe and effective solution for the control of worms since Carbendazim was banned?

JUST HERE TO KEEP THE LIGHTS ON!

The previous twelve months have proved difficult for the turfcare industry. In this article, Gary Barwell, Head of Sports Turf and Grounds at the Edgbaston Stadium tells Jane Carley that, despite the considerable challenges, there were positives to take out of the situation

Manicured to perfection

Hazlegrove Preparatory School is situated in Yeovil, within a beautiful rural Somerset location. The school is steeped in history that stretches back to 1519 and, as part of the King's School Bruton Foundation, Hazlegrove is part of an educational lineage that spans nearly five centuries



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WELCOME TO

PITCHCARE

Rolling, rolling, rolling

The vaccine rollout across the UK continues to be successful and we can only hope that this means bums on stadium seats in the near future. The Covid-19 roadmap certainly looks positive for the return of normality from the 21st June, but you never know what can happen!

We recently ran a social media poll to determine how you, as an industry, feel about trade shows for 2021. We wanted to find out if you were jubilant and eager to return to face to face interaction, or whether you are nervous - and the results were interesting.

Over a variety of platforms: Twitter, Facebook Groundsmen and Facebook Greenkeeping (official) pages and our own Forum, we received over 1500 votes which showed a majority 54% of you are keen to attend a show this year. A staggering 69% wanted an outdoor event. However, 76% of voters were in favour of a winter show - which could be pretty grim and chilly outdoors - so the jury is out on that one!

BIGGA recently rescheduled the Festival of Turf event to 21st and 22nd July, so that it is now outside of the Government's social distancing restrictions, and The Sports & Grounds Expo (SAGE) is scheduled for 27th-29th July at the Three Counties Showground. Formed out of the heightening demand by visitors and exhibitors to get 'hands-on' and, with so many of you wanting an outdoor event, we have to keep our fingers crossed that the roadmap sees everything lifted by these proposed dates.

With the return of golf at the end of March, and grassroots sport shortly after, there was an obvious lift in morale and positiveness, but it's still a question of what lasting effects the past year could have on people's mental health. I

recently watched a documentary where people were encouraged to ask someone if they are okay - twice! The theory being that it is the most important part of the conversation and it is quite often brushed over and bypassed; therefore, by asking twice, you put the emphasis on the question and provide an opportunity for someone to say 'I'm not okay'.

The GMA #groundsweek campaign was hailed a success with groundstaff, managers, volunteers, players, officials and clubs etc. coming together with one message - to promote and celebrate our industry. They report an increase in job enquiries as a result and I have been encouraged over the last couple of months by the amount of recruitment adverts across all outlets in the industry. Pitchcare amassed a record number of new positions available during March, which can only be encouraging for the industry and new people seeking sportsturf jobs.

Let's keep banging the drum!

Kerry Haywood
Editor



SAY THAT AGAIN!

"I have enjoyed it so far, but 2020 was a freak year and one of the most challenging years I have ever had in greenkeeping, but I have loved the responsibility"

Phil Worth, Macclesfield Golf Club



"If there are none, then it seems we are left pretty much where we are - frustrated turf managers exploring ineffective or legally questionable treatments"

Phil Collinson, ICL



"From my point of view, it possesses all the good attributes of a hybrid and a natural pitch, but is devoid of the handicaps of both"

Antonio Blanco García del Pino, Valladolid



"Covid has been challenging. When you set high standards, it is tough not to get around to do everything you would normally do and not to the standards you usually set!"

Graham Kitley, Hazlegrove Prep School



"I'm proud of what we achieved, especially when you consider the deluge ahead of T20 finals (in October). It was amazing that we got it on and that it played so well"

Gary Barwell, Edgbaston Stadium



"As a contractor, you're getting pushed to finish by a certain time and not a certain quality. As long as you can do a job 'good enough' and the client says yeah, that will do, then it ticks the box. Now we say, let's stay here and get this right"

John Carpenter, Ealing Council

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Issue 96 April/May 2021

Gary Barwell, Edgbaston Stadium

COVER STORY: Just here to keep the lights on!

The previous twelve months have proved difficult for the turfcare industry. In this article, Gary Barwell, Head of Sports Turf and Grounds at the Edgbaston Stadium tells Jane Carley that, despite the considerable challenges, there were positives to take out of the situation. **P54**

GOLF

Temperature challenges

Maintaining two golf courses that host near one hundred thousand rounds a year between them to an exceptional standard isn't easy but, at the Emirates Golf Club, Dubai, it is what they do. Blair Ferguson chatted over Zoom with Dónal Mulvey, the club's Fleet Manager. **P14**

Worth his weight!

On a very wet winter's day, Lee Williams met up with thirty-four-year-old Macclesfield Golf Club's Head Greenkeeper Phil Worth, who joined the club two years ago and admitted 2020 was one of the most challenging years he has had in greenkeeping. **P22**

Getting to grips with technology

Leek Golf Club is one of the oldest in the country and, along with twenty-seven others, is a member of the 1892 Club - an organisation that allows members from each club to play each other's course. Nicknamed the Queen of the Moors the course was once covered with heather but, thirty-five years ago, the club planted many trees transforming it into a parkland course. **P30**

No monkeying around here

Officially founded in 1891, Chester City Golf Club is situated on the banks of the River Dee and set on two levels overlooking Chester Racecourse with views of the Welsh hills. Course Manager Andy Whyman spoke to Lee Williams about his busy and challenging first year at the club. **P36**

WINTER SPORTS

Continuing to grow

Temperatures rarely get below 8°C in Valladolid, Spain, and can reach a high of 40°C in high summer. It is here that Antonio Blanco García del Pino looks after the pitches of La Liga side Real Valladolid. In this article, he talks about tending turf 200km north of Madrid. **P46**

SUMMER SPORTS

Where there's a Wells ...

Lytham Cricket and Sports Club is situated a stone's throw away from the Fylde coastline and is primarily the home of Lytham Cricket Club. Over the years, many other sports have come to call this ground home and, the club's twenty-five-year-old full-time Head Groundsman, Thomas Wells took some time out of his busy schedule to speak to Lee Williams. **P60**

Outfield of dreams!

Blackpool Cricket Club's Stanley Park is a 5,000-seater ground that is regularly used for county cricket matches by Lancashire County Cricket Club. It is one of the county's official outgrounds alongside Liverpool and Southport. This year, they will host the Royal London Cup one day game against Worcestershire CCC on 8th August. Lee Williams met up with Sam Dutton, the club's twenty-seven-year-old Head Groundsman to discuss the work undertaken. **P68**

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SCHOOLS & COLLEGES

Manicured to perfection

Hazlegrove Preparatory School is steeped in history that stretches back to 1519 and, as part of the King's School Bruton Foundation, is part of an educational lineage that spans nearly five centuries. Graham Kitley is the school's Director of Grounds, responsible for managing twenty-two acres of grounds - maintained and manicured to perfection. **P74**

MULTI SPORTS

Grounds for investment

Even though sporting areas have been closed up for months due to Covid-19 regulations, the maintenance crews are still hard at work ensuring facilities are kept in good condition. Chris McCullough talks to Grounds maintenance Team Leader Warren Knobbs to discover what is going on behind the scenes at the Melvin Sports Complex in County Tyrone. **P84**

PUBLIC PLACES

Greener Ealing

July 2020 signalled a new era for Ealing Council grounds maintenance team. After twenty-five years of working with outside contractors, the decision was made to form a local authority trading company in the shape of Greener Ealing Ltd (GEL) to reinstall an emphasis on green space and waste management in the borough. Blair Ferguson reports. **P88**

Victorian splendour

Waddesdon Manor is a National Trust property in Buckinghamshire - renowned for its Grade I listed house and outstanding Victorian gardens. Last year, Peter Driver paid a socially-distanced visit to speak to Head of Gardens Mike Buffin. **P96**

INDUSTRY

Pure grafting

Gone are the days when the fairway mower was put in the shed at the beginning of October and then dusted off at the beginning of March. During his twenty-eight years as a contractor in the turfcare industry, Lee Padwick at Pure-Lawns has seen it all and he recently spoke to Kerry Haywood about the many challenges he faces. **P102**

TECHNICAL

It never rains but it pours

What are the drainage solutions open to turf managers and how can these help deal with the pressure of maintaining fine turf surfaces whilst keeping their facility open for play? Phil Helmn MG looks at the options. **P112**

Have you got worms?

'What have you got for worms?' has been the most asked question I've received in the past year. And, unfortunately, my answer every single time has been a short and succinct 'nothing'. But why? And what are companies doing to bring through a safe and effective solution for the control of worms, since Carbendazim was banned over twelve months ago? Phil Collinson, Technical Area Sales Manager of ICL reports. **P116**

More bang for your buck!

In this article, Alastair Rowell, UK sales manager - turfcare equipment from Reesink Turfcare, considers how you can get more from your machinery. **P122**

Understanding the key elements

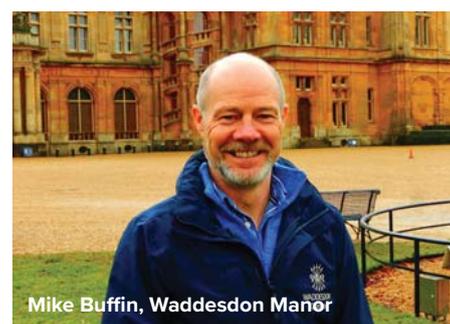
What is so special about carbon and by which means does it transcend in to many areas of turf management? Derek Fullerton aims to provide some transparency to these questions, and ultimately highlight how turf managers possess the ability to alter the carbon footprint of their land. **P122**



Sam Dutton, Blackpool Cricket Club



Donal Mulvey, Emirates Golf Club



Mike Buffin, Waddesdon Manor



Derek Fullerton, Murrayfield Golf Club



Graham Kitley, Hazlegrove Prep School

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Roadmap to Warwickshire

A chance to reconnect at the new Festival of Turf exhibition

This summer, BIGGA is inviting the turf industry to reconnect at the Warwickshire Event Centre for two days of exhibition, innovation and entertainment.

The UK Government's Roadmap out of lockdown has laid out a pathway to freedom following the challenges placed upon everyday life by the coronavirus crisis. For BIGGA this journey culminates on 21 and 22 July with a brand-new exhibition for greenkeepers, groundsmen and others with a professional interest in turf management.

Jim Croxton, BIGGA CEO, said: "It will have been a long 18 months since the industry gathered together at BTME 2020 and little did we know the challenges we would face over the coming year. We've all got new stories to tell since we last met up and I'm proud that BIGGA is able to facilitate the opportunity for the turf management industry and its commercial supporters to do so in a face-to-face setting."

"The Festival of Turf is going to be packed full of innovative products and services and some brilliant exhibitors, but most importantly it will be an opportunity to get together and enjoy reconnecting with old friends after such a long time apart."

On 21 and 22 July, England is anticipated to be at Stage 4 of the unlocking process, meaning social distancing measures will have been removed, and at that time it is anticipated that just about every adult in the UK will have been offered a vaccine. Other safety measures will be in place, but confidence is high that the festival can be a fantastic and entirely safe experience.

Festival of Turf is a completely new exhibition for the turf industry. Although there will be



many of the familiar faces from BTME and other industry exhibitions of the recent past, the predominantly outdoor exhibition – in addition to a number of stands and other facilities indoors – will give a different experience for attendees. There will be a stage featuring live music into the evening and industry experts talking during the day, appropriate summer refreshments and exhibitors are being

encouraged to do what they can to make the event a real festival of celebration after so long apart.

The Festival of Turf is set to be the biggest turf party of the summer, so for the latest news and updates, head to the BIGGA website to find out more. You can also check in on social media using the hashtag #FestivalOfTurf



Learning LIVE 2021 – Call for Papers

Inspirational speakers wanted for SALTEX's education programme

Organisers of SALTEX are looking for the best speakers in the grounds management industry to showcase their knowledge at the show, which takes place at the NEC, Birmingham on 3 and 4 November 2021.

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

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

individuals who are prepared to share personal experience and learnings.

If you have a story to share or consider yourself a field specialist, then we want to hear from you.

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

Please note that Learning LIVE is an educational, editorial opportunity.

For more information visit <https://gmasaltex.co.uk/learning-live-2021-call-for-papers/>



The curse of vandalism!

A spike in mindless vandalism is a major cause for concern

Over the past 'Covid' months, we have reported on over thirty cases of mindless vandalism carried out, in the main but not exclusively, by youngsters bored with lockdown.

These news stories have been gleaned from local press reports, but there have been countless other incidences reported on social media and, with repairs often running into five figures, is there any way that these actions can be stopped?

With golf courses particularly vulnerable due to their open nature, clearly security fencing is not an option. And, for the sports fields that have been targeted, the cost of fencing can be prohibitive, especially for the community clubs with shoestring budgets that use them.

Quad bikes, cars and motorbikes performing 'donuts' on sensitive grass areas seems to be the most prevalent method, but reports of cars being set on fire, course furniture being damaged and goalposts, cricket nets and other equipment being wrecked are not uncommon.

Additionally, burglaries have been on the rise in the past year with expensive to replace machinery and tools being stolen from groundsmen and greenkeepers sheds, usually by more organised gangs.



The latest cases involved Caird Park Golf Club (main image) and Guildford GC (inset and below), with repairs estimated to be both costly and time-consuming

Sadly, the police seem powerless to help as the only real way of apprehending the culprits is to catch them in the act.

Most of the security options, like CCTV, security fencing and alarms are costly to install. Warning signs have little or no effect - you can't educate the uneducated - so what is the answer?

Hopefully, a return to regular play will reduce the number of incidences, but even that won't stop these acts, often carried out after darkness falls.

If you have been affected by any of these issues, we'd love to hear from you. How much did the repairs cost? How was play affected? What counter measures have you put in place? Were the police able to offer any assistance, either by way of apprehending the culprits or offering security advice?

Drop our editor, Kerry Haywood, an email and we'll put together some, hopefully, sound advice on ways to tackle the problem in a forthcoming issue of the magazine and on our website.

kerry.haywood@pitchcare.com



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The Sports & Grounds Expo

All New Outdoor Trade Show Is Gaining Momentum for Summer 2021

With the government's announcement outlining the road map for this summer, SAGE has gained huge momentum. The planning over the last 6 months can now move further into refining the "added value" and the team are keen to get the word out - Join us 27 - 29 July 2021, for the all new OUTDOOR Sports and Grounds Expo (SAGE).

Set in the stunning surrounds of the Three Counties Showground at the foot of the Malvern Hills, the show has a clear focus on hands-on demonstrations and experiences, offering visitors the chance to see and test out the latest products and ideas within the industry. Come and see leading exhibitors showcase their products in action - without limitations on space - bringing together grounds personnel from a broad range of sectors to provide an engaging and well-resourced environment.

Many companies are looking to improve efficiency and cost effectiveness, and this is a key area which SAGE is focusing on; exploring and showcasing the products that allow this to actually happen across the industry.

"The government's announcement out of lockdown has really opened up the summer; SAGE now sits perfectly in the calendar, and provides a fantastic opportunity to get outdoors and to see what is on offer across the industry. Our motivation is to give visitors a hands-on experience as much as possible, without



Three Counties Showground, Malvern

compromising on safety and, at The Three Counties Showground, this is easily achieved," says Event Manager Vicky Panniers

"Our aim is to provide an environment that will benefit everyone from grass roots to senior management; we are very excited about what is on offer," she continues.

The safety of visitors and exhibitors is a priority, the latest health & safety advice will be implemented, security measures including social distancing have already been put into action, hand sanitiser will be readily available and free pre-registered bookings for all visitors to reduce queues are heavily encouraged.

Visitors will be impressed by the abundance of space and the diversity of products on show, whilst exhibitors will be astounded at the value for money on offer!

There are exciting plans in progress - watch this space! Keep up to date with all the SAGE news on Twitter & Facebook.

The Sports & Grounds Expo will be the highlight of the industry calendar this summer, offering a safe and proactive environment for those operating across all sectors of the sports and grounds maintenance industry. SAGE is a free event open to all who are interested in the sports and grounds industry.

Visitor registration is now open - Go to www.sportsandgrounds.co.uk to register and to be kept up to date with what's to come this July 2021!

For more information, contact the team today by email: team@sportsandgrounds.co.uk, by phone: +44 (0)1684 580101 or visit the website: www.sportsandgrounds.co.uk



SAPCA Awards 2021 - Winners Announced

The winners of the SAPCA Awards 2021 have been revealed, with five companies being chosen from a short list of 10 finalists.

Now in their sixth year, the awards celebrate achievements in the sports and play facility construction industry. Each year, SAPCA members are invited to submit entries to celebrate their successes, whether a new product or service, a technical innovation, a completed project, a research project or an achievement in sustainability.

The SAPCA Awards 2021 were presented during an online presentation on 24th March.

SAPCA chief executive, Chris Trickey, said: "2020 was a tough year for all industries, but the breadth and quality of entries we received for the SAPCA Award shows how the sports and play sector has remained robust."

"While the 12 months has certainly not been 'business as usual', the awards show how companies have been able to overcome challenges and disruption and to keep innovating and providing the products, services and facilities needed for people to enjoy sport and physical activity."

"It was great to see so many excellent projects being delivered by SAPCA members this year - so much so that, this year, we have two winners in the 'project' category."

"All in all, the 10 finalists exemplify the wide range of technical expertise and innovation across the industry and the very high standards of sports and play projects being delivered."



The winners are:

Product Category: **Sports Labs**

Project Category: **Tony Patterson Sports Grounds**

Project Category: **Allsports Construction and Maintenance**

Sustainability Category: **TigerTurf**

Innovation Category: **Labosport**

A refocus on training

Organisations refocus on training as staff return and growing season gets underway

After the busiest start to the spring season in years, Grounds Training says organisations across the country are catching up with postponed training and planning for the new financial year.

“Some companies put training on hold last year, while others moved some of their online where possible”, says Lead Instructor, Martin Sampson. “What we’ve seen is how eager everyone has been to get back to face-to-face training. From keen amateurs to company directors, the feedback we’ve received is that there is no substitute for interaction with experienced instructors. Being able to get hands-on with equipment in a workplace environment is also critical for learners at all levels.”

He also highlighted the need for managers to consider the training requirements of staff members returning from furlough.

“There are people who have been out of the workplace for lengthy periods, and many are returning at an extremely busy and often



stressful time. When it comes to using machinery, it’s easy to get out of the habit of carrying out important checks and following best practice. To ensure the safety of people returning to work, their colleagues and facility users, I’d encourage supervisors to consider return to work inductions to confirm competence and boost confidence. These can be carried out alongside seasonal staff inductions. Refresher training is also a great way of regrouping and refocusing teams.”

Grounds Training has added several new courses to its portfolio, including a Train the Trainer course specific to ground care machinery, training for the use of remote-controlled mowers and battery powered equipment, and a suite of Lantra accredited machinery maintenance courses which include mower sharpening, mower set-up, machinery hydraulics and machinery electrics. For further information, visit www.groundstraining.com/courses.

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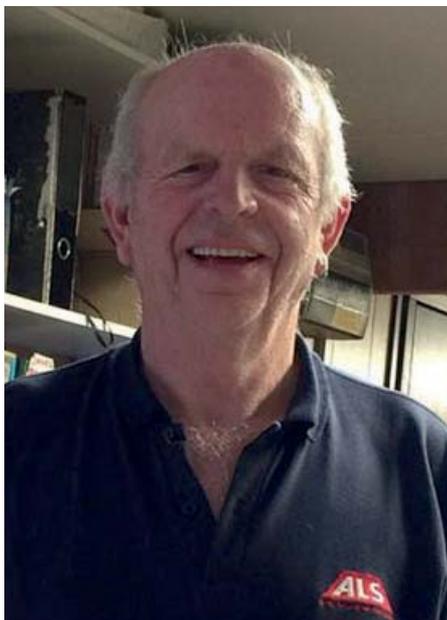
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Dave Harvey RIP

We remember Dave Harvey - our colleague and friend



To the very many friends and colleagues of Dave Harvey and, especially, to Jan his wife and his family - Dave's sad passing is a huge loss.

Dave was loved by literally hundreds of greenkeepers, groundsmen, suppliers and work colleagues - who all regarded him both as a friend and as an exceptional organiser and manager. His ability to keep all the balls in the air as a contracts manager and pull rabbits from hats - against all odds - is legendary. No matter how big the obstacles, Dave somehow managed to deliver.

At the very busiest times of year with a full diary of contract bookings, bad weather, a stolen or broken down piece of key equipment, an operator off work ill - all these things would throw all plans to the wind, but somehow Dave coped with it, making sure customers were not let down and reorganising the whole jigsaw

puzzle of commitments. Even if it meant he personally needed to set out in the small hours of the morning, to get to a customer with serious disease problems on his greens, Dave was there. He always did so with a 'can do' attitude, humour and a cheerful outlook. He was, without doubt, the key player in establishing ALS Contract Services' reputation as a reliable and quality service provider and was highly respected by some of the very best turf managers in the country.

Dave started out with ALS in January 1988 following a few years working for Hodges & Moss, mostly contract spraying agricultural crops with some amenity spraying thrown in. His background as a farm worker meant he was adaptable and multi-skilled, was prepared to work whenever needed and he understood how to work with the weather. As the founding workforce of just two staff at ALS Contracts, he quickly adapted to taking on the role of organiser and manager, despite his initial doubts in his own ability to take on that role. He needn't have worried! It was not long before more staff joined and Dave was key in selecting and motivating the right people for the job. He was good at recruiting staff who were self-motivated, self-reliant and with the right skills. He was also a prime mover in expanding the contracts operation from the highly seasonal spraying activities into groundwork machinery, which extended the working season making the whole operation viable.

Dave rarely took holidays as most people do. He devoted his holiday leave to days off (out of season), to live his passion for training his gun dogs and beating and shooting - all of which were shared by his wife Jan. It is very sad that he did not make retirement to enjoy these interests.

Dave was a great character who will be sadly missed by his colleagues at work, by possibly hundreds of customers who regarded him as a friend but most of all by Jan his wife and long-term assistant in the contracts department. All of us will miss Dave and extend our sincere condolences to Jan and his family at this time.

Bill Clutterbuck 1947-2021



It is with much sadness that we report the passing of Bill Clutterbuck, a highly respected member of the cricket groundsmen community.

In his early years, Bill was an accomplished cricketer, before moving into coaching, qualifying alongside such notables as Micky Stewart and Graham Monkhouse. He was widely regarded for mentoring a young Matthew Maynard.

Pitchcare's former Operations Director John Richards said; "In recent decades, Bill was a much-valued member of the Pitchcare family, from when he began as an instructor on our training courses to his subsequent inciteful and humorous contributions on this forum. I attended one of his cricket maintenance courses, about fifteen years ago now, and he loved nothing better than to pass on his knowledge and ideas to anyone who wanted to learn. He was a natural, with a lovely manner, which is why he was so highly respected. Our thoughts are with his family."

As well as his involvement with Pitchcare, he was the head groundsman at Guildford Cricket Club's Woodbridge Road Ground, which hosted Surrey County Cricket Club's Guildford Festival every year which, much to Bill's delight, was later paired with the Guildford Beer Festival.

Head Groundsman at The Kia Oval, Lee Fortis, commented; "Bill was a very knowledgeable man and extremely well respected among the first-class groundsmen across the country. He gave a great deal to Surrey CCC, preparing numerous top-quality pitches for games at Woodbridge Road and winning a series of awards in the process."

"On behalf of everyone at the club, I would like to pass on our condolences to his family, friends and those in the Surrey cricket network who knew him."

Like all the best groundsmen, he was unhappy to see players not give his pitches the appropriate respect, resulting in a variable relationship with his club that reached its nadir when he parked the heavy roller on the square to ensure a match did not take place, an incident which made front page news in The Times and was dubbed 'Rollergate'. It was a story that Bill very much enjoyed recounting with his inimitable humour.

Bill is survived by his wife Sue, two children and four grandchildren. Our thoughts are with them.

Stephen Campbell RIP

Tributes have been paid to Stephen Campbell - Appleby Golf Club's head greenkeeper for forty years - who has died aged 65.

Described as a joker and family man who lived life to the full, Stephen, of Bongate, Appleby, with his wife Vivien and was known to friends as Steve, was always a "people person" who got on with everyone.

Paying tribute, Appleby Golf Club president Ray Cousin said: "Steve began his career with the greens staff in March 1981, and for most of the last 40 years has been head greenkeeper."

"Throughout the years he has produced a course that is loved by all that play it. The quality of the putting surfaces tended to by him are held in the highest regard and his course presentation has been exemplary."

"Steve will be sadly missed, not only as a fine greenkeeper but as a valued friend to all that knew him at the club. His legacy will live on for generations to come."





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The People's Project

Everton Stadium plans receive government approval

Everton Football Club's plans to develop a new stadium at Bramley-Moore Dock in the north of Liverpool can proceed after the Government chose not to call-in the planning application.

The Government review, standard practice for a development of the size and scale of Everton's stadium plans, was conducted after Liverpool City Council's Planning Committee had unanimously approved the plans on February 23.

The Club received written confirmation of the Secretary of State's decision not to intervene to call-in the application.

The decision to approve a new 52,888-capacity waterfront arena allows the club to complete its agreed acquisition of the site from Peel L&P and the funding solution for the project, ensuring the club can begin to make the plans a reality.

It is estimated that the stadium development and plans for a Goodison Legacy will deliver a £1.3bn boost to the economy, create more than 15,000 jobs and attract 1.4m new visitors to the city.



A club statement on the Everton website following the decision read: "On such a momentous day, the football club would like to thank every Evertonian, along with the many organisations, the tens of thousands of people across the city region and the team of dedicated staff who have played a vital role in ensuring the Club reached today's milestone."

Everton has been advised by CBRE UK's Planning & Development team and worked closely with the Liverpool Planning Authority, Historic England and other stakeholders as part of the planning process.

Everton Football Club will be sharing insights on The People's Project during ALSD International taking place in Liverpool, September 6-7, with attendees to take a technical tour of Goodison Park.

Latest on Fulham's Riverside Stand development

In their latest video update, Andrew Mackintosh, Project Manager for Buckingham Group Ltd, provides an update on the Riverside works at Fulham Football Club's Craven Cottage ground and outlines the schedule for the coming months.

As work continues apace on the Fulham Pier development, this latest video update provides details on what will be a real game changer for Fulham Football Club and the local community.



The new stand will not only increase the seating capacity at Craven Cottage but also enhance amenities to the ground and locality for supporters, residents and visitors to enjoy.

Designed by architect Populous - who will be joining a "Stadiums of the Future" panel session at this September's ALSD International conference and exhibition - the development boasts a transformation of the riverside walkway into a world class leisure destination; a pathway that will allow an uninterrupted walk along the banks of the River Thames between Hammersmith and Putney Bridges, and a choice of amenities for visitors to enjoy throughout the year.

You can view the video here:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9bSYA3rzDkg>

Amex upgrades on track

Brighton & Hove Albion Football Club has been given the go ahead to expand the capacity of its American Express Community Stadium to 32,500.

Some of the work on the Amex Stadium has already been completed, while other upgrades will be phased over the short to medium term. These include an extra stairway leading from the external concourse to the coach park and a new gatehouse on Village Way.

The stadium's current capacity is 30,750, with expansion designs undertaken by KSS Design Group. The architecture and design firm has been working with Brighton & Hove Albion FC



for the past 21 years. In this time, KSS has designed the multi award winning Amex Stadium, opened in 2011, and BHAF's Category One status Training Centre, opened in 2014.

Luton Town reveal latest images of stadium plans - at two sites!

Luton Town Football Club has released new images of the developments at Power Court and Newlands Park, one showing its planned new Power Court stadium lit up on a match night.

Both sites are owned 100% freehold by 2020 Developments (Luton) Ltd having been acquired in various stages between 2015 and 2018. Outline planning consent was received for both sites during 2019.

Structural changes in the way the UK consumer shops, works and plays has required a revision to scheme plans originally conceived in 2015/2016 prior to submission of original planning applications. The Coronavirus pandemic has generally served to accelerate these structural changes. The challenge has been to ensure the vision for both sites remains viable and deliverable.

Several changes were already being considered by the development team ahead of any impact from Covid-19. This is standard for any development between early stages of the process.

The English Football League Championship side's core objective remains to deliver a truly great new stadium and home for Luton Town



Power Court

FC. The intended capacity remains set at 23,000 (with potentially an initial cap at 17,500 for transport assessment reasons) and a target opening date in 2024.

By taking control of its own future, the club can ensure the new stadium is not burdened by external debt and delivers real and tangible benefits for the people of Luton.



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An honest insight!

Q&A with Agrovista Amenity's Head of Amenity, John Marland

In January last year Agrovista Amenity was officially launched at BTME in Harrogate, and it is safe to say that a global pandemic was unaccounted for. In this exclusive Q&A, Head of Amenity John Marland, offers an extraordinarily honest insight into how the newly formed Agrovista Amenity has fared throughout Covid-19.

It obviously was not the start you were expecting but what have the past twelve months been like?

In all honesty it has been challenging - you just cannot plan for a global pandemic. However, it has allowed us to accelerate the integration process between Agrovista and Maxwell Amenity, and has also enabled us to use the time to focus on the business and identify where improvements can be made.

We also completed a major project in which we launched AAMOS. This is a bespoke new online ordering system which allows staff to manage their accounts. Not only does it allow for better account management and can be accessed on any device including mobiles, but it is also offers a new and improved level of customer service. Ultimately, we are aiming to create an ordering process like the Amazon experience, in which the customer receives notifications and updates, including ETA for delivery, every step of the way. We are incredibly pleased that we have been able to implement this project.

How have the staff been able to assist their customers throughout this time?

We felt from the onset that Agrovista had to adopt a tone and policy that was apt for a global pandemic. We decided that all social media should be focussed on general communication rather than anything adversely commercial and all our salespeople were told to stand down.

In fact, we stood everyone down before the full government lockdown. It was also decided that we would only support customers on site if it were by prior arrangement and only at the request of the customer. I am pleased to say that no staff were furloughed. Everybody was fully employed, even if it were just to continue their learning and develop their skills through our online academy.

With many operations coming to a standstill, have you seen an increase in visitors to the online shop on Pitchcare.com?

Part of the rationale for acquiring Maxwell Amenity/Pitchcare was the online shop and, as

you can imagine, the internet has become a safe and viable method to secure and purchase products during the pandemic. People were spending a lot more time in the garden or were at least appreciating green space and it is for these reasons that we did see an increase in online business. What I would say though, is that every upside comes with a downside and it put an enormous amount of pressure on the logistical side of the business. It was difficult because we were, and still are, operating in a Covid-19 secure manner, which meant people were working from home, there were restricted shift patterns and we had limited numbers on-site. I would say that it highlighted stress points in our business, and it enabled us to put certain positive measures in place to address those stress points.

Normally, the team would have been in an office together, and management would have been able to have face-to-face meetings with staff members. Has this had an impact and what have you put in place for allowing people to keep in touch with one another?

We have developed our ways of working and have instigated online team meetings where people can meet regularly and speak - and that does not necessarily have to be about work.

We have been very aware that this period has been testing for everybody and the welfare of our staff has, of course, been of the utmost importance. With this in mind, we have previously supported a mental health charity and we also have mental health ambassadors within the business so there were already structures in place. We want to encourage staff to always communicate and reach out.

I think you often learn a lot about your organisation in times of pressure and I am tremendously proud of this group of individuals within Agrovista Amenity and Agrovista as a whole. The frontline operation - the bigger business which supports food production in the UK, they had no choice but to stay open. As much as we can talk about managerial challenges, the people who have been working everyday throughout this have done the hard yards - and they are the ones who should be celebrated the most.

Before they were even cancelled, you were quick to pull out of many of the industry shows - can you let us know the thinking behind that? Furthermore, do you think that the industry has missed its trade shows?

First and foremost, the reason behind choosing not to attend any event was employee and



customer safety. It was not in any way a snub to the organisations such as the GMA, BIGGA or the STRI - we are big supporters of them all. However, if I cannot guarantee the safety of our employees, then I would be failing in the role that I have.

Shows have been missed without question - they are landmark dates within the industry's calendar, and we hope for a return to normality, sooner rather than later. The shows would have been an opportunity for us to inform everyone who we are, what we are doing and what we want to achieve. The lack of engagement, the face-to-face interaction and transfer of knowledge has been the biggest loss.

This time last year, you proudly claimed that the launch of Agrovista Amenity was a career highlight. Is this still the case and has the pandemic disrupted any plans that were in place?

Nothing has changed - it has been a highlight and a challenge. We still have such a long way to travel on this road, and I am still enthused by it all. The plans are all there, and yes, our progress has been slightly hampered by this, but we will continue to improve and continue to develop, not just in terms of the products we support, but in the way that we do it.

By that I mean in the way we take our independent view on science.

We do not have factories and are not tied to any one product or brand, so we can continue to look at the market and find ways that we can use all the manufacturers across the world. We have an incredible global reach to find new tools to aid our customers in what is becoming a more and more challenging environment.

We are in an exceptionally good position - the mechanisms we have in place are the reasons we must remain positive.

As an industry let's make sure we all look after each other, keep each other safe, and let's look forward to a brighter future.

For more information about Agrovista Amenity, visit: www.amenity.agrovista.co.uk

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Maintaining two golf courses that host near one hundred thousand rounds a year between them to an exceptional standard isn't easy but, at the Emirates Golf Club, Dubai, it is what they do. Blair Ferguson chatted over Zoom with **Dònal Mulvey**, the club's Fleet Manager

Emirates Golf Club was built in 1988 as the Middle East's first grass golf course. In 2021, it is the region's number one golf destination and hosts one of the longest-running European Tour events in the Omega Dubai Desert Classic on the Majlis Course and the Women's Moonlight Classic, the first European Tour event under floodlights, on the Faldo Course.

In December 2020 alone, the Faldo Course had over seven thousand rounds, which is someone teeing off every five to six minutes for twelve to thirteen hours. For every one of these rounds, the members, paying public or PGA professionals expect the very best from the Middle East's very best, and delivering that along with a

seventy-two strong team is Fleet Manager and Second Assistant Dònal Mulvey.

In early February, when we sit down for this interview, Dònal and the course team are in their coldest time of year and fresh from another successful Desert Classic, with Paul Casey claiming his 15th European Tour title.

Whilst the daytime temperature in Dubai is twenty-five degrees Celsius, in England, on the other side of the Zoom call, it's a slightly colder minus two - a temperature Dònal is more familiar with from his time working at Royal Dublin Golf Club.

The Irishman traded the striking views of Dublin Bay for Dubai's sun and sand in 2017 after initially learning his trade during a formative 30-week college placement at the

Emirates Golf Club

Temperature challenges

Links that would turn into a job for seven years.

"I did my first year of college, and I needed a summer job. My friend helped me out with a job on a pitch and putt course. I went back to college after the summer finished in 2009 and, during that year, I had to do a 30-week placement, so my lecturer Pat Suttle set me up with a job at the Royal Dublin Golf Club. He basically said to me, if I'm going to send you here, you need to work. You need to be able to work. Me being a young lad, I said sure no bother and got such a shock after a week or two, to say the least. But it was a good shock in the end."

"Working at Royal Dublin for that 30 weeks taught me a lot about hard work and high standards and, being a Championship

Golf Course, it has those. I worked under Paddy Teeling there, and he was the one setting the standards, and you had to match them, or you'd leave."

"I think those summers there just happened to be some of the best weather-wise. Royal Dublin is a links course in the heart of Dublin Bay and, when the sun shines, it's absolutely beautiful. It's so low lying that you can see the ships coming in every day. You can actually set your watch to the Irish Ferry and Stena Line at 8:08am nearly every morning."

"Funnily enough, I spotted Emirates Golf Club a long time ago when I was beginning college. I don't know how and I don't know why, I can't remember exactly, but I'd always seen it in magazines and the way it was

presented during the European Tour. For some reason, it was always sitting in the back of my head, and when an opportunity came up as a Head Mechanic at a different golf course in Dubai - the Superintendent at the time was an Irish lad - I jumped at that opportunity to go over and get my foot in the door. Whether it worked out or not was another thing, but I don't think I would have got that opportunity again, so I just went for it."

"I think the eight months up to me leaving Ireland was probably one of the coldest eight months I've ever experienced. The opposite side to a links golf course is during the winter; it's windy, and it does not stop blowing. I was in the workshop, and my tools were covered in frost, the wind was blowing





I was in the workshop, and my tools were covered in frost, the wind was blowing for eight months solid, and I was telling myself it's time to get some heat in my bones and get out of here



for eight months solid, and I was telling myself it's time to get some heat in my bones and get out of here."

If the Irish winds were proving a touch too cold, then arrival in Dubai was the opposite. Dónal likens it to the first waft of air when you open an oven every time you step outside in the summer. During his walks to catch the bus at half three in the morning, the humidity would have him soaked in sweat until he returned home that night.

For him, that was the biggest change to face. Workwise, he was thrown straight in and went with the flow before the opportunity came to join Craig Haldane at Emirates Golf Club, where he has fully adapted to the elements, both for himself and for the courses.

"The effect of no water on the course can take a day or two to show, depending on the weather. Once Bermuda or paspalum is

deprived of water, it does come back, but it's very hard to bring it back. We do an awful lot of hand hosing during the summer because irrigation is never one hundred percent perfect, so hot spots will appear. And you have those tell-tale greens or areas on the course that you can keep your eye on because you know if that goes, you need to keep an eye out on other areas."

"The thing about the water we use is it's very high in salt, and salts and grasses don't really mix. Paspalum is a somewhat salt-tolerant grass, so it does thrive with the water that we put on. The problem is that you're putting on all this water, and the salt starts to build up and, when the grassroot hits salt, it shuts down. So, between the Air2G2, needle tining and our renovation, we need to open up that profile and get as much sand in there for drainage as we can."

"We call it flushing. Let's say we go out on



We do an awful lot of hand hosing during the summer because irrigation is never one hundred percent perfect, so hot spots will appear





We use the Pogo every day to take the moisture content, salinity and EC readings. When we first got the Pogo with the new irrigation system, I think we saved about twenty-five percent on irrigation in the first year

a Sunday night. We will 8mm needle tine to open up the surface, and we will spray a wetting agent to help pull water through and then irrigate for a significant amount of time to cause hydraulic conductivity. That saturation of the green causes it to flush itself and pull all the salts and all the water out of the soil profile. We have to do that quite often during the summer because of the amount of irrigating we do, and that pulls

the salt from the soil profile and gives it a fresh surface.”

“We use the Pogo every day to take the moisture content, salinity and EC readings. When we first got the Pogo with the new irrigation system, I think we saved about twenty-five percent on irrigation in the first year. With all the new technology like weather stations, we measure the evapotranspiration rate per day so that the

water taken off the course through evaporation is then reapplied rather than applying extra, and it’s just the right amount, this alters significantly throughout the year.”

“And you can see with the rain that we have, if it happens - it hasn’t happened this year for some strange reason - the EC drops significantly, and that is the freshwater diluting the salt in the soil profile. But once you add in irrigation and nutrients, it pretty

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On the face of it, seventy-two staff for two eighteen-hole Championship Courses and a par three course may seem a lot, but between hand watering, cutting, landscaping and machinery maintenance, no one has a quiet day

much grows itself, and the problem is trying to stop it growing during the summer.”

Keeping up with the continually growing grass is a challenge at Emirates, with the greenkeeping team cutting every day of the year to keep the courses in prime condition. As Dónal talks through an average daily and weekly routine, it becomes clear that cutting isn't the only thing that needs to be done constantly.

On the face of it, seventy-two staff for two eighteen-hole Championship Courses and a par three course may seem a lot, but between hand watering, cutting, landscaping and machinery maintenance, no one has a quiet day.

As Fleet Manager, ensuring the equipment at the team's disposal, including a one hundred and seventy golf cart fleet, is ready for a gruelling work schedule falls to Dónal, and it is one that the heat plays a significant part in.

“When I first came in five years ago, preventative maintenance was done to the manual, which is right, but given the conditions and the amount of usage and hours that we rack up on the machines, it just wasn't sufficient enough. One of the first things I did was shorten the intervals between preventative maintenance, and the other thing was grinding.”

“Bermuda and paspalum grass is thick and so hard-wearing, especially on the bedknives and the reels. When I first came over here, my team was backlapping every day, and I was like, you only ground this the other day; you don't need to backlap. So I got a GP400, ground it, set it out and two days later, they tell me it's not cutting, and I was thinking I only ground this two days ago, so I took off the bedknife, and I couldn't believe the wear over two days. It's not something I like doing, but we have to backlap every day!”

“We're using Foley grinders. They were a new purchase three years ago now, and it's one of the best things we ever bought. One of the main reasons we picked Foley was its



ease of use. Five of my eleven guys can use it, and I can say today we're grinding greens mowers, and one of the guys will do that all day, and then we'll do fairway mowers in two days, and a different guy can go in and do it. We also have a great relationship with Arjen Spek at Foley who is always there when we need him.”

“That's one of the main reasons we love the Foley grinders because you have to go step by step. My team is amazing, and I actually don't say you need to grind; you need to backlap - they know, which is a huge load off my back. They know the standards that have been set for them and,

when you have a team like that, you just say go ahead.”

“And I don't have to sit there and watch to make sure they are grinding the correct way because it's all pre-set in the grinders, and that's why I love them so much.”

“One of the things we do quite regularly during the summer, in addition to the preventative maintenance programme, is checking fluids - hydraulic oil, engine oil, and especially coolant. We'll clean out the radiators and clean out the air filters and we will be greasing all the time. Let's say every second week, the rough mowers will come in because they work three and a half to four



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That's one of the main reasons we love the Foley grinders because you have to go step by step. And I don't have to sit there and watch to make sure they are grinding the correct way because it's all pre-set in the grinders, and that's why I love them so much

days a week during the summer, so they are always going, and it's quite dusty and hot conditions."

"During my time in Ireland, I think I had two maybe three hydraulic leaks, but here it's just a regular thing given the heat and the water. You can imagine spraying dirty water on rubber hoses and contracting and expanding in the heat and the hot hydraulic oil inside. It's constant pressure on the pipes and seals, and even tanks leak because of the continuous pressures of heat and the conditions."

The machinery conversation leads us to a topic that has been much discussed at Emirates over the last year and a half, and that is battery powered mowers. The obvious question is, how does a battery cope with working in such heat. Although not a direct comparison, the club has had a great experience with E-Z-GO golf carts which use lithium-ion batteries that can now be found in Jacobsen's new Eclipse 360 ELiTE greens mower. However, the best practical example is the INFINICUT greens mower that has been on trial at the club and performing well.

"Batteries are a topic at the moment because

lithium has come into the picture. We've had a good talk about it for the last year and a half, especially switching over with golf carts."

"The only thing we operate using battery power is the golf cart fleet, which is another area that falls under me as well. It doesn't seem to be an issue, and E-Z-GO has done their testing over quite a substantial amount of time now, so we have recently purchased golf carts for Jumeirah Golf Estates, Dubai Creek and Emirates Golf Club (414 carts) with the lithium battery. We've had one at Emirates Golf Club for well over a year now with zero issues, so I'm confident with it. I can't speak for other companies because they haven't been tested, and I think they are a few years behind E-Z-GO. I recently purchased a lithium battery for my cart, which is an aftermarket battery. I'm quite impressed with it, but longevity is my biggest concern."

"It really is an interesting one for us. At the moment, we are replacing our greens mowers as it's been five years now and we're looking at all options. What we have in now, and are testing, is the INFINICUT which is a lithium battery. Personally,

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I'm extremely impressed by it, I really am, but will it last in my conditions is the big question. That's my biggest concern."

"With an engine, you can put parts on it, but you can't put parts on a battery. There's a lot to consider, and then there's the whole computer side to go along with that. Will that last in the heat and humidity? It is the future, and I would love to purchase a lithium battery option, but it's a tough one to call."

"I do see us going lithium in the future. We're testing this mower, and it's cutting twelve greens on one charge. We use six mowers in the morning, so it's more than enough battery life, as well as the lithium being quick charging; if we did have any issues, we could easily give it a charge for twenty minutes, and it would be good to continue cutting."

"In fairness, suppliers of all brands have

been good to us over the years, and they give us products to test out. A huge perk of my job is that I get to see a lot of new machinery before anyone else does, and a lot of suppliers pay us visits and demonstrate what they have to offer, which is a huge benefit."

"We use a lot of Jacobsen mowers, and we've always had a great relationship with Textron and Jacobsen, especially the guys in Ipswich. I've always said to their team, send me machines because I'll put them to the test, because I've never seen so many hours built up on a machine anywhere so quickly."

Working to extremes, be it the weather, pushing machinery or scheduled course maintenance, is what has to be done at Emirates. Dònal and his team's real challenge is adapting to find the best way to deliver the best without ever slipping below

their standards in the process.

For some, the high-pressure environment might be too much, but Dònal, who is a calm, collected and assured character, appears to take it in his stride. Credit for that could be paid to his early days at Royal Dublin, or maybe even further back to his interest in the Hurling and Gaelic Football pitches he played on. What is clear from our conversation is that he has a defined passion for his work that is combined with excellent knowledge and, every day, that is being used to push Emirates Golf Club forward.



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Macclesfield Golf Club

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Macclesfield Golf Club is situated in picturesque landscape on the edge of the Peak District National Park. On a clear day, views stretch across five counties. The course is not long, but it is a great test, with some interesting and beautiful golf holes. On a very wet winter's day, Lee Williams met up with thirty-four-year-old Head Greenkeeper **Phil Worth**, who joined the club two years ago and admitted 2020 was one of the most challenging years he has had in greenkeeping

Phil's first career choice was to become a designer so, after leaving school, he went on to do a course in Sports Equipment Design at Salford University. In the summer breaks, he would work as a seasonal greenkeeper to get him away from the desk and to help pay for tuition fees. He enjoyed his time on the golf course so much that he decided to do a u-turn and pursue a greenkeeping career.

"I first started off at New Mills Golf Club in Derbyshire in 2007 as an apprentice greenkeeper and did my NVQ Level Two there. It's fair to say it wasn't the most affluent of golf courses, but it certainly taught me a number of valuable lessons such as operating sustainably on a minimal budget and the importance of teamwork to achieve the highest possible standards."

"After two years, I had the ambition to move my career forward and work at a more prestigious venue that offered far superior resources and investment. In 2011, I joined The Mere Golf and Country Club as an Assistant Greenkeeper which was a world away from New Mills; a resort-style venue with all the latest Toro machinery, bigger

budgets and a better chance of gaining the experience I was looking for. During my time there I achieved a lot, with the main highlights being preparation of the course to Championship standard for 'The Open Regional Qualifier', being accepted as part of the BIGGA support team to work at the PGA Championship at Wentworth, starting my Foundation Degree in Sportsturf and, most significantly, gaining a promotion into the role of Greenkeeping Supervisor."

Being a young man in his twenties, and having no real family ties, Phil decided to send his CV to lots of courses on the other side of the world. He got a job offer a month later and took a leap of faith and went to work in New Zealand and Australia. "I got a seasonal greenkeeper position at Jacks Point in Queenstown, New Zealand. I was only planning to be out there for six months, but that escalated to two years as I enjoyed it so much. I also worked for Royal Sydney Golf Club and New South Wales Golf Club, which was number three in Australia at the time. I gained a lot of experience about warm-season grasses, revetting bunkers and a variety of overseas management techniques."



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I asked Phil what led him to come back over to sunny England? “I had achieved what I wanted to out there; I had my fun and, in between jobs, I went travelling. When I got back to the UK that winter, I worked at Royal Lytham Golf Club for the Walker Cup then managed to get a job as First Assistant at Tytherington Golf Club in Macclesfield, where I worked for six months, before moving to Prestbury Golf Club in a similar role. Whilst at Prestbury, I completed my Foundation Degree and learned a lot from the club’s Course Manager, Mark Crossley.”

“After a short time, I heard that Mark Hillaby, who was Head Greenkeeper here at the time, was moving on and I fancied a pop at applying for the position as I felt it was my time to step up into a managerial role, having gained a lot of experience in the industry. I came for my first interview, got through to the second interview, where I had to give a big presentation, and I am grateful I got the role. I have enjoyed it so far, but 2020 was a freak year and one of the most challenging

years I have ever had in greenkeeping, but I have loved the responsibility in challenging times. I’m very fortunate to have a fantastic team here who assist me in presenting a golf course that we can be proud of.”

Helping Phil maintain the course to his high standards is thirty-eight year old, Chris Moores, Deputy Course Manager/Mechanic, six years served and has an NVQ Level 3 in Sports Turf plus spraying certificates; twenty years old, Tom Silcock, Assistant Greenkeeper, four years served, NVQ Level Two in Sports Turf plus spraying certificates; twenty-six year old, Ross Giles, Assistant Greenkeeper, three months served, NVQ Level 2 in Sports turf and PA1.

Phil describes the site as being a parkland course in nature although the top of the course consisting of eleven holes also have characteristics that depict a heathland environment with gorse, pockets of heather and finer grasses. The bottom seven holes are more of a typical parkland environment consisting of heavy clay-based soils and

mature trees.

Construction of the greens is varied around the course, as Phil explains. “We have a few older greens which are soil push-ups, some are sand-based with drainage, and we have a USGA spec green at the bottom. This gives us three different profiles to work with, so we try and micro-manage the best we can, adjusting fertiliser inputs, techniques and products accordingly.”

The club’s Toro irrigation system is getting dated and, ideally, Phil would love to have the budget available to replace it. But, for now, it is a matter of make do and mend. “The system is still fully functional, and we have pop-ups on the greens and two tees. We will fix any leaks and replace sprinkler heads if and when needed.”

The course is situated on a hill at the edge of the peak district; this comes with its advantages and disadvantages. “We can get some pretty adverse weather conditions; high winds, spells of heavy rain and cold temperatures, but the plus side of being on a hill helps the top of the course drain very well, whereas the bottom course at the foot of the hill stays a lot wetter. In winter, we tend to use a twelve hole course, which helps protect the wetter holes and the



Left to right: Tom Silcock, Ross Giles, Phil Worth and Chris Moores





I'm tending to find we are more productive at the start of the season. It has changed a lot over the last five years, and we just have to adapt our methods to suit

golfers seem to enjoy playing that in the worst months weather-wise as it provides a fair test of golf."

Phil talks me through his maintenance on the greens throughout the season. "Cutting heights vary depending on conditions, but we tend to cut at a height between 3.25mm and 4mm in the summer using a Baroness LM315GC ride-on greens mower. We will cut at around 6mm using the Toro GM 1000 hand mowers, twice a week in winter

depending on conditions. I would love to hand mow all year round as they have a lighter footprint and brush attachments which is great for presentation and quality of cut but, with the amount of growth in summer and limited staff, it's not possible unfortunately. Every month, during the main season, we aim to give the greens a light verti-cut going a few millimetres into the surface to encourage lateral growth and discourage seed heads. If the budget allows

during the season, we will hire in a Vredo disc seeder and overseed using Johnsons J All Bent seed mixture."

"Our aeration programme on the greens includes using the Toro ProCore 648 every couple of weeks during the growing season using 10mm tines at a depth of four inches. Two or three times a year, we will verti-drain, varying the width and depth of tines. To keep the greens opened up during the winter, I like to use the slitter."

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Getting Personal

Phil Worth - we all want to know his most embarrassing moment!

Who are you? Phil Worth, Head Greenkeeper at Macclesfield Golf Club. Age 34.

Family status. Newly in a relationship with a beautiful Tinder goddess.

Who's your hero and why? Being a huge Man City fan, I'd have to say Sergio Aguero ... especially after his goal to win the league in 2012.

What's been the highlight of your grounds career so far? Working in Australia and New Zealand for two years at a number of world-class venues. Also recently achieving my goal becoming a Head Greenkeeper.

If your younger self saw you now, what would he think? Good progress to date and very proud of my achievements.

Which famous people would you up? Quite a few to be honest, but most recently Donald bloody Trump!

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

What was the most embarrassing moment in your life? Not printable ... it's far too embarrassing.

What is your favourite film? I love all Bond Films and anything with Denzel Washington.

What scares you? Leatherjackets.

What would your autobiography be called... and who would play you in the film? 'For What It's Worth' played by Sacha Baron Cohen.

What would you cast into Room 101? Teenagers that have Friday night BBQs on our 17th green!

Which historical time and place would you most like to visit? The moon landing.

Which three people, living or dead, would you invite to a dinner party? Karl Pilkington, Liam Gallagher and Jennifer Aniston.



Do you have a lifetime ambition?

To be happy and healthy and fulfilled by my achievements. I've also always wanted to go and watch The Masters at Augusta and run a Marathon.

What's the best advice you have ever been given? Be true to yourself and never give up.

What's your favourite smell? A BBQ on a hot summer's day, bacon and also the first cut of the year before the hayfever kicks in and ruins the moment!

Which three albums would you take to a desert island? Oasis (Definitely Maybe), The Verve (Urban Hymns) and The Stone Roses (The Stone Roses).

What's the daftest work-related question you have ever been asked? I was once asked by a past colleague, "Why is this mower not cutting?" when out hand mowing tees, only to realise he'd not taken his wheels off!!!

What's your favourite piece of kit? Toro ProCore 648.

What three words would you use to describe yourself? Ambitious, perfectionist and driven.

What is the single most useful thing you could tell a 16-year-old greenkeeper? Be prepared to work hard and believe in yourself and you will achieve your goals.

What law/legislation would you like to see introduced? I would like to see a more consistent payment structure to reduce the disparity across the industry and also increase Apprentice wages to tempt more younger people into greenkeeping.



"We topdress as much as we can depending on the weather and the budget available. Last year, due to the demands of a busy golfing calendar and adverse weather conditions, we only managed to get eighty tonnes on. In an ideal world, I would like to double that quantity, applying on a little and often basis. These quantities are essential for us to help reduce the organic matter levels in the top 25mm and improve the smoothness and trueness of the putting surfaces."

Phil hired in the Koro FTM from Campey Turf Care Systems to aggressively scarify the greens for renovation week. "We went down to 10mm, so there was a lot of organic matter that came out. It did a great job.

We then applied forty tonnes of dressing using our Dakota Topdresser and brushed it in with the SISIS brush. Next year, I would like to hollow core the greens and go a bit deeper and try and get through that organic matter level."

Presentation of the course is key to Phil and his team and something they pride themselves on. "This is one of the things the members really appreciate during the main season. I pride myself on attention to detail and, given the characteristics of the site coupled with its unique topography, it has a lot to offer when presented in the right way. The team love this side of greenkeeping and do a fantastic job of producing an aesthetically





pleasing course.”

The ever-changing weather patterns we are experiencing have some detrimental effects on sporting venues, and greenkeepers and groundsmen have to adapt to this, and Phil is no different. “In recent years, rainfall figures for the area have vastly increased. Winter has been a mixed bag of very cold temperatures and snow, followed by periods of heavy rainfall - consequently leading to prolonged periods of saturated ground conditions and localised flooding. This is having a negative influence on the maintenance of turf surfaces, therefore accurate timing of maintenance practices is critical to ensure we hit the windows available to us. I’m finding now that May is more like our old summers. Then you get to June onwards and the heavens open, so we find we’re more productive at the start of the season. It has changed a lot over the last five years, and we just have to adapt our methods to suit.”

Phil likes to keep his fertiliser regime on the greens as simple as possible and believes, by looking at the surfaces, you

can tell what requirements they need; he has a lot of variants to consider between the differing construction and soil types he has to work with. I believe, as turf managers, it’s very easy to overcomplicate things and become overwhelmed by the amount of products available on the market, therefore we aim to adopt a measured approach in order to achieve desirable results. “Our sand based greens tend to be a little needy and often require additional inputs, whilst the soil-based greens generally perform well throughout the year - with the exception to a few problem areas, which we are looking to micro-manage and install a primary drainage system to improve their year round playability.”

“I use a variety of fertiliser products, but I tend to kick off the season with ICL’s Greenmaster Cold Start to get them going and aid winter recovery. Then, I begin a liquid feed programme with the Consolidate range which allows me great flexibility and consistency of plant growth instead of peaks and troughs. I have also recently been improving our moisture management



I have enjoyed it so far, but 2020 was a freak year and one of the most challenging years I have ever had in greenkeeping, but I have loved the responsibility in challenging times





techniques by using H2Pro DewSmart during the winter and FlowSmart, as a penetrant wetting agent, to pull the water through the profile. We also apply liquid iron and tank mix with Phosphites to control disease. In autumn, they will get a final granular application of Invigorator to help harden the turf going into winter.”

The club’s improvement programme was effected in 2020 with staff being furloughed on a rota basis and the heavy and prolonged rain at the end of the year has not helped. “Covid meant it was a strange year, so a lot of our projects were put on hold. Hopefully, this year, we have several projects to carry out - prioritising drainage work. On the seventeenth fairway we need to install a pipe drainage system, as it’s one hole that’s often

waterlogged during the winter consequently affecting play - which is far from ideal when we are looking to promote eighteen holes throughout the year. We also have a few bunkers we need to renovate and tree work to be carried out, so fingers crossed for a better 2021.”

The Baroness front line machinery is leased through GGM Groundscare, but the current deal runs out this year. Phil and the club are starting to look at putting a new replacement plan together, but it has not been an easy time financially for the club. “I hope to stick with Baroness products as we have really enjoyed using their cutting machinery. With the course being very undulating the Baroness mowers three-wheel drive system has been perfect for the site. Our local dealers and the service they provide has been excellent and they have helped us out a lot.”

“My Deputy Head carries out our servicing and regrinds of the machinery; he is mainly self-taught, improving his knowledge as he goes along; he does a great job.”

Phil tells me leatherjacket control has become a significant issue in recent years with an effective chemical not being

available anymore. “Last year, a lot of the damage was caused to surfaces by leatherjackets, eating away at the roots of the plant and also crows pecking at the surface of the greens, affecting the quality of the turf. We have tried a few new products and techniques, but only time will tell if they have been successful. I believe it is a significant issue for the industry going forward. Not only that, we have problems with the control of wormcasts. It would be nice to get a bit more help from the associations and manufacturers as we advance because who knows where the future is going with it?”

The site’s ecology is very important to Phil and the club, and they are always looking to improve. “We are aiming to increase the regeneration of pockets of heather and add wildflower areas to support the ecology and biodiversity of the site. We have installed bird boxes, and I’m considering getting a beekeeper to install hives around the course to promote a natural environment where wildlife can thrive. The club is always looking to develop its Environmental Policy to ensure that nature and golf can co-exist.”

What’s in the shed

New Holland Tractor Boomer 25
 New Holland Tractor Boomer 35
 New Holland TN60DA & MC40
 Loader
 Kawasaki Mule
 Jacobsen G Plex Mower
 Toro GM1000 Hand mowers x 3
 Toro Reelmaster 3100-D x 2
 Jacobsen GP400 Greens Mower
 Toro Reelmaster 6500-D
 Toro Groundsmaster 4300-D
 Toro Groundsmaster 4500-D
 Jacobsen Greensking V mower
 Baroness LM2400 Fairway mower
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Leek Golf Club

Getting to grips with technology





Leek Golf Club is one of the oldest in the country and, along with twenty-seven others, is a member of the 1892 Club - an organisation that allows members from each club to play at each other's course. Nicknamed the Queen of the Moors the course was once covered with heather, but thirty-five years ago, the club planted many trees transforming it into a parkland course. Lee Williams met with the club's Head Greenkeeper **Daniel Scanlon** who has had a big impact since joining the club nine months ago

Despite starting a new job in the midst of a global pandemic and dealing with atrocious weather this winter, Daniel has made the most of his short time at the club. "It's been a weird year, but I have enjoyed it so far. None of us have really been furloughed through it all; we just had six weeks on reduced hours through January and February, which wasn't too bad because of snow and cold weather. We have still managed to get plenty of work done though with the help of the Greens Chairman, Club Pro and the members."

"In the last few months, we have undertaken a lot of tree work which included chopping a number of them down and clearing areas, to improve airflow and to help the prominent trees thrive. We have even managed to reinstate and open up an old medal tee on one of the par threes, which members didn't like using because the trees were encroaching the view of the green. Also, on the back of the seventeenth tee, we have a dry-stone wall in desperate need of repair and members are doing a great job of the reconstruction. I feel we have been as productive as we could be and used our time wisely whilst the members have not been around."

Next to where I parked was a large bank that leads down to the eighth green, which I could see had recently been cleared. I was shocked when Daniel said that a member in his seventies had tackled the entire area single-handedly. "The area was vastly



overgrown, and it took a lot of time to clear. Our members have been a great help and I appreciate the support I have had from them and the club officials to date. It took a big push to get everything tidied up and ready for the reopening at the end of March, but we were more than ready to welcome members back."

Whilst at school, Daniel carried out his two weeks work experience at The Tytherington Club in Macclesfield alongside the greens staff. Working in an office did not appeal, and he preferred to pursue a career working outside, so greenkeeping was a perfect



As you can imagine, trying to cut fairways when it is wet, just means you end up with an inch of mud on your rollers and you constantly have to get off the machine to clean them off, which is a pain



Members are doing a great job reconstructing the dry-stone wall



choice. “Luckily for me, Tytherington’s gardener was retiring the year I left school and they offered me the position of trainee greenkeeper. Soon after I started, the head greenkeeper (who took me on) moved to Stockport Golf Club and the deputy became head. Eighteen months later, at the age of eighteen, I received a phone call from Stockport Golf Club asking me if I would like to join them as an assistant greenkeeper (which I happily accepted). In the ten years at Stockport, I was very lucky to be able to take part in many construction tasks including the reconstruction of greens, tees and installing drainage. It was the first time I had got stuck into construction and I really enjoyed it.”

“Ten years on, the head greenkeeper left and I moved back to The Tytherington Club as the first assistant, before a promotion to deputy head after just a few months (due to the head and deputy simultaneously leaving to pursue other opportunities). Chris, who had been appointed the new head greenkeeper,

offered me the deputy head position.”

“Four years on, I was browsing Facebook when I saw the position of head greenkeeper at Leek Golf Club advertised and I was offered the position after a Zoom meeting with the board.”

Daniel feels fortunate that he was able to appoint a new team member who he knew would support him in his new role and offer the right advice. That responsibility fell upon Steven Millar (47), Senior Greenkeeper with thirty years’ experience. His qualifications include NVQ Levels 2 and 3 in Sports Turf Management, PA2 and PA6 and also 201 and 202 chainsaw licences. He is also grateful to have Assistant Greenkeeper Connor Daly (24). Connor has five years’ experience and has worked at the club for eighteen months. His qualifications include NVQ Level 2 in Horticulture, PA2 and PA6, 201, 202 and 203 chainsaw licences, cylinder/bottom grinder certificates. Plus, Assistant Greenkeeper Seth Stanton (20) who has four years’ experience at the club. He has recently passed his NVQ Level 2 in

What’s in the shed

Jacobsen GP400 greens reel mowers x 3
 Jacobsen HR500 rotary mower
 Jacobsen TriKing cylinder mowers x 3
 Jacobsen LF570 reel mower
 John Deere Gator
 Toro Workman utility vehicle
 New Holland TC40 tractor
 New Holland TN55 tractor
 New Holland T4040 tractor
 Toro GreensMaster 1000 x 3
 Charterhouse Verti-Drain 7521





I feel we have been as productive as we could be and used our time wisely whilst the members have not been around

Sports Turf Management with a Merit.

Situated in the heart of the Staffordshire Moorlands, the River Churnet runs down the side of the course (close to the fifth and ninth holes) and causes flooding on those fairways after heavy rainfall. Daniel tells me that it is not a real problem. "We will get the golfers to play around it or close the holes but, within a day, the water has receded and they are back in play. The course itself drains well and is quite sandy in places - I

believe it used to be an old sand quarry, so it rarely gets too wet that we have to stop play. A testament to how well it drains is the fact we allow buggies all year round and I'm yet to see any real damage."

Walking the course with Daniel, I was impressed with how firm the one-hundred-year-old push-up greens were, considering the amount of rain we had just days before my visit. "I have been given an excellent foundation to work with"

Daniel commented. "John Turner, who was here for eighteen years, was intense with his topdressing and aeration programmes. From what I have experienced so far, drainage is good, with the exception of a few greens at the bottom end of the course, but they are pretty dry within a couple of hours. In comparison to The Tytherington Club, it is mad how much firmer the course is after it has rained for a day."

The irrigation system was installed in 1991

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Getting Personal

Daniel Scanlon - I'm sure everyone will agree that I'm pretty awesome. I'll be getting plenty of texts about this!

Who are you? Daniel Scanlon - Head Greenkeeper at Leek Golf Club.

Family status. Married for nearly two years.

Who's your hero, and why? Mike Goodhinde. He gave me my first job and put up with my antics for ten years. He also scored 177 not out in a game of cricket.

What's been the highlight of your grounds career so far? Probably the last ten months.

If your younger self saw you now, what would he think? He would probably wonder what happened to all that hair I used to have. Other than that, I reckon he would be pretty damn happy.

Which famous people wind you up? It would be easier to tell you the ones that don't!

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

What was the most embarrassing moment in your life? Probably reading this when it's published.

What is your favourite film? Bad Boys one and two.

What is your favourite sport? Football and I'm a Manchester United fan.

What would you cast into Room 101? Influencers - how is that even a job?

Do you have a lifetime ambition? Form a band and play on the main stage at Download Festival (which is never going to happen!).

What's your favourite piece of trivia? I only found out recently that only twenty-eight miles separate Russia and Japan.



What's your favourite piece of kit? Toro Sidewinder/Trimax.

Which three people, living or dead, would you invite to a dinner party? Chester Bennington, Corey Taylor and Ivan Moody.

What's the best advice you have ever been given? I always used to get told to save money by the older lads I used to work with ... how I wished I had listened.

What's your favourite smell? A bacon butty.

Which three albums would you take to a desert island? Linkin Park; Hybrid Theory, something by Volbeat and Three Day Grace.

What's the daftest work-related question you have ever been asked? The have you cut the greens today question ... even though you've just been cutting the green they are playing on.

What three words would you use to describe yourself? Hard working, approachable and genuine.

What is the single most useful thing you could tell a 16-year-old greenkeeper? Work hard, be patient and listen. It'll be worth it!

What talent would you like to have? I would love to be musically talented.



and is fully automated. Laughing, Daniel admits he is yet to get to grips with how it all works. "It's a Bailoy control system with an iPad where, for example, you can set automatic programmes and check how much water has been applied on each green and tee. It is all new to me; I am used to a control box on the wall. There is a mix of Hunter and Toro heads, but I do not have to get too involved with replacements and repairs as we have Simon Roe from Congleton, with whom we have a maintenance contract. He originally worked for the company who installed the irrigation system before going independent, so he knows it like the back of his hand, plus I worked with him for ten years at Stockport Golf Club, so I know him well."

With only nine months under his belt (and lockdowns to deal with) Daniel hasn't had much time to implement his desired maintenance regime on the greens. "John did an excellent job of getting air in and introducing bentgrass seeds into the greens, so we have a strong bent content. At the minute (March), we are currently cutting at a height of 6mm with Toro GreensMaster 1000 hand mowers. The plan will be to lower the height of the cut gradually down to no lower than 3.5mm and then, once the growing season kicks in, hand-cut three times a week and use the Tru-Turf greens iron to give them a roll." I was interested to know if he had a certain speed he was looking to achieve. "The golfers seemed quite happy with the





Damage caused by badgers



stimp around ten last year. We will try and get a bit more out of them by double rolling for tournament days, but I think the majority of the golfers do not like them too fast.”

“Depending on weather and the amount of golf being played, I aim to do as many verti-cuts as possible throughout the year; maybe once every six weeks, to reduce the thatch layer that has built up. To stop Poa from spreading through the greens, we will use the poa buster heads to remove the seeds and then overseed using the Vredo disc seeder. We use a brown top bent grass seed once a year supplied through our captain, who conveniently owns a garden centre and can source it for us a lot cheaper, which is excellent.”

“Every six weeks, Will Kidd comes in to verti-drain the greens using his Wiedenmann Terra Spike GXI 10 with half-inch tines at a depth of eight inches. Our verti-drain is only suitable for use on the fairways. I love the finish from the GXI and, once we have been back over with the mowers or the roller, the golfers can get back on straight away. We used Will a few times last year, and the members were delighted. Alongside verti-draining, we will hire in the Toro ProCore from Cheshire Turf Machinery to vary the depths and not get

a pan. It is important for us to reduce the number of fungicides we use, so doing all we can to increase airflow around the plant can only be a benefit.”

“Finally, I would like to topdress every six weeks with around three-quarters of a tonne of sand per green. In September, my aim is to hollowcore using half millimetre tines and get them down as far as possible, before applying sixty-tonne of sand - weather permitting of course.”

Daniel has taken advantage of Agrovista Amenity’s soil sampling service through Amenity Specialist Chris Knowles. “I have worked with Chris in the past and I trust him, which is essential to me. After the soil samples’ results came back, I asked Chris to put a fertiliser programme together for the greens to include granular and liquid feeds.”

“We started our programme in February, when the greens were starting to look pale and hungry, so we applied twenty bags of Absolute Green and the results were incredible; the results are still apparent a month later. In the next few weeks, we will apply the Compo Expert Ferro Top 6:0:12 (+6MgO+8Fe). Both Chris and another greenkeeper have recommended it to me and I have read up on the Agrovista

Amenity website about it. As temperatures begin to rise in April, we will start to go into a more liquid-based feeding programme using InTrench Potassium, GoGreen Energy, E2 Pro Elicitor and Attraxor to regulate growth and help reduce the Poa heads. The programme also includes SeaVolution, Excel wetting agent and GoGreen Plus.”

I noticed quite a lot of badger damage around the course near the paths and on some of the bunker bankings. They are becoming a real problem for Daniel and his team. “All we can do is repair the damage they cause, but this takes us away from carrying out other jobs we would like to get on with. Like many courses around the country, wormcasts are a real problem, especially on our fairways, tees and approaches. As you can imagine, trying to cut fairways when it is wet, just means you end up with an inch of mud on your rollers and you constantly have to get off the machine to clean them off, which is a pain. We verti-cut the tees recently to try and get rid of some of the wormcasts that had built up over winter, with them not being cut, and it worked really well. Unfortunately, there is not much we can do about them at the minute and members just have to be made aware we are doing our best.”

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Chester Golf Club

No monkeying around here





Ever since I was knee-high, I would go into work with my father and help out wherever I could. Once I got to year ten at school, I needed to decide what career path I wanted to take and greenkeeping was a natural choice

Officially founded in 1891, Chester City Golf Club is situated on the banks of the River Dee and set on two levels overlooking Chester Racecourse with views of the Welsh hills. Course Manager **Andy Whyman** spoke to Lee Williams about his busy and challenging first year at the club

Since joining a year ago Andy, along with his team, have not wasted any time getting stuck into projects and have taken full advantage of lockdown restrictions to help improve drainage and the course's aesthetics. With very little fall on the lower tier to the Dee, drainage is something that requires serious attention, but Andy addressed the problems early on. "Through winter, we have dredged the ditches and cleared all the vegetation out of the pond, as the water was stagnant and it was an overgrown mess. We have refaced the edge to make it look more aesthetically pleasing, we are looking at installing a water feature to oxygenate the water and also built a log habitat into the bank to help encourage crested newts and

other insects. Now that it's clear, we will be able to drain into it when we look to start our drainage programme next year on the fairways and rough."

"On the second tee, we have cleared all the overgrown vegetation which obscured views of the Welsh mountains and built a large bug hotel to the left-hand side. We will be introducing wildflowers and beehives with the aim to sell the honey to our members. We are also currently working on regenerating the bunkers; so far we have edged them up and will be adding eighty tonnes of Chelford 45 sand which matches our dressings on the greens and means sand splash is not an issue."

Interestingly this year, the club has been working with Chester Zoo (situated three miles away) to undertake their tree



as both parties benefit from the project. “They carry out all the chainsaw work on our trees, which usually equates to four wagons full of brash and branches, and this gets transported back to the zoo to provide supplementary feed for the animals whilst the remaining logs are used to create habitats for the local wildlife. The partnership has been working really well; it has saved us thousands and helped the zoo out, at a time when they were struggling due to the pandemic.”

Over the next five years, Andy has a plan to help improve the course’s ecology even further, and there is a lot to do. “We will slowly build it up by introducing more bug hotels, large wildflower areas and introduce natural grassland areas, whilst being considerate to the course and not interfering with play.”

Another partnership that Andy tells me is working well is with Emma Beggs, Senior Agronomist for the STRI. “She comes in around August time and I will spend the day with her walking the course and taking soil samples. Once the results are returned,

she will produce a report which is circulated both internally and to all our members. It is excellent to have their support with what we are trying to achieve and it validates the way we see the club moving forward by changing grass species in greens, trying to reduce fertiliser and fungicide applications per year, plus trying to be more sustainable. Our combined reports give scope to the members to see precisely what vision we have for the club.”

“On Emma’s last visit, we made a strong suggestion for the requirement to verti-drain the site, as we have suffered heavily with a pan that was five inches down. With her help, we convinced the club to invest in a new Wiedenmann Terra Spike which arrived at the end of September and it has made a huge difference.”

Once a week, Andy will walk the course and sit down with the Greens Chairman, Mike Knight, with whom he has developed a good relationship over the last twelve months. “We will discuss what we have done that week and he passes on any feedback he has received from members. I produce the budget for the year based on what I



We are looking to increase the amount of seed and hire a Vredo overseeder. It will be interesting to see what kind of results we get in June



The lower level of the course is prone to flooding



Recent bunker regeneration project



We are looking at whether we get a new fleet or just to replace certain bits of kit this year. Currently, It's a matter of weighing up the options and seeing what we can do

believe we will spend, plus a buffer to cover any unexpected problems.”

The parkland course is predominantly built on a clay base and, in winter, the fairways on the bottom level can get quite wet, especially when the river Dee rises. “The course does have a drainage system, but it requires a lot of attention and replanning to cope with the winters we are currently experiencing. The outlets for many of the drains are into the Dee so once that is

high, and our ground conditions are at field capacity, we rely heavily on our ditches to take the water until the Dee drops its levels - to allow the ditches to drain away.”

“Last year, we recorded around 460mm higher rainfall than in 2019 and every year it is going up; this January was the wettest on record. Weather patterns are shifting and we have to implement ways to keep the course open, even with the vast amount of rain. If that means draining more holes per year,

that will be the course of action we will take - alongside providing more drainage outlets by building ponds and water sources around the site, but that's a long process.”

The course has a forty-year-old fully automated irrigation system, which has seen some upgrades over recent years. “It has been recabled and there is a mix of Hunter and Toro heads on the tees and greens. Two years ago, a new Bailoy controller was installed, which is very good. I want to install

+




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Getting Personal

Andy Whyman - he's scared of snakes, but will never give up!

Who are you? Andy Whyman - Course Manager at Chester Golf Club.

Family status. Married with two children; Lucas and Eva plus Rex, the labrador puppy.

Who's your hero and why? Lucas Radebe (The Chief) - a Leeds United legend. I loved watching him play and he also turned down Man United!!

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

If your younger self saw you now, what would he think? I proved those school teachers wrong.

Which famous people wind you up? Frank Lampard (enough said).

What job would you love, other than your own? Professional footballer.

What was the most embarrassing moment in your life? I couldn't possibly tell you that.

What is your favourite film? Home Alone. I love watching it with my family at Christmas.

What scares you? Snakes.

What would your autobiography be called... and who would play you in the film? Life Is One Fun Ride ... Enjoy It! Adam Sandler would be cool to play me.

What is your favourite sport? Football.

What would you cast into Room 101? Hayfever.

Which historical time and place would you most like to visit? The old Wembley for the 1972 FA Cup final ... just to see that Leeds team play once.

Do you have a lifetime ambition? Nothing currently springs to mind - just to be the best I can be.

What's your favourite smell? Abercrombie cologne or Creed.



Which three people, living or dead, would you invite to a dinner party? Lucas Radebe, Norman Hunter and Sir Bobby Robson.

What's the best advice you have ever been given? Never give up.

What's your favourite piece of trivia? Which famous US superstar once said: 'I've never lost a game, I just ran out of time?' Michael Jordan.

What's your favourite piece of kit? Wiedenmann Terra Spike GX18.

Which three albums would you take to a desert island? Too many to choose from. Spotify would be the answer.

What's the daftest work-related question you have ever been asked? There have been some cracking ones throughout the years and it's a difficult one to pick a winner!

What three words would you use to describe yourself? Outgoing, funny and observant.

What is the single most useful thing you could tell a 16-year-old greenkeeper? Always ask questions - however daft you may think they are. Don't be scared to go out of your comfort zone to achieve your ambitions, gain as many qualifications and experience as you can possibly grab. The world is your oyster, if you want it to be!

What talent would you like to have? To be able to produce magic. Some of these magicians are something else.



new valves, but there is no point in putting new valves into a forty-year-old pipe system. It is fully functional, but I feel it's just a matter of keeping it ticking over at the moment. We have a contract with Greenacres Irrigation Ltd who undertake any repairs, but there is no doubt that we will have to look at a new irrigation system in the future, however, other projects currently take priority."

The original greens are predominantly the old push-up style, however, over the years, six of them have been reconstructed and are now sand based, giving a nice variant to work with. "In winter, we cut at 5 ½mm and,

in summer, we go down to 4mm. Reduced staffing levels this year mean we have been cutting with the Toro Greensmaster TriFlex 3420, as I cannot afford for two people to be hand-cutting when we have such a large site. We cut every day in summer, but we won't always do a clean-up cut; it depends on growth and the weather. For example, if we are rolling straight behind, we might just roll the perimeters to give the greens a break. We have one green that is long and narrow and, because the Toro machines are not offset, it ends up leaving triple rings, so we obviously try to avoid that as much as possible."



Improvements have been made to drainage during lockdown



The pond has been cleared of vegetation



We will be introducing more bug hotels, large wildflower areas and introduce natural grassland areas, whilst being considerate to the course and not interfering with play

“Greens are hollow-cored twice a year and we verti-cut and scarify as and when we need to. We apply anywhere between 100-120 tonnes of topdressing per year, to help dilute the thatch areas that have built-up over the years. In the next twelve months, we are going to be more excessive with sand applications, as we found it really helped address six greens that had a lot of

black layer; those greens certainly smell and look a lot healthier now.”

“Last year, in the last week of maintenance, we did a seed trial using ICL ProSelect Riptide (creeping bentgrass); overseeding the greens with sixty-six kilos, which were worked into the existing hollow-core holes with the sand and, after eight to ten days, we had some excellent

results with healthy germination.

Following this, we are looking to increase the amount of seed and hire a Vredo overseeder. It will be interesting to see what kind of results we get in June using the Vredo; I'm hoping we get an even better strike using a disc seeder, but we will see which method works best.”

“In summer, tees are hand-cut three



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Logs used to create habitats for the local wildlife

times a week at 10mm, using the fleet of Toro Greensmaster 1000s and, in winter, the height of cut is lifted to 14mm. To help control growth and to keep them looking their best, we apply Primo Maxx II. Last year, our emphasis was on the greens but, this year after talking to STRI, we are looking at hollow-coring, deep verti-draining and applying some sand. This should help control wormcasts and also help improve

the soil exchange. Tees are used 365 days a year, except for the three par 3 holes that have mats.”

“We dropped the height of cut on fairways last year to 14mm and we cut them regularly to help thicken them up. This year will be the first year where we will implement a fairway feeding programme, including a wetting agent to see what kind of reaction we get.”

Worms and the casts they leave

behind have become a big issue (since Carbendazim was banned in the UK in 2017) and how to manage the problem has given many a head greenkeeper nightmares. Andy commented: “You can brush and switch them, which is fine when the casts are dry but, when they are wet, they just smear over the surface. We have to get the message over to golfers that more and more products are being removed from

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The course does have a drainage system, but it requires a lot of attention and replanning to cope with the winters we are currently experiencing

the market that help us control them and they need to bear with us.”

Andy has taken advantage of soil testing services available from STRI, ICL and Agrovista Amenity to compare results. He appreciates reps are keen to offer a fertiliser programme, but he believes in being his own man; judging what products to use and applying them to the greens when he feels fit - depending on weather conditions

and how things are going. “I have very good relationships with a selection of reps and I know that I can get products in quick if required, as you never know what the weather is going to throw at you from one week to the next. I never stick to a plan; I have a rough idea in my head of what I’m going to do and last year it worked well.”

Five years ago, the club started a deal with Toro for their frontline machinery. This

is due to expire, allowing Andy to explore new options. “We are looking at whether we get a new fleet or just to replace certain bits of kit this year. Currently, it’s a matter of weighing up the options and seeing what we can do.” Andy has used all makes of machinery in his career, but he is a big fan of Toro equipment and cannot see himself moving over to another supplier. “Toro has always been reliable;

again augers to maximise work rates



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We have to get the message over to golfers that more and more products are being removed from the market that help us control them and they need to bear with us



I like their units and how easy it is to set them up. We do have a mixture of machinery, that includes John Deere and Jacobsen, which will need replacing in the next few years either way. So, it is a matter of working out a plan of what needs replacing when and then presenting that to the club. Ideally, I would like to replace the whole fleet with Toro machinery."

Greenkeeping is in Andy's blood and you could say he was destined to carve out a career in the sports turf industry, as his dad is Course Manager at Burnham and Berrow Golf Club in Somerset.

"Ever since I was knee-high, I would go into work with my father and help out wherever I could. Once I got to year ten at school, I needed to decide what career path I wanted to take and greenkeeping was a natural choice. When I left school, I spent two years at Cannington College in Bridgewater and did my National Diploma in Sports Turf and, in the holidays, I would go to help my dad."

When Andy finished his course at the age

of eighteen, he had a big decision to make. He was given a great opportunity at Carden Park, but this meant packing his bags and moving to the Northwest; a daunting prospect for anyone. It has now been sixteen years since taking that step and he has made the Northwest of England his home. Andy describes how the opportunity came about: "I phoned Andy Campbell at Carden Park to see if there were any positions available and, luckily for me, he was looking for an assistant greenkeeper. After the interview, I got the job and was offered staff accommodation and, since that day, I haven't looked back. After three years, I left and took up a position at St Anne's Old Links course with Stuart Hogg. After two years, family commitments led me back to Carden as a senior greenkeeper."

"In 2013, I joined Pryors Hayes Golf Club in Chester as head greenkeeper until this job came up, which I certainly see as a progression in my career. Pryors was a proprietary owned golf club, whereas Chester is a member's club. The added

bonus is that it's closer to home and, being honest, it's the only club in the area I would have gone to without having to move out of the area again."

Andy wanted to give a special mention to three men who have greatly influenced and supported him throughout his career so far. "First is my dad, Richard Whyman - who first introduced me to the industry as a young lad, Stuart Hogg and Andy Campbell. When you are working for them, you do not appreciate how much you have learnt until you step away and take on the responsibility yourself."

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- Jacobsen TriKing cylinder mower
- John Deere X495 lawn tractor with collection box
- Massey Ferguson 1260 tractor
- John Deere 3520 utility tractor
- John Deere 3720 front loader
- John Deere 4520 compact tractor
- Kubota L5040 tractor
- Wiedenmann Terra Spike GX18
- John Deere Aercore 1500
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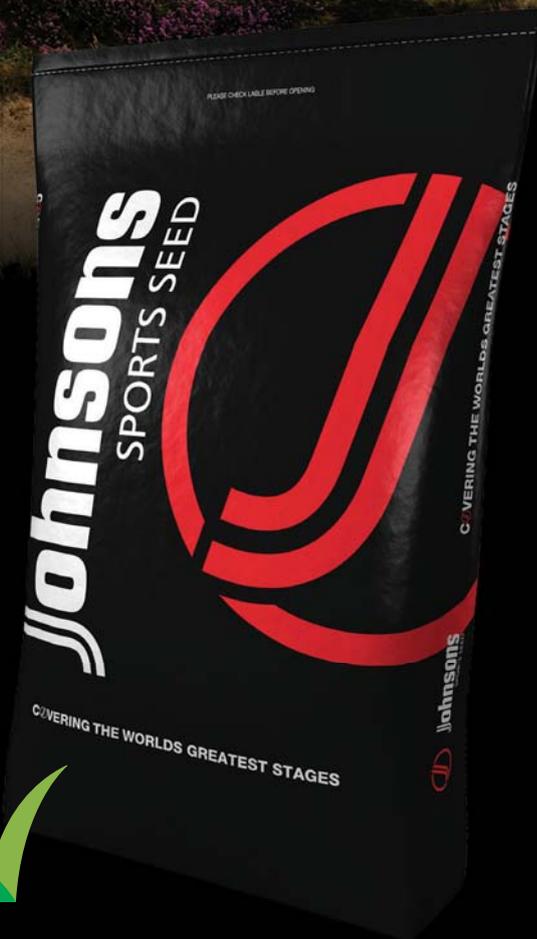


“ For me, the decision was easy; Johnsons J Premier Fairway, along with J All Bent, has moved our sward composition towards our ultimate goal of providing our members with the heathland characteristics we all aspire to.

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Real Valladolid C.F.

Continuing to grow

Since 2018, La Liga side Real Valladolid C.F. has gone through an extensive period of remodelling. It is here that Grounds Manager **Antonio Blanco Garcia Del Pino** looks after the pitches and, in this article, he talks about construction, maintenance and tending turf 200km north of Madrid

My name is Antonio Blanco Garcia Del Pino, and I have been circling the Iberian peninsula and Europe for twenty years, originally coming from Avila in Spain.

Despite the absence of any natural grass sports facility in the area I grew up in, I always had a particular interest in growing turf, probably due to multiple attempts to produce a decent lawn in the family home's garden, with no success. That is how I started reading books on the subject.

I studied Agricultural Technical

Engineering at the University of Salamanca and had my first contact with the world of greenkeeping at the Palomarejos Golf Course in Talavera de la Reina. Subsequently, I studied for my postgraduate degree in golf and football course maintenance management at the EADE University, in Malaga (2011-2012). During this time, I had the privilege of working, for about a year, at the Real Club Valderrama located in the resort of Sotogrande, San Roque, hosts of the 1997 Ryder Cup and regarded as being one of the best courses in continental Europe, if not the world. The golf

course stands out for its attention to detail and high levels of maintenance. It also boasts its own large greenkeeping laboratory and is a significant promoter of the profession and greenkeeper training in Spain. There I laid the foundations for my learning, mainly in terms of professionalism and perception of quality.

I then worked as a seasonal greenkeeper in Las Colinas Golf & Country Club in Alicante, followed by Koksijde Golf ter Hille in Flanders, Belgium and, after that, Kolner Golf Club in Cologne, Germany. In 2016, for an initial three weeks, I took up the



maintenance technician's position for a sportsturf contractor in Portugal. Three weeks became a year, and I ended up taking on the head groundsman's role and managing the playing surface for three Primeira Liga teams of Portugal - Clube Desportivo de Tondela, Grupo Desportivo de Chaves and Sporting de Braga. I was also involved in the construction and renovations of football pitches. I was responsible for maintaining the Estádio Municipal de Aveiro for the Portuguese Super Cup and hosting a Portugal international match who, at that time, were champions of Europe.

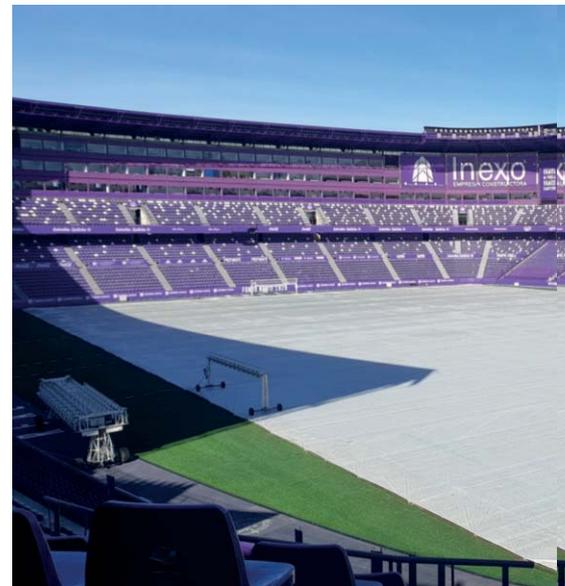
It was, for me, an intensive and informative experience in the maintenance, renovation and construction of football pitches. I enjoyed the tremendous challenges and the high level of technical skills involved in maintaining a high-quality playing surface.

In 2017, I went back to Spain and joined Real Valladolid C.F., then in the Second Division, with an exciting promotion project. In 2017-2018 the club gained promotion back to La Liga, and that wonderful season was topped off with the club's purchase by football legend Ronaldo Nazário. This is my

fourth season at Real Valladolid C.F., in this time the club has undergone an extensive remodelling process which has seen growth at all level including, most importantly for me, in the facilities.

The Estadio Nuevo José Zorrilla was opened in February 1982 and is named after poet José Zorrilla y Moral. During the 1982 FIFA World Cup, three Group D matches were played here, and Pop Superstar Michael Jackson performed a sold-out show on 6th September 1997, during his HIStory World Tour.

We have cold winters; historically, we



average around fifty-six days of frost and thirty-nine days of fog in the winter season; this has given the ground the nickname "The Stage of Pneumonia". But we are also experiencing very hot summers with dozens of days hovering around 40°C. In the last few years, the winters have not been so cruel to us, especially to the turf, but temperatures, humidity and the lack of sun can be a real problem in the winter months.

When was the last pitch reconstruction?

The last reconstruction was carried out July-August 2019 to allow the stadium capacity to increase with the installation of 1594 new seats. For this to happen, the old perimeter moat protecting the pitch from crowd invasions was demolished. The pitch subsoil was removed at a depth of 1.8 metres to make way for five new rows of seating. This is the first phase of the integral reform project of José Zorrilla, which the club plans to carry out in four phases.

The work had to be carried out in record time, with construction company Sport Relva taking on the project. After excavating the old pitch, they started to install a new drainage system, laying pipes at 2.5-metre intervals; this was separated from the sub-base by a geotextile. Upwards of the drains

is a 20cm gravel mattress, 4cm sealing layer of extra thick sand and 25cm of two types of sands of a specific composition. We added zeolite and amendments; we did not add any organic matter to the profile. After levelling, we placed a mesh between the top layer of the profile and the top. This type of construction gives the field tremendous strength and stability. We are delighted with the performance.

What are the dimensions of the pitch?

The pitch measures 105m x 68m.

Does the pitch have any shaded areas throughout the day?

Fortunately, the stadium is well orientated, with the longitudinal axis from north to south. The stadium's structure in the south stand is quite open, so it lets enough direct sunlight pass through for most of the year.

However, in the winter months, when the sun goes down, we do have shade problems in the south and, to a lesser extent, in the west of the stadium. The south receives virtually no sun from the end of

November to March and the west, during the same period, does not receive enough sun.

To help improve these areas, we tested LED technology two years ago and, last winter, we tested SGL's High-Pressure Sodium lights. After realising their effectiveness in enhancing the turf's quality in the most needed areas, we have just invested in seven of SGL's latest model lighting rigs in varied sizes. We received these in autumn; they will give us the versatility we require for our and future needs, especially if the south stand is expanded.

Besides the grow lights, we use Domen-Green thermal blankets, which are a breathable, 80g/m² micro-drilled polypropylene, to counteract low temperatures and frosts, on all our natural grass pitches during December to March, giving spectacular results. They have proved to be an essential element in our maintenance practices.

The club had planned to install an underground heating system for the stadium pitch this summer, but the circumstances



Historically, we average around fifty-six days of frost and thirty-nine days of fog in the winter season; this has given the ground the nickname 'The Stage of Pneumonia'



Antonio Blanco García Del Pino,
Grounds Manager at Real Valladolid C.F.



due to the pandemic have not allowed it. Hopefully, we can resume this project when possible. It would help raise the temperature of the soil profile in winter. Undersoil heating, combined with the blankets and the lights, would be the final step in providing a quality surface all year round.

What is the usual weekly pitch activity?

The players will train on the stadium pitch every week for approximately two hours. On the week of a match, this will raise to three hours of training plus the game itself. Lately, it has been shrinking to two hours every week; a good trend which dramatically favours the pitch's playing condition on match days.

Our medium-term objective would be to reduce training on the stadium pitch even further. Still, the decision is exclusively with the sports technicians, whose needs take priority over all of us working at the club.

in June last summer, we were scheduled to host Alejandro Sanz in concert, but this was suspended like all mass events, due to the pandemic situation.

Pre-match maintenance planning

Our fertiliser programme consists of the regular monthly application of a granular feed. To help reach maximum performance to coincide with at least one or two matches, we will apply a mix of liquid fertiliser, biostimulants and colour promoters three to five days before a game.

The day before the match we will give a first cut using strings, with heavy Ransomes Mastiff, Allett and Dennis mowers. This is followed up with two further passes with the Dennis Pro34 to clean up the clippings, if there has been any training, and helps sharpen up the line between stripes.

On the day of the match, we will cut shorter using the same machines. On the first pass we will engage the cylinders and cut the pitch and the second pass is purely for aesthetics. This will give us the correct requirements determined by the La Liga Television Broadcasting Regulations.

Next, we mark the pitch once or twice depending on the need or type of paint we use. At the end of the match, our objective,

depending on the weather conditions, is to leave the field repaired and fully prepared for recovery that same day. This helps optimise the recovery time to the maximum ready for the next use.

Post-match tasks include one pass with the Pro34 rotary mowers to pick up any debris, divoting and overseeding any areas that need it, also placement of the thermal blanket in the winter months. Finally, the next two days after the match, we spray products that help de-stress and repair the plant.

How many staff do you employ and do you rely on subcontractors for some of your work?

Real Valladolid C.F traditionally has its own maintenance team and we are seen to be an essential asset which we are proud of. The professional staff consists of seven groundsmen plus a server that performs the department's management and coordination work. We maintain the stadium and the Sports City of the Annexes, reporting to the Corporate Area Directorate.

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In addition to our full-time staff, in the three primary winter months we hire in four additional operators exclusively for the placement and removal of thermal blankets.

The machinery is one hundred percent owned by the club and we continually renew and look at the best and most modern options on the market.

There are some tasks that we outsource to local specialised contracting companies, as and when needed, for large works or renovations.

Tell us more about the pitch's surface?

In the climatic zone where Valladolid is located, the most suitable type of grasses for quality sports pitches are cool-season grasses. We use a mix of Smooth stalked Meadow Grass (*Poa pratensis*) and English ryegrass. We have recently started a project to test the suitability of fine fescues.

Our stadium pitch and the two training camps right now consist of a mix of Fiesta4, Rinovo, GreenLand, Nuglade, Prafin and Jump Star. This is a mix of perennial ryegrass, Kentucky bluegrass and smooth stalked meadow grass.

The pitch is a 100% sand construction system with reinforcing mesh, which is something we took a gamble on and we are

pioneers of what, at this current time, is a novel idea in the industry. I am happy to share this information with Pitchcare readers as I think they will find it interesting.

It is not a hybrid; it's a natural, but not a conventional natural pitch. We could call it a reinforced, but being new, different, and a little unknown it escapes the current classifications. From my point of view, it possesses all the good attributes of a hybrid and a natural pitch, but is devoid of the handicaps of both.

The system was developed by Sport Relva, a construction company who specialise in Portuguese football pitches. They have renovated the pitch for the last two years and we have developed a good relationship with them; they understood our need for a healthy/robust grass system.

The rooting profile is pure sand, which is immediately stabilised by a specific mesh, 3-4cm below the surface. The roots grow through and around the mesh providing a stable playing surface. We have achieved root depths of between 10-25cm.

Personally, I find the system to be

extraordinary; it provides a great talking point and, most of all, is performing at a high level with intensive use and maintenance.

The construction allows the grass to be grown in a similar way to hydroponics; with a very high amount of oxygen in the rootzone, minimal compaction and rapid response to fertilisation and treatments.

We are experiencing very low incidences of fungal disease and a high drainage capacity because of the construction's 0% organic matter content. Organic matter will be generated by the turf itself little by little, and we will manage it to keep it at the lowest possible levels.

The idea behind building a profile without organic matter is that, despite its virtues as a colloidal complex, in my experience, and I think most of my peers will agree, it is the cause of most of the problems we suffer on sports turf. Here, we are developing and checking that, on a high maintenance pitch, the organic matter is expendable and replaceable under construction if certain aspects are taken care of.

We are collaborating on our findings, and I



This is followed up with two further passes with the Dennis Pro34 to clean up the clippings, if there has been any training, and helps sharpen up the line between stripes





think the general trend is to decrease its percentage in the construction of the football pitches' profile. I am sure it will be debated but, in my opinion, I am convinced that, in the future, it will no longer be completely added to the ground of most high-level sports pitches.

The main problems you would expect to find with this type of construction are a low cation exchange capacity, a lack of water retention and the leaching of nutrients. Still,

using the right granule fertiliser technology, coupled with the addition of zeolite, for example, we have surprisingly had virtually equal water and nutrient requirements or only slightly higher than in other sports pitches of the same high performance based on conventional sand.

Once the roots criss-cross through the mesh, it gives you what I would describe as a solid block of grass-mesh-roots-sand, making the surface much more resistant to

rotational torque values, surface breakage and divoting. In short, we have a system that allows it to behave no different from hybrid pitches in terms of strength and immediate stability. Our pitch also has lower hardness levels similar to that of the more natural based pitch.

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History

On 20th June 1928, Real Valladolid Deportivo was born from the merger of two Vallisoletan clubs: Real Unión Deportiva and Club Deportivo Español.

The first match was held on 22nd September 1928 at the Campo de la Sociedad Taurina (next to the town's bullring) against Alavés, with a 2-1 victory. The club's first ever goal was scored by Sainz. The first president was Pedro Zuloaga Mañueco and the first coach, Hungarian Esteban Platko.

In the first official match (Regional Championship), Real Valladolid beat the U.D. Burgos 12-0.

In the first Spanish League system (28/29), the Federation placed Real Valladolid in Group B of the Second Division, where they finished in 5th place.

The club colours are violet and white stripes. The team plays in La Liga, holding home games at the Estadio José Zorrilla, which seats 27,846 spectators.

Valladolid's honours include a single trophy of great relevance, the defunct Copa de la Liga 1983-84. It has been runner-up in the Copa del Rey on two occasions (1949-50 and 1988-89), and has participated in two editions of the UEFA Cup (1984-85 and 1997-98) and also one edition of the UEFA Cup Winners Cup (1989-90).

The team subsidiary - Real Valladolid B - currently play in the Segunda División B.

Since its La Liga debut in the 1948-49 season - in which it became the first club from the region to play in La Liga (five others have since done so) - Valladolid is the most successful football club in Castile and León by honours and history, with a total of 44 seasons in the First Division, 35 in the Second and 10 in the Third. Historically, Valladolid is the 12th-best team in Spain by overall league points. Two of its players have won the Pichichi Trophy: Manuel Badenes and Jorge da Silva; and ten have been internationals with the national team.

On 3rd September 2018, it was announced that Brazilian former international footballer Ronaldo Nazario had become the majority shareholder after purchasing a 51% controlling stake in the club. As of April 2020, Ronaldo owned 82% of the club shares.



city council to irrigate the local parks, gardens, and the needs of our stadium and Sports City. It is slightly alkaline, but the quality is acceptable. We perform water analysis every three to four months, as well as soil and leaf analyses.

Number of training surfaces?

The facilities we have at the club include two natural grass pitches and the stadium pitch for the first team, and two synthetic grass pitches for Team B and the lower categories. The first team, until October 2020, had only one training pitch plus the stadium. This training camp was built around 1982 and has had a lot of use, with 4-6 sessions per week. The drainage system was failing and would struggle to cope with continuous rainfall.

Since then, we have been able to rotate training between a new second natural grass pitch and the existing pitch.

The sports city project will provide more natural and synthetic grass fields, a mini stadium, buildings for the club's teams and offices, plus a renovated and well-designed facility for the surfaces maintenance crew.

Apart from the first team pitches, we support and advise on the maintenance of another municipal natural grass pitch in a neighbouring town, which is the current training headquarters of the second team, which also has a synthetic pitch. This B team - Real Valladolid Promesas - plays their matches on the old training ground of the first team. Finally, at the end of 2020, we finished building in another area of the



From my point of view, it possesses all the good attributes of a hybrid and a natural pitch, but is devoid of the handicaps of both

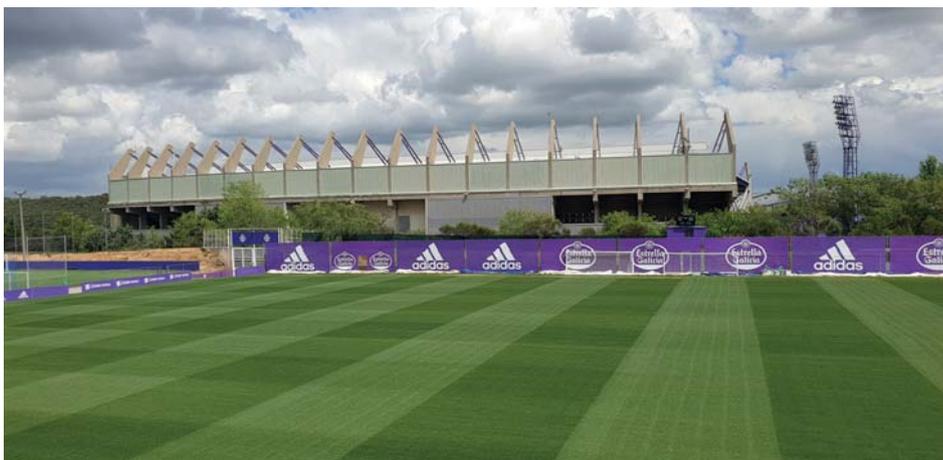
present sports city a new artificial pitch for the schools and lower categories of Real Valladolid C.F., replacing the original natural pitch. More than 500 children had used this pitch.

What tasks are carried out at the end of the season?

It depends on several factors. We usually triple or quadruple scarify with the Amazone scarifier, taking out 80% of the existing plant. This is followed by some form of aeration and a substantial topdress. Recently, we have been overseeding with *Poa pratensis* alone at the beginning of summer, as it develops better than the ryegrass in the heat, and later we reseed with Perennial Ryegrass in early autumn and the rest of the year.

This has not yet been the case but, if possible and summer events leave sufficient time for regeneration, I would like to use the Koro Field Top Maker. The stadium mesh is disposable and the price is negligible. It can be maintained or removed with the Koro and placed back again before overseeding.

This season, the rapid renovation was carried out by scarification, hollow coring and overseeding. The pitch has responded in an exemplary way, maintaining excellent health, and it is not easy to find a *Poa Annua* plant in it. It's now two years since it was constructed and we could not be more satisfied.



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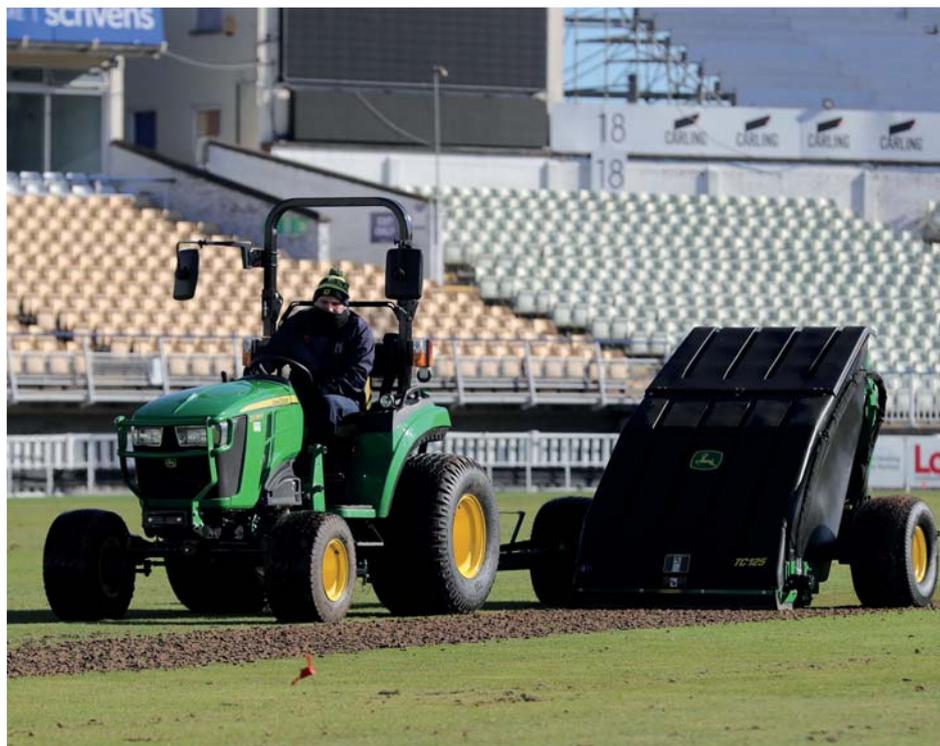
Edgbaston Stadium

Just here to keep
the lights on!



Edgbaston's Head of Sports Turf and Grounds Gary Barwell

The previous twelve months have proved difficult for the turfcare industry. In this article, **Gary Barwell**, Head of Sports Turf and Grounds at the Edgbaston Stadium tells Jane Carley that, despite the considerable challenges, there were positives to take out of the situation



The chance to reflect and consider other ways of doing the job has been one upside of the past twelve months and, at Edgbaston Stadium, home to the Warwickshire County Cricket Club, T20 side Birmingham Bears, Test Matches and One Day Internationals, plus T20 Finals Day, it has also seen a significant change to groundcare regimes.

Head of Sports Turf and Grounds Gary Barwell comments: "We've taken the opportunity to look at the benefits of bringing renovation and maintenance back in-house, with investment in a fleet of specialist machinery giving us the flexibility to work 'little and often'."

This approach has already reaped benefits since the delayed end to the 2020 season meant that renovations could not be started until the end of October. The square was renovated, although in the cold stadium environment, uptake was reduced.

Then, picking the best of the weather this spring, the Edgbaston team hollow cored, reseeded and fertilised the outfield in early March, ready for the rain and warmer temperatures needed to get the seed away.

Gary had plenty of 'headspace' - although

not necessarily hours in the day - for consideration last year.

"Once it became clear that the season would be suspended, all of the staff were furloughed with immediate effect," he recalls. "I was on my own for eight weeks, just doing the job that I love, and it was a bit of a novelty to start with. With no fixtures to prepare for, I was cutting grass so we would be ready to go when the time was right - just 'here to keep the lights on'."

He comments that communication with the management via Sport Director Paul Farbrace was excellent and, once confirmation came through that the players would be back in three weeks, Deputy Head Groundsman Mark Johnson returned, and gradually the rest of the eight-strong team followed.

"Although the fixtures were a moveable feast, I'm proud of what we achieved, especially when you consider the deluge ahead of T20 finals (in October). It was amazing that we got it on and that it played so well," he says.

This season is largely business as usual with the addition of The Hundred, and players were back training by mid-March, taking advantage of the nets at the training



I'm proud of what we achieved, especially when you consider the deluge ahead of T20 finals (in October). It was amazing that we got it on and that it played so well



Significant investment in new machinery at Edgbaston has brought major renovations in-house and added flexibility which should improve pitch standards further



An SGL pitch lighting rig straddles two strips, bringing on grass seeds when the sun doesn't shine!



For example, if we had a contractor booked in to overseed and it rained, we'd have to go with the time we'd booked. Now, we can swap the jobs around and do it in the best conditions

ground adjacent to the stadium.

Gary and his team will be able to use windows in the schedule and work with the elements to keep the pitches performing throughout due to the investment in machinery.

"Although we renovate the square ourselves, we'd always used contractors Fineturf for major works and the outfield and we got on with them well, but I wanted to explore what we would gain from having our own equipment," he explains. "It was a big step and I needed to have the management on side. The difficulty that many grounds managers have is that they will simply say: 'I need this machine because it does X and Y.'"

Instead, he worked alongside the Edgbaston finance team's Abraham Khan to look at the options and how they stacked up against using contractors.

"We considered leasing or purchasing machinery, and the latter was preferred as it gives the business an asset. Abraham calculated that, by having our own machinery, we could save £2000 a year."

Mike Wheeler at local dealer Farol was key in helping seal the deal by advising on the right mix of machines, which includes some sixteen items of equipment from tractors to a scarifier (see what's in the shed for a full list).

Specialist renovation equipment includes a Vredo disc seeder, Koro Recycling Dresser and Wiedenmann GXi8 aerator, more commonly the tools of the contractor or hire company.

"I just wanted us to be more self-sufficient," Gary explains. "For example, if we had a contractor booked in to overseed and it rained, we'd have to go with the time we'd booked. Now, we can swap the jobs around and do it in the best conditions."

"It also means we can try new approaches; previously, we'd go round the square with a Blotter if it had rained heavily, but why not try out the Pro Core to take advantage of the rain?"

There's also plenty of capacity to get jobs done in a timely way and to make better use of materials.



Equipment purchased has included specialist renovation machinery such as the Wiedenmann XFB decompacter



Recent investment includes new nets on the training ground, which is maintained to the same standards as the stadium adjacent to it

“We’ve got 1.5ha of land at the stadium and another 1.5ha at our second ground, the Edgbaston Foundation Sports Ground, so why not purchase the fertiliser to do both at the same time and get a better price? The second ground had not been aerated for four years but, because we’ve got our own aerator, we’ve been able to do it twice in two months.”

He comments that the grounds team have ‘taken ownership’ of the kit and are

committed to using and looking after it well.

“Ash Hill came from a golf club background so he was familiar with some of the more specialist equipment already, and Farol and the manufacturers have been brilliant with training.”

Equipment is shared between the stadium and training ground and the Edgbaston Foundation Sports Ground. The aim, he comments, is to get the same standards on the square at the training ground, which has

benefitted from new nets this year, as in the stadium.

Gary considers that the relationships within the team are a key part of his role, and staff welfare has been paramount during lockdown and as groundsmen return to work.

“We did regular Zoom calls when the team were furloughed and have a What’s App group, and it wasn’t just about work, banter is important too,” he says. “Most of us have



Most of us have partners or families, but one lad was living on his own in a house share, so we encouraged him to go back to his family



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QUICK PUMP REPLACEMENT



Getting Personal

Gary Barwell - if you see Christian Bale walking around Birmingham, look again!

Who are you? Gary Barwell, Head of Sports Turf and Grounds, Edgbaston Stadium.

Family status? Married with two daughters Evie (15) Megan (11).

Who's your hero and why? My grandad - just a big influence on me and I'm a lot like him.

What's been the highlight of your grounds career so far? 2015 Ashes - my first Ashes Test pitch.

If your younger self saw you now, what would they think? Hopefully he'd be proud!

Which famous people wind you up? Anyone who says things for effect.

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

What was the most embarrassing moment in your life? I haven't got one.

What is your favourite film? The Wolf of Wall Street.

What scares you? People unhappy with my work.

What would your autobiography be called... and who would play you in the film? A Little Bit of Barwell Magic ... Christian Bale (apparently he looks like me).

What is your favourite sport? Football.

What would you cast into Room 101? People who ask if I'm Gary Barlow from Take That.

Which historical time and place would you most like to visit? The Battle of Bosworth in 1485, as I grew up locally.

Do you have a lifetime ambition? To design my own house.



Which three people, living or dead, would you invite to a dinner party? My dad, grandad, and Sid James.

What's the best advice you have ever been given? Always give 100%.

What's your favourite piece of trivia? Anything Sport or Only Fools and Horses.

What's your favourite smell? Creed (aftershave).

Which three albums would you take to a desert island? Anything from Snow Patrol, Queen or Oasis.

What's the daftest work-related question you have ever been asked? Can I add an extra 2mm of grass on!!!!

What's your favourite piece of kit? Allett Buffalo mower.

What three words would you use to describe yourself? Passionate, honest and dedicated.

What is the single most useful thing you could tell a 16-year-old grounds person/greenkeeper? Never give up on your dreams

What talent would you like to have? I would like to be able to change the weather.

What law/legislation would you like to see introduced? Fair pay throughout the grounds industry.



Gary and his team with the first gold roller delivered in the UK as part of Auto-Roller's centenary celebrations

partners or families, but one lad was living on his own in a house share, so we encouraged him to go back to his family."

"We normally have a decent amount of holiday in winter, so the second lockdown wasn't so bad for those who were then put on flexi-furlough, but I've worked through."

He aims to stagger the workload so that everyone gets a good work/life balance and lieu days can be taken fairly.

"When getting ready for practice for example, I only need two groundsmen to come in on each day of the weekend to take the sheets on and off. Mark Johnson has responsibility for

the training ground, so I'd rather have him all week and let him have the weekend off. It's a long season, from 15th March, when training starts, to 20th September."

If the easing of restrictions progresses as planned, a sense of normality could return this summer, with spectators a possibility for the Test Match in July.

"It's important to remember that precautions are still needed, however. We keep to 2m apart, check temperatures and the lads know not to come in if they feel unwell at all. It's not difficult due to the nature of the work, but we obviously can't afford to have an

A role for synthetic materials

Along with near neighbour and friendly rival Worcestershire CCC, Edgbaston has been trialling hybrid pitches since 2016.

"I looked at various systems used in football and got some really useful advice from Alan Ferguson when he was at St George's Park," explains Gary. "We decided to trial SISGrass, which is a yarn stitched in 9cm below the surface, and a year later met with the ECB to discuss our findings."

Installed on wickets 15 and 17, the hybrid grass is virtually indiscernible from a fully natural wicket. The surface is ready for play six weeks after installation and match preparation takes slightly longer - up to a day more, he reckons.

"They look good. We've used them for all levels of cricket and, once the teams work out the effect on the ball, there is no



Natural and hybrid wickets side by side - little visual difference, maintenance the same, but extended wear from the SISGrass strip

What's in the shed?

Tractors

John Deere 2038R compact
John Deere 4066R compact

Implements

Maredo scarifier
Campey Uni-rake
Dakota Turf Tender spreader
Vredo disc overseeder
Toro ProCore
Sisis TM1000
Sisis Seeder/Hydromain
Koro FTM

Autorollers x 2

Powerroll
Team Scout mounted sprayer

Sisis Rotarake
SGL MU50 lights

Mowers

Allett Regal 36in
Allett Buffalo
Allett C34E
Allett Shaver
Infinituc
Honda pedestrian rotaries x 2

outbreak," comments Gary.

As well as preparing for the new season, the team at Edgbaston are looking to 2022, and the Commonwealth Games.

Demand for facilities means that the Edgbaston Foundation Sports Ground will play an important role.

The former Mitchells & Butlers ground, a couple of miles from the main stadium, was purchased in 2012, having been saved from development but fallen into disrepair.

"I've got a team of two groundsmen based there who have produced some really good pitches. It's the home of

Warwickshire's second team but, in 2022, it will be needed more, especially for training, so we are currently investing in nets and new pitches there."

New Astroturf pitches at the ground are being developed in conjunction with TGMS and main contractor Fineturf, with Gary as project manager.

"I've really enjoyed it, and it was something else to think about whilst the rest of the team were on furlough. We've got such a lot to look forward to."



Warwickshire
County Cricket Club

difference in how they play. There is much less wear - you just can't see the white marks from the ball," he comments.

Gary says that, whilst the technique won't make a bad wicket good, or a good wicket better, if they are prepared to a high standard, hybrid wickets will last longer.

Three more hybrid wickets are due to be added in the stadium this year, while of the thirty-two net strips in the training ground, twelve are hybrid.

Another addition is an Astroturf strip around the edge of the outfield, suitable for running during training, but also to make the use of advertising boards easier and safer. Gary comments that the synthetic material also withstands run off from washing stadium seating and rain better.



The Astroturf strip around the outfield has provided considerable benefits, not least safety

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Lytham Cricket and Sports Club

Where there's a Wells, there's a way

Lytham Cricket and Sports Club is situated a stone's throw away from the Fylde coastline and is primarily the home of Lytham Cricket Club. Over the years, many other sports have come to call this ground home and, the club's twenty-five-year-old full-time Head Groundsman, **Thomas Wells** took some time out of his busy schedule to speak to Lee Williams

Thomas' heavy workload is such that he manages the facilities at both Lytham Sports Club along with his part-time role at Garstang Cricket Club, and he is responsible for the budgets at both grounds. "It's been a big step up since being at Lytham. At Garstang it's just one playing surface, whereas at Lytham there are four different surfaces in one, which means that I have to create and plan the budget according to what I deem essential."

The Lytham site consists of one senior football pitch, a cricket square with twenty-four wickets, six grass tennis courts and seven artificial surfaces.

Situated one hundred metres from the sea, Thomas describes the majority of the site as a heavy sand-based soil. Both the grass tennis courts and the cricket square

are on Kettering loam. "This does mean that the site drains well and, generally, the only time we have a problem is during winter when the water table is so high that we get standing water, but after one or two dry days, the water soon goes and you can get back on with things."

"We do have an old clay land-based drainage system which, as far as I'm aware, is over seventy years old, but it does still pull - that is until it is made redundant, once the water table hits a certain level. After confirmation from the previous groundsman, we have only had one game called off due to rain in the last seven years."

The club has six roll-on covers that allow Thomas to produce (then cover-up) two fresh wickets for every Saturday and Sunday.

He talks me through the maintenance of



the football pitch. "During the season, I cut with the John Deere 2653B triple mower at a height of 27mm, but I do occasionally lift it to 30mm - depending on the weather forecast and the amount of wear and tear. I will try and do at least a single pass with the Jacobsen ride-on with the verti-cut units, once a month during the season. Every week, I will run over the pitch with the SIS drag brush to get any debris to the surface and then go over with our Kubota BX2200, with cutting deck and collector box, to suck up any debris. The pitch is divoted and rolled after every match."

Last summer, the club invested in a state-of-the-art dome to cover two of the artificial tennis courts during winter. "It ended up costing around £120,000, but it has been a godsend on days when it is hammering down as it allows the members to play

CRICKET PREPARATIONS

To help visualise and give more insight into the maintenance work Thomas undertakes on the cricket wicket, I asked him to break down his routine, starting with pre-season and what preparations he undertakes leading up to a match.

“During winter, I will cut the square when required at 22mm and I will try to aerate two to three times with the Groundsman Industries spiker. Pre-season, I will drop the height of cut to 18mm, ready for rolling using the heavy roller; I try and do five passes. As the cricket season approaches, I will drop the height of cut to 14mm ready for wicket preparations over the next fourteen days.”

Day one

- Brush and cut down to 10mm
- Thin out with a rake, scarifier or verti-cut
- Brush and cut at 10mm
- Water the wicket
- 20 minute roll x 2, with a 30 plus minute break between passes

Day two

- Brush and cut at 10mm
- Carry on thinning out with the brush
- Brush and cut at 10mm
- Water the wicket
- 20 minute roll x 3, with a 30 plus minute break between passes

Day three

- Brush and cut at 10mm
- Carry on thinning out with the brush (only if I feel it is needed)
- Brush and cut at 8mm
- Water the wicket
- 20 minute roll x 3, with a 30 plus minute break between passes

Day four

- 30 minute roll x 3, with a 30 plus minute break between the passes

Day five

- Brush and cut at 8mm

Day six

- Brush and cut at 8mm
- 30 minute roll x 3, with a 30 plus minute break between passes (start slowing the speed down)

Day seven

- Brush and cut at 8mm
- Carry on thinning out with a brush (only if I feel it is needed)
- Brush and cut at 8mm
- Water the wicket if needed
- 30 minute roll x 2, with a 30 plus minute break between passes

Day eight

- Brush and cut at 8mm

Day nine

- Brush and cut at 8mm
- 30 minute roll x 3, with a 30 minute break between passes

Day ten

- Brush and cut at 7mm
- Thinning out for the final time with the brush
- 30 minute roll x 3, with a 30 minute break between passes

Day eleven

- Brush and cut at 7mm
- 30-minute roll x 3 (at a crawl), with a 30 minute break between passes

Day twelve

- Brush and cut at 7mm

Day thirteen

- Brush and cut at your match height between 2-6mm
- 30 minute roll x 2 (at a crawl), with a 30 minute break between the passes
- Mark out the wicket

Day fourteen (matchday)

- Brush and cut at your match height between 4-6mm
- Roll between 7 and 14 minutes x 2

“I found the best results are with six hours plus of rolling on a wicket; the above plan is a minimum. During the playing season, the outfield is cut at a height of 15mm then rises to a height of 30mm in winter and it’s spiked when it is fit to do so.”



tennis all-year-round. Ours goes up in September and comes down in March and it’s similar to the inflatable domes you occasionally see at Premier League football clubs. I feel it has been a good investment; these courts have the potential to be booked out from 8.00am to 10.00pm every night, with the floodlights beaming through the canvas - it’s a great way for that section to make extra money.”

The investment does not stop there though. Thomas continued: “In the next two to five years, we are looking to build a new clubhouse. The current facilities are starting to get dated, and during that process, we will also look into potentially relaying fourteen wickets on the square. At the minute, we have twenty-four wickets; one half is for senior

cricket and the other half is focused on junior cricket, but they are going to look to swap it around which will mean senior cricket has a more sufficient boundary. The square surface has been down for one hundred and forty years - it has sufficient depth, but some of the wickets are just starting to become a bit dull and lifeless, so they are in much need of rejuvenating.”

“After speaking to a couple of contractors, they believe we could Koro the top one or two inches off, before rotavating the surface to decompact the subsoil and stone bury it, followed by the laser grader. Next, we will apply fresh loam - layer by layer - and laser grade it again to give us the correct levels.”

“The new clubhouse development was due to start





All ready for football



Once I realised that I wouldn't make it as a professional cricketer, I turned my thoughts to what the next best thing would be; to become a groundsman and produce playing surfaces

this winter, but has unfortunately been put back a year or two due to the pandemic. The project will potentially take eighteen months to complete, which will give us sufficient time to get the square done and give it that grow-in period; fit for play at the same time the club reopens its doors.”

The club owns all of its machines and is a mixture of new and second-hand, which have mainly been purchased through Balmers GM Ltd and Campey Turf

Care Systems. “I'm not loyal to any one manufacturer and I'm more than happy to try a range of machines before deciding on a piece of kit. MAC Services carry out servicing of the ride-on machines, Mark1Mowers in Kirkham service the pedestrian machines and Reelsharp Services have started to regrind all the cutting cylinders in winter.

Thomas tells me when it comes to pest and disease control, he likes to steer clear

of using chemicals where possible. “If we have any problems with things like moles or rabbits, we get a specialist company from the local area to treat. To control weeds, we tend to spray a selective herbicide once a year around the end of March/early April.”

“During spring, we tend to have a small problem with rabbits, but the local foxes tend to stop the issue by the summer months. This winter, we have also had a slight problem with casting worms, so

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Getting Personal

Thomas Wells - he had no idea what career he would take and dislikes Piers Morgan

Who are you? Thomas Edward Wells. Twenty-five years old - originally from Solihull, but moved to Preston in 2014 to study at Myerscough college and ended up staying.

Family status. Been in a relationship for six years, no children, two dogs and one cat.



What's been the highlight of your grounds career so far? Preparing a pitch for the Vatican cricket team whilst at Stonyhurst College and it being the centre of attention of the whole school. Also receiving great feedback from everyone involved in the match.

If your younger self saw you now, what would he think? He would be very surprised that, from not knowing what I wanted to do as a career when leaving school, I made a big jump moving away from home to study something completely against the normal.

Which famous people wind you up? Piers Morgan!!

What job would you love, other than your own? Either Head Groundman at Aston Villa FC or the Edgbaston cricket ground.

What was the most embarrassing moment in your life? Not knowing what I wanted to do when leaving school. All my friends had a plan of what they wanted to do and how they would get there.

What is your favourite film? Harry Potter.

What scares you? Heights.

What would your autobiography be called? The Grumpy Groundsman.

What is your favourite sport? To play cricket, but to watch football.

Which historical time and place would you most like to visit? Either the ancient Egyptian or Roman times.

Do you have a lifetime ambition? Just to live life to the full and provide well for my family.

Which three people, living or dead, would you invite to a dinner party? Jack Grealish, Andrew Flintoff and Rory McIlroy.

What's the best advice you have ever been given? Good things come to those who wait.

What's your favourite smell? Freshly cut grass.

What's the daftest work-related question you have ever been asked? How do you dye a cricket pitch white?

What's your favourite piece of kit? The Dennis FT610.

What three words would you use to describe yourself? Workaholic, self-driven and motivated.

What is the single most useful thing you could tell a 16-year-old groundsman? To go out and get the correct qualifications; whether that's by going to college or university, or by doing an apprenticeship.

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



I have been trialing Purity Soil Conditioner. It has considerably reduced the amount and we will hopefully continue to see the benefits throughout the year."

"The only real disease we see, mainly on the courts and the square, is the odd outbreak of red thread, which we treat with a high nitrogen feed to try and grow it out."

The site's ecology is very important to Thomas and its members. "Around three sides of the site, we have a bit of natural woodland and we tend not to cut any of the grass down in those areas to encourage natural wildlife

and insects. Over the last six months, the tennis members have put up about a dozen bird and bat boxes behind the clubhouse. In the long run, I would like to introduce an area of natural wildflowers to increase the number of insects and Hymenoptera (bees and wasps) to pollinate. Due to lockdown and no sport being played, I have seen a lot more wildlife around the site."

It struck me whilst chatting to Thomas that he knows his stuff for a youngster (compared to me), so I wanted to find out what encouraged him to get into the industry. "I didn't know what career path



Before tennis renovations



After tennis renovations



I think a lot of people take groundsmen/greenskeepers and, more importantly, the volunteers massively for granted, as they just expect playing surfaces to be in perfect condition at all times of the year

to take when I left full-time education in 2013, but as a child, I was sports-driven and played county cricket for Warwickshire until the age of eighteen. Once I realised that I wouldn't make it as a professional cricketer, I turned my thoughts to what the next best thing would be; to become a groundsman and produce playing surfaces. The club that

I played for in Birmingham - Knowle and Dorridge Cricket Club - were aware of what I was looking to do and they offered me the chance to work with the groundsmen, Ian Maddocks and Steve Rouse, over the summer. I thoroughly enjoyed the job and I decided this was the career I wanted to pursue so, in 2014, I moved to Preston and

attended Myerscough College for two years. I completed NVQ Level Three in Sports Turf Management and, in the second year, I had the opportunity to take over as Head Groundsman at Garstang Cricket Club. This was not only to just look after the grounds, but to play, which I still do today around my job at Lytham."



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In the long run, I would like to introduce an area of natural wildflowers to increase the number of insects and Hymenoptera (bees and wasps) to pollinate



“Once I finished studying, I got a job at Stonyhurst College as a senior groundsman and became the head of cricket for the senior school, looking after their three ovals. Whilst at Stonyhurst, I completed my PA1, PA2 and PA6 spraying certificates and my BE trailer licence. In February 2020, I was sad to leave to undertake this job at Lytham Sports Club, but the role has given me the chance to step up a level.”

Cricket is Thomas’s number one sport, but he is open to any opportunity that may arise in the sports turf industry in the future.

Thomas believes the sports turf industry is on the rise, with groundsmen around the country showing that it is not all about just cutting grass - as many people assume. “Social media has made it easier for groundsmen and greenkeepers to post pictures, share experiences and show what grounds people do. I also think that social media has had a massive effect in bringing new blood into the industry.”

“Having said that, I think a lot of people

take groundsman/greenkeepers and, more importantly, the volunteers massively for granted, as they just expect playing surfaces to be in perfect condition at all times of the year. They do not see the many hours where employees are doing their best with the equipment and budget. At the end of the day, without hard-working greenkeepers and groundsman, playing surfaces around the country would drastically suffer. However, it is always good when teams/captains/clubs give praise because it makes the job we love more satisfying.”

Being from the younger generation of sports turf professionals, I asked what he would suggest we do to raise the sports turf industries profile, and does he like to attend industry shows?

“I would like to see more schemes in place to give school children the chance to go into sports clubs and see what work is done and given them a chance to volunteer. This would provide a great pathway into the industry for youngsters. I would also like to

see a lot more on social media showcasing industry days and events.”

“I attend both Saltex and BTME every year - before the pandemic anyway! This was always a great way of networking and meeting new people and getting new ideas to take back to Lytham and put them into practice. I have not been to any demo days or roadshows, but I have been speaking to Campey’s and I am keen to host a demo day featuring their products during renovations.”

What’s in the shed

- Dennis FT610 with a 5 and 9 blade cylinder as well as a verti-cutting unit
- Honda Pro rotary mower
- John Deere 2653B ride-on triple mower
- Kubota BX2200 with cutting deck and collector box
- BOMAG 120 road roller
- Jacobsen ride-on triple mower with verti-cutting units
- SISIS Combrake
- SISIS Drag Brush
- EvenSprey professional 50 litre sprayer
- Stiga power brush
- Eagle power brush
- STIHL hand-held blower
- STIHL BR 700 backpack blower
- STIHL FS 55 strimmer
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Ed Mowe, Head Groundsman for Leicester Tigers, with the **STIHL RM 655 RS**

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Blackpool Cricket Club

Outfield of dreams!

Blackpool Cricket Club's Stanley Park is a 5,000-seater ground that is regularly used for county cricket matches by Lancashire County Cricket Club. It is one of the county's official outgrounds alongside Liverpool and Southport. This year, they will host the Royal London Cup one day game against Worcestershire CCC on 8th August. Lee Williams met up with **Sam Dutton**, the club's twenty-seven-year-old Head Groundsman to discuss the work undertaken

Situated in the heart of Blackpool, one of England's most loved seaside resorts, its famous tower is clearly visible when standing in the middle of the Stanley Park cricket ground and, long after the cricket season has finished, the equally famous illuminations light up the night sky.

The club's 1st XI play in the ECB Northern Premier League, whilst its 2nd's, 3rd's and 4th's play in the Palace Shield Cricket League. They also have a Sunday team playing in the Palace Shield Sunday League.

Following concerns expressed by the county side on the condition of the outfield, major renovations have been carried out to address the problems. Lancashire last played here in 2018 against Warwickshire CCC.

Thomas (Tom) Myerscough, Sam's helpful friend and mentor - who, by day, is an Environmental Scientist - tells me more. "The project had been in the pipeline for quite some time. In 2015, Lancashire put in a new county pitch on the square, which gave them three pitches to play on, allowing them to hold festivals or two one day games. Then, in 2018, it was suggested that we should look

at investing in improving the outfield surface. It was full of thatch, holding on to water like a sponge and would flood, causing many of our league games to be called off. We told the council of our plans, and they were happy to get on board because, when it is sunny and we have a county game on, we can attract a crowd of well over four thousand people. The place is bouncing, it is great for the area."

When Sam first joined the club two years ago, the ground's scoreboard end was under water and, after the water subsided, he could see the earth had moved underneath. "Blackpool is a flat ground, but Tom and I stood at the backward point of the square and, at the edge of the outfield, we were four or five foot above the batsman; this happened over just three months. Being in Blackpool, you would think the ground is built on sand, but it was actually a lowland peat bog at one stage before it was developed. They had to shift a lot of earth to make it flat and imported a lot of heavy clay, but there is still some peat knocking around."

"In 2019, we carried out a lot of hollow-coring to try and help relieve some of the water tension in the surface, and we shifted



We applied six hundred tonnes of rootzone from Everton's training ground, which was then incorporated into the existing profile to improve the levels, mainly on the south side of the ground. Once they were happy with the levels, it was rolled flat and sand banded





Getting Personal

Sam Dutton - always trust your gut feeling!

Who are you?

Sam Dutton - head groundsman at Blackpool Cricket Club.

Family status.

Girlfriend and dog.

Who's your hero and why? My dad, Simon Dutton. He's an absolute legend of the Cumbria CCC and I'm hoping to beat all his records. Also, Ben Stokes; unbelievable talent and an inspiration to all us cricketers and he's Cumbrian.

What's been the highlight of your grounds career so far? Producing the pitches for Lancashire CCC.

What job would you love, other than your own? A professional cricketer or working at a professional ground.

What was the most embarrassing moment in your life? Getting out first ball of the one day final at Wormsley.

What is your favourite film? Never Back Down or Warrior.

What would your autobiography be called... and who would play you in the film? The Life of Sam, played by Alan from The Hangover.

What is your favourite sport? Cricket.

Do you have a lifetime ambition?

To be head groundsman of a professional cricket ground.

Which three people, living or dead, would you invite to a dinner party? Conor McGregor, Tyson Fury and Tom Hardy.

What's the best advice you have ever been given? Always stick to your gut feeling (it's always right).

Which three albums would you take to a desert island? Picture This (by the same band), Divinely Uninspired to a Hellish Extent (Lewis Capaldi) and Lighting Matches (Tom Grennan).

What's your favourite piece of kit? The Dennis FT510 or the Lloyds Paladin.

What three words would you use to describe yourself? Passionate, hardworking and fun.

What would be the most useful thing to tell a 16 year old groundsman? Don't be afraid to ask questions and get stuck in.



some serious material. It did make a difference, especially on the far side."

In 2020, Sam and Tom decided that the work they had carried out was never going to be enough to help solve their problems with flooding. So, they approached the club and asked them to look at carrying out the project that was first mooted in 2018. "To our surprise, they agreed and were happy for us to put the work out to tender. Once all the quotes came back, we chose J Mallinson (Ormskirk) Ltd to carry out the work."

Work started in September 2020, and the job should have been completed by the end of October but, with the harsh weather conditions bringing heavy rain and frost, they are now due to finish at the end of March 2021. "I think, in some ways, it has been a blessing in disguise," comments Sam. "I have seen other grounds that have been overseeded in October that looked alright, but they are a bit patchy. Also, with COVID, I had been furloughed and was not able to spend much time at the ground. So, at the same time the project is completed, I will be back full-time to get everything ready for the start of the season ... fingers crossed."

Tom, a keen cricketer with a love for turf, had gained a lot of knowledge over the years working on various other cricket grounds and volunteered to manage the project for Sam whilst keeping him informed of developments. He explained what work has been carried out. "Mallinsons started by koroing off the surface, to a depth of 20mm, to remove as much of the thatch as possible. After the first pass, we realised this was not deep enough, so we took core samples from twelve points around the outfield and found the thatch's average depth was around 27mm. So, a second pass was carried out to remove most of the remaining thatch layer. After koroing, we found that, at the south end, the levels were not quite right, which meant we would have ended up with a significant

rise on to the square. Instead of having a three-metre cut off point at the end of the square, which we have at the North end, it is now one and a half metres to help blend those levels in, so we do not end up with a gully below the end of the square. We are aware that, for the first year, this could be potentially problematic for fast bowlers because the take-off point will be inside the new outfield, but we are hopeful that it will be the best outcome in the next two to three years."

"Once the koroing was completed, we moved on to the installation of the drains. The plan was to drain the whole site, essentially to the ring drain using all longitudinal drains, but that changed because of the levels they found once the outfield was koroed off. So, instead, they decided to go with longitudinal and lateral drains, which is probably much better in the long run."

"The next steps involved cultivating the site to relieve compaction and to break-up any of the thatch that remained. Then we applied six hundred tonnes of rootzone from Everton's training ground, which was then incorporated into the existing profile to improve the levels, mainly on the south side of the ground. Once they were happy with the levels, it was rolled flat and sand banded."

The project was moving on nicely until the rain started to fall, delaying work for four months. In that time, Sam was able to see the difference the drains had already begun to make. "I have lived in Blackpool for three years now, and I have never seen Stanley Park, in which the ground sits, so waterlogged, but our outfield was dry."

Sam is now back in charge of the project and talked me through the final stages. "Once all the sand has gone down, Mallinsons are going to verti-drain to help relieve any compaction that has occurred whilst the work was carried out. In the final stage, they will tiller out the surface and roll ready for



overseeding at 45gm² with a ryegrass mix using a dimple seeder.”

Sam now has a big challenge on his hands, bringing through a new surface from seed with limited resources. I asked him if we have a warm and dry April, as we have experienced in recent years, how he plans to get around the fact he has a limited irrigation system. “Firstly, I will hope and pray the weather is on my side. In the worst-case

scenario, we will call in the fire service, as we have done in the past. Tom and I have been badgering the chairman to install a ten thousand litre tank that would give us one hell of a head start, not only now but also during the season. But obviously, this is a considerable expense on top of the money the club has spent on the outfield, meaning it will have to be something we look at again further down the line.”



Since August, I have been on furlough, so I have just been in to keep things ticking over on the square as much as I can, with Tom’s help at the weekends

I was interested in knowing how they have managed to maintain the square whilst all the work has been carried out around it. Sam explains, “Before the work started, I cut the square down to 5mm; with the lack of play, I found myself scarifying more heavily with our SISIS Rotorake 600, taking out five passes in varying directions. It was then spiked, overseeded with Rigby Taylor’s R9 100% Ultra Fine Dwarf Ryegrass seed mix and

Blackpool Cricket Club

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What's in the shed

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- Dennis FT510
- SISIS Rotorake 600
- SISIS pedestrian spiker
- Honda HRX 476 petrol mower
- STIHL strimmer and blower
- Ransomes Mastiff cylinder mower
- Toro Reelmaster 3100-D
- Powerroll A-R4
- Kubota B2530 compact tractor
- Blec Multiseeder
- Groundsman Industries tractor mounted aerator

topdressed using Surrey Loam GOSTD 125 and Supernatural on the Lancashire pitches and brushed in. I was lucky to get all that done before the job started properly. After renovations, we were okay for a while, until it began to grow again, and I found myself having to rally the troops to help me carry the machines over to the square, which was interesting. Once it dried out, I was able to go across."

"Since August, I have been on furlough, so I have just been in to keep things ticking over on the square as much as I can, with Tom's help at the weekends."

Once taken off furlough, Sam could spend more time manicuring the surfaces ready for the new season's start, which he is very much looking forward to after last year. He talks me through his maintenance process of the square. "From March, I will keep my square around 20mm and gradually take it down to 14mm, which I will keep for the season. I will try to keep the outfield approximately 35mm once it has established, but will progressively take it

down to 12mm during the cricket season. I power wash my main machinery once a week, or at least blow the cylinder after use, and I feed the square every 4-6 weeks during the season to keep the leaf and roots as healthy as possible."

Tom is keen for the club to enhance the ecology around the site, especially as it is situated right next to Stanley Park, a fantastic area for ecology with its incredible selection of trees and greenery. "We do have wildflower areas around the ground which are allowed to flower and set seed before a regular mowing regime starts. We do get a good number of birds visiting the site, and we regularly see Oyster Catchers on the square; this year, I plan to put up some bird boxes. We are careful when applying products to reduce the amount of chemical runoff into the drains. We also have gardens that are maintained, and rainwater harvesting is being considered at the site."

After playing cricket in Australia, Sam needed to focus on his career, which involved staying close to his passion. So,

when he was offered the chance to work at Barrow Golf Club as an apprentice and gain his NVQ Levels 1 and 2 at Myerscough College, he jumped at the chance, knowing this would help him get the experience he would need to one day become a cricket groundsman. "After a few years, I joined South Lake Services, a contracting company that looked after the turf and gardens at schools, posh houses and holiday lodges. Two years ago, I was given the dream opportunity to join Blackpool CC as an assistant groundsman by the chairman; I snapped his hands off. Initially came here with the promise of gaining experience under the Head Groundsman Chris Mackay, but then he left after two months. I was then made Head Groundsman, throwing me in at the deep end. I had little knowledge of maintaining a square and that is when Tom stepped in to help me out. Since 2019, he has guided me through the maintenance, renovation and feeding processes, and I have also gained a lot of experience by just doing the job."



Sam (left) and his mentor Tom Myerscough





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Hazlegrove Preparatory School

Manicured to perfection



Hazlegrove Preparatory School is situated just outside of Yeovil, within a beautiful rural Somerset location. The school is steeped in history that stretches back to 1519 and, as part of the The King's Bruton Foundation, Hazlegrove is part of an educational lineage that spans nearly five centuries. **Graham Kitley** is the school's Head of Grounds, responsible for managing twenty-two acres of grounds - maintained and manicured to perfection. Lee Williams caught up with him recently

The striking lawns and gardens are the school's main focal point at the front of the 18th-century house, but Graham and his staff also maintain four boys' cricket squares, three girls' pitches (recently added) and a six-hole golf course and putting green. Also, during winter, the outfielders are split into five rugby pitches and seven training grids. Artificial surfaces include two synthetic pitches and an eight-lane cricket net system.

Being set in rural parkland, the soil profile is made up of heavy clay, which Graham tells me is not the easiest to work with. "In winter, it holds a lot of water and, in summer, it dries out very quickly. Compaction causes major issues, so we verti-drain, slit and ProCore as much as possible (at different depths) to avoid creating a pan. We have undertaken a vast amount of aeration which has had a positive effect on root growth in most areas and we have had some positive feedback

recently about the pace, bounce and carry of the ball."

"The golf course is set around a multitude of large old oak trees which also causes a few problems as all our greens and tees suffer from shade. Our smaller artificial pitch also has shade issues, causing algae and moss problems and sometimes it does not thaw out during frosty periods."

Graham talks me through the general maintenance and fertiliser regime of his natural surfaces. "We try to stick to routines, but weather and general school life makes that hard. All greens are cut three times a week at a height of 5mm, using the Allett Shaver 20, as it's small enough not to scalp in some of the undulations we have. The new borehole enables us to irrigate more regularly. During autumn and winter, we spray monthly with Turfite 20:20:30, liquid turf hardener and Seamac ProTurf to reduce plant stress and disease. Granular feeds are





also used to keep a base feed ticking over and, if time and budgets allow, sand dressing and pro-coring are undertaken. The greens are regularly verti-cut with the Allett C24.”

“As we move into autumn, the rugby pitches are cut to 40mm using the John Deere 7700, with the Trimax ProCut attached. They get one granular feed of Evolution (a controlled coated granular) and are regularly Verti-Drained and Quadraplayed. We overseed and apply a sand dressing in the spring - again if the budget allows.”

“In summer, the outfields also have one granular feed and are sprayed for weeds. If the budget allows, we apply one liquid feed for sports day. If the weather is favourable, these are cut every other day usually between 17-25mm.”

“The cricket squares are renovated annually using Ongar loam, before overseeding. During winter, they also receive a liquid feed and granular base feed of Agrovista Amenity’s Evolution 5 - a controlled slow-release granular. Our square is cut to 19mm and the wickets are cut at around 6mm. Water management can sometimes be tricky as they are used daily, and summer feeds vary depending on



Covid has been challenging. When you set high standards, it is tough not to get around to do everything you would normally do and not to the standards you usually set!



Alongside my team, I aim to make first impressions count as the grounds are the first thing any visitor, parent and pupil see on their arrival

weather and usage.”

“Our main lawn is also used for croquet and significant events, so it is treated the same as the cricket square, but is overseeded with a 100% perennial ryegrass mix. Regular liquid feeds are applied every two to three weeks, supplemented with a granular once a term. I regularly change the pattern and verti-cut to stop the nap from becoming so bad.”

The natural turf surfaces are all

predominantly annual meadow grass and Graham tries to introduce different cultivars of grass seed from various companies.

“The rugby pitches, cricket outfield and the main lawn are overseeded with a 100% perennial ryegrass mix annually. It is impossible to control the poa in and around a large mass of fields and meadows, especially on our greens. We overseed with Limagrain’s MM7; a mixture of 40% Cyrena perennial ryegrass, 40% Venice perennial

ryegrass, 10% Caldris chewiness fescue, 10% Sefton browntop bent, which offers fast germination, establishment and wear tolerance. Our cricket square is overseeded with Limagrain’s MM50; a perennial ryegrass mix and an ultra-fine dwarf ryegrass with 25% Clementine, 25% Angelina, 25% Estelle and 25% Gianna.”

Graham has to be smart when considering what fertilisers to use, with pupils being out on the fields all the time, which also reduces



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Getting Personal

Graham Kitley - his best advice is something we should all remember!

Who are you? Graham Kitley - Head of Grounds at Hazlegrove Preparatory School.

Family status. Engaged.

Who's your hero and why? Peter Schmeichel. I am a massive United fan, and growing up, he was simply the best.

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

Working at Hazlegrove and matchday grounds staff at Bournemouth for a couple of Premier League games.

If your younger self saw you now, what would he think? Most probably; wow, you are bald.

Which famous people wind you up? Jamie Carragher, Graeme Souness and Phil Thompson.

What job would you love, other than your own? I actually don't think I would want to do another job. Although, I guess being part of the grounds team at the SCG would be something special.

What was the most embarrassing moment in your life? I have had a few, but being a drunk teenager and having your dad come pick you up was not great for the street cred.

What is your favourite film? That's a tough one; either Forrest Gump or Top Gun.

What scares you? Snakes and rats.

What would your autobiography be called... and who would play you in the film? Butterfingers with Jason Statham.

What is your favourite sport? Football and cricket equally.

What would you cast into Room 101? Liverpool FC ha-ha.

Which historical time and place would you most like to visit? Titanic setting sail from Southampton docks.



Do you have a lifetime ambition? To see more places around the world such as Africa, America and New Zealand.

Which three people, living or dead, would you invite to a dinner party? Sir Alex Ferguson, the Queen and Winston Churchill.

What's the best advice you have ever been given? Never write an email reply in anger ... once it's sent, that's it!

What's your favourite smell? Cut grass.

Which three albums would you take to a desert island? Phil Collins, Oasis and The 1975.

What's the daftest work-related question you have ever been asked? Is that grass real? ... whilst I was stood with a mower.

What's your favourite piece of kit? The Allett C34E.

What three words would you use to describe yourself? Passionate, loyal and sporty.

What is the single most useful thing you could tell a 16-year-old groundsman? To work hard, ask as many questions as you can and to take as much training as you can get.

What talent would you like to have? To be a bit more academically able ha-ha.

What law/legislation would you like to see introduced? Not sure on that one, but probably something to do with how to get younger people involved in a grounds career.



the number of times he can get out and cut. "I always look for a feed with a slow-release element, which will give a nice colour and does not have to be watered in immediately after application, and my preferred product in summer, is ICL's Pro Turf. This autumn, I have tried the Evolution range from Agrovista Amenity, which has also worked well. Luckily, our grounds have healthy nutrient levels, so we don't need to tailor a feed to counteract this."

Fortunately, the site does not suffer from much disease other than a little red thread however, because the school is situated in the countryside, a variety of animals often cause damage to the playing surfaces. "Rabbits

are a big problem and they scratch about on the greens sometimes, so we fence them off if the digging gets too bad. Foxes and badgers are also present, but they don't cause as many issues. On the other hand, worms are my biggest problem and have been a real headache for the past two years. It has been a real battle of trying different new products, none of which have really worked for us. I appreciate other groundsman have had good success, but I think it depends on where you are and the soil types."

Graham looks after the grounds budget which covers everything aside from salaries. "I have to put a capital expenditure report forward and justify why I need





We have undertaken a vast amount of aeration which has had a positive effect on root growth and we have had some positive feedback recently about the pace, bounce and carry of the ball

something, then the governors decide. I have been fortunate along the way and have had backing on many larger purchases that are outside my budget.”

The machinery budget for the year generally determines how Graham purchases new or additional equipment, which is done through local dealers and/or direct. “We have purchased some great second hand or ex-demo kit. I try to keep smaller pieces, such as hand mowers, refreshed regularly, but the larger equipment is on an as-required basis. We look after the

kit as best as possible to enhance its life span; annual servicing, regular cleaning and maintenance checks help.”

“You could say, at times, I’m loyal to one manufacturer, but ultimately, I want the best kit and what feels right for the team using it. Not all equipment from one manufacturer suits our site, so that has a bearing on some of my purchases.”

Presentation to both Graham and the school is everything. “Alongside my team, I aim to make first impressions count as the grounds are the first thing any visitor, parent

and pupil see on their arrival. As a result, it’s important, for not only the lawns and playing surfaces to look their best, but also my staff and the machinery.”

The King’s Bruton Foundation comprises two schools - King’s Bruton and Hazlegrove where Graham oversees a team at each, managed by two deputies. Keeping Hazlegrove look its best all year round are; Frankie Vass, twenty-five, who started as an apprentice and is now a fully qualified groundsman, plus Will Boucher, who joined the team from Somerset County Cricket



Left: Will Boucher, Middle: Graham Kitley and Right: Frankie Vass



Club; Will is currently studying for his Level 2 in Sports Turf. Graham commented: "Through our maintenance contract with Verde Recreo, we have additional help four times a year and they undertake a deep brush and clean, whilst Ecosol Turfcare come in to deep drill our cricket squares."

Like many schools up and down the country, Covid-19 brought about many changes and problems that grounds managers had to deal with and adapt to. Graham commented: "We have been affected in all sorts of ways and budgets were cut or frozen at times whilst in lockdown. Some staff have been made redundant and the rest were furloughed at times. When staff have been on site, we had staggered starts and break times and have incorporated a lot of lone working to keep staff socially distanced. We also adopted a one-way system around the school and closed certain areas completely. Also, with windows and doors open to allow airflow in

the classrooms, noise from the machinery has been an issue. We have also found that pupils have spent more time outside, meaning the grass areas were used for longer into autumn and winter, which obviously had a knock-on effect with wear and tear."

As the light at the end of a long tunnel gets ever closer, I asked Graham if he has been affected both personally and at work? "Luckily, I have worked all through this awful time. However, it has certainly been challenging; to go from a team of four to just myself at times, as the rest of my team were furloughed when the school has been in lockdown. When you set high standards, it is tough not to get around to do everything you would normally do and not to the standards you usually set! Spreading myself thinly has just about kept a lid on things and it has kept me fit and occupied my mind at the same time. On a personal level, not being able to play sport has been difficult, but I



Trying to find qualified staff is becoming harder, and salaries are not the best throughout the industry. I have heard about people leaving our sector to work in factories so they can earn more money





Putting green



I have received some great advice from my local reps, who are now good friends, and I take a lot of inspiration from the quality pitches I see every week on TV, produced by my fellow professionals

realise I just have to be thankful for what I have got. Many other people have not been so fortunate to continue working, or even worse, have been made redundant and even lost loved ones.”

“One big positive, that has arisen during the current situation, is that it has brought out the best in some people - especially my colleague, Frankie. He has really stepped up in difficult circumstances and worked his socks off, taking on more responsibility

and more jobs that he may not have done before. He is using his initiative to work out problems on his own and working harder and, at times, for longer than the working day. Nothing is ever too much trouble and people like him are hard to find.”

“How we raise the profile of the industry and encourage people like Frankie to join is a big question. However, like with most things these days, we all connect and view the outside world through social media.

Using this platform is probably the best way to interact with the next generation. It is a long time since I left school, but there certainly was not a pathway back then (that I can recall). Maybe, when elite sport is televised, an emphasis on the grounds could be added in to explain to spectators and viewers what work is involved?”

Graham’s career started in the sports turf industry when he was a teenager. “I started off by helping out on my local cricket ground,

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before becoming an apprentice gardener when I left school - attending college one day a week. I then moved to a private hotel that offered a small amount of sports turf mixed in with my gardening. From there, I moved to Warminster School as Head Gardener, but also helped on the grounds. During this time, I took my Level 2 in Sports Turf and realised that was the direction I wanted to take. Eventually, I became grounds manager and then moved to my current position at Hazlegrove Preparatory School and I have recently been appointed as Director of Grounds for both Kings Bruton and Hazlegrove.”

No one person has inspired Graham throughout his career so far, but he has had a lot of help along the way. “I have received some great advice from my local reps, who are now good friends of mine, and I take a lot of inspiration from the quality pitches I see every week on TV, produced by my fellow professionals. Comparing those pitches to the state of some of the ones I was playing on as an amateur has motivated me to do my

best and achieve the best.”

Graham feels that our industry is struggling in many ways. “From what I see and read on social media and in Pitchcare magazine we are all struggling. Trying to find qualified staff is becoming harder, and salaries are not the best throughout the industry. I have heard about people leaving our sector to work in factories so they can earn more money. New machinery is costly, and second hand seems to be what people can afford. I think there is an enormous gulf between the big pro clubs and the rest when it comes to budgets, staffing and salaries.”



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Melvin Sports Complex

Grounds for investment



Even though sporting areas have been closed up for months thanks to Covid-19 regulations, the maintenance crews are still hard at work ensuring facilities are kept in good condition. Chris McCullough talks to Grounds maintenance Team Leader **Warren Knobbs** to discover what is going on behind the scenes at the Melvin Sports Complex in County Tyrone

Leisure & Sports Centres across the UK are amongst the various sporting arenas that have become casualties of the ongoing Covid-19 era, having been forced to close their doors for months now.

Always busy, these centres are real hubs of sporting activities serving the general public in the local areas and have been sorely missed by adults and children alike.

Based in Strabane in County Tyrone, Northern Ireland, the Melvin Sports Complex offers a wide range of facilities, including a new multisport 3G pitch for rugby, football and GAA.

This particular leisure centre is owned by the local Derry City and Strabane District Council and is also home to a number of grass pitches and an athletics track. The indoor provision includes a soft play area, a four court sports hall plus range of activity rooms.

The Felix McCrossan 3G pitch was built to replace an older 2G surface and an existing grass pitch on the site. Completed in 2018 and officially named in 2019, the 3G facility was constructed to a standard that would meet the requirements to host competitive games in football, GAA and rugby.

The standard had to meet World Rugby and FIFA quality accreditations. A strict maintenance scheme was subsequently drawn up to ensure that these accreditations are retained.

The layout of the pitch can accommodate two full size football pitches, one full size GAA pitch or one rugby pitch, with a quick turnaround time to set up each of the pitches.

Council Schedule

January

Weekly lining 38 pitches
Slitting surface aeration fortnightly
Strimming posts and inspection of posts/hooks monthly
Divoting pitches weekly
Rolling of pitches as required
Cut pitches as required with small mower - grass no higher than 4cm

February

Weekly lining 38 pitches
Slitting surface aeration fortnightly
Strimming posts and inspection of posts/hooks monthly
Divoting pitches weekly
Rolling of pitches as required
Cut pitches as required with small mower - grass no higher than 4cm

March

Weekly lining 38 pitches
Slitting surface aeration fortnightly
Strimming posts and inspection of posts/hooks monthly
Divoting pitches weekly
Fertilising pitches - 8 x 25kg bags per pitch - Spring/Summer feed
Cut pitches weekly depending on weather conditions

April

Cut pitches and amenity grass weekly
Verti-drain all pitches - deep aeration
Deep seed all pitches
Line all pitches
Strimming posts and inspection of posts/hooks monthly
Slitting surface aeration fortnightly
Spray all pitches with selective weed killer
Divoting pitches weekly

May

Deep seed all pitches 4 x 25kgs of seed per pitch
Cut pitches and amenity grass weekly
Strimming posts and inspection of posts/hooks monthly
End of season renovations - turfing/sowing out/rotovating goal mouths
Line all pitches
Slitting surface aeration fortnightly
Divoting pitches weekly
5 sand based pitches - fertilise

June

End of season renovations - turfing/sowing out/rotovating goal mouths
Take down some posts to protect surfaces
Cut pitches and amenity grass weekly
Strimming posts and inspection of posts/hooks monthly
Topdressing all pitches - 60 tonne of sand per pitch
Line all pitches

July

Cut pitches and amenity grass weekly
Strimming posts and inspection of posts/hooks monthly
Fertilising pitches - 8 x 25kg bags per pitch - spring/summer feed
Re-mark all senior pitches for Foyle Cup
Foyle Cup Week - cut pitches x 2/line x 2
Renovation of pitches with turf - pitches not used in the Foyle Cup
Put posts back up
Water turf - weather dependent

August

Cut pitches and amenity grass weekly
Strimming posts and inspection of posts/hooks monthly
Line all pitches
Divot all pitches, check goalmouths for damage/bare patches and repair

September

Cut pitches and amenity grass weekly
Strimming posts and inspection of posts/hooks monthly
Line all pitches
Divot all pitches and check goalmouths for damage
Turf goalmouths, repair bare patches
Slitting surface aeration fortnightly verti-drain pitches

October

Cut pitches if grass is no longer than 4cms high
Divot pitches weekly
Light rolling of pitches if required
Strimming posts and inspection of posts/hooks monthly
Fertilising pitches - 8 x 25kg bags per pitch - winter feed
Slitting surface aeration fortnightly
Blow leaves off pitches
Turf goalmouths, repair bare patches
Line all pitches

November

Line all pitches
Strimming posts and inspection of posts/hooks monthly
Slitting surface aeration fortnightly
Divot pitches weekly
Blow leaves off pitches
Light rolling of pitches if required
Cut pitches if grass is no longer than 4cms high

December

Line all pitches
Strimming posts and inspection of posts/hooks monthly
Slitting surface aeration fortnightly
Divot pitches weekly
Blow leaves off pitches
Light rolling of pitches if required
Cut pitches if grass is no longer than 4cms high



This project was jointly funded by the Northern Ireland Executive Department for Communities and Derry City and Strabane District Council.

When it was open and running, the facility was an overwhelming success with all sports utilising the 3G pitch for both training and competitive fixtures as well as recreational and community use. The modern surface enables the maximisation of the facility with much less maintenance requirements than the pre-existing pitches. This, in turn, meant that the playing hours that the facility could offer had been greatly increased, prior to the Covid-19 lockdown regulations that forced its closure.

Investing significantly in the facility is just the first step for the council. Keeping the surface in the best condition requires a joint approach from the management team of Melvin Sports Complex and the council's grounds maintenance team. Maintenance is normally scheduled to be carried out at times when the demand is low and in line with the 3G manufacturer's guidance. This ensures that downtime is kept to a minimum and that the surface is always in excellent condition.

In these unprecedented times when all the leisure centres are closed the groundcare teams still have to maintain the facilities, and the man in charge of looking after that maintenance is Warren Knobbs, who is the grounds maintenance crew leader.

Warren said: "I'm now eighteen years with the council looking after the various sports grounds including Melvin Sports Complex. Previously, I worked on a golf course and had already obtained my greenkeeper qualifications levels 1, 2 and 3."

Warren reports to his manager to discuss the budgets and requirements to upkeep the facilities and works alongside two others. Between the three of them, they have almost thirty years experience.

"I work alongside Liam Brolly and Nigel Gilchrist, both of whom have five years service in pitch work," said Warren. "The team have worked considerably longer in a general grounds maintenance capacity though."

"We carry out most of the work ourselves, but do call in contractors when required to carry out supplementary works," he added.

All staff in the team are fully trained and



expected to be able to carry out all and any duty requested and, collectively, they take great pride in their work.

Warren said: "We take our job very seriously and all aspects of maintenance are geared towards the pitches looking and operating to the highest standard possible."

"When it comes to the cutting of the grass surfaces, we have noticed that climate change has impacted the grass growing season. The grass is now growing in February, but that also means the weeds are growing quicker too," he said.

There are a number of new projects planned at the Melvin Sports Complex and some have already been completed.

"There is a redevelopment of an existing grass pitch with athletics facility planned,"

said Warren. "A new stand, toilets and changing room facilities are being installed."

"Over the more recent years, the introduction of the 3G pitch has been a major development at this site."

The council has its own Health and Safety department but the staff are also kept regularly trained, undertaking various courses as seen appropriate.

When it comes to machinery, Warren and his team have access to the normal machinery portfolio, including tractors, five gang mower, spiker, verti-drain, fertiliser spreader, boom sprayer, linemarkers and a range of hand tools.

Machinery is normally purchased via a council tender policy which doesn't necessarily stick to the same brands, just

the best deal.

Warren said: "Any new purchases are sourced via council procurement. We don't tend to stay loyal to any one brand in particular. I would say the verti-drain has been the piece of equipment that has helped us the most."

"All the machine servicing is carried out in-house and, if I had a wishlist, it would stress we need some more updated machinery."

"The ecology and environment is also very important at our sites and we have several Green Infrastructure initiatives throughout the council area," he added.

Warren agreed that the groundcare industry was undervalued and more needed to be done, perhaps by using social media, to improve it.



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Ealing Council

Greener Ealing

July 2020 signalled a new era for Ealing Council grounds maintenance team. After twenty-five years of working with outside contractors, the decision was made to form a local authority trading company in the shape of Greener Ealing Ltd (GEL) to reinstall an emphasis on green space and waste management in the borough. Blair Ferguson reports



Grounds Maintenance
Supervisor John Carpenter



Contract Planning Officer Brad Decker

In February 2021, Ealing Council had been operating as the new regime for seven months, and already the changes are apparent, both aesthetically and within the organisation.

Between them, Grounds Maintenance Supervisor for GEL, John Carpenter, and Contract Planning Officer Brad Decker, have fifty-five years of experience, dating back to 1983 when John started as an apprentice on the grounds team. They experienced first-hand the shift to contractors and the problems it has created but, more importantly, they will be a significant part of the solution.

Minutes into our interview, it is clear that both John and Brad are very passionate about what they do and what they can

achieve with GEL. Rather than lamenting the past, their joint focus concentrates on getting the best out of a department that has been on the periphery for over two decades.

Brad explains: "I think the savings Ealing have had to make over the last decade put pressure on our contractors and us, and you have to keep trying to find money and keep squeezing the contract, and eventually, you don't have guys out there cleaning the streets to the spec that the public expects. And there were fly-tips all over the borough because you have to charge for people to bring their waste. Things like that have a knock-on effect. Instead of just getting the job done and everything looking good, you start cutting costs, and we have pressures on us when we have to find another one



hundred thousand pounds in savings. So you do things like reduce weekly cleaning from once a week to once every six weeks and things like that. All those things have a gradual knock-on effect, so I think the public had gotten a bit fed up with it, the council were not happy with it and decided it was best to form their own company that they could have a bit more control over.”

“As John said, when he started, he was a council employee. Then, in the mid-nineties, the work went to outside contractors. So everyone working for the council got moved over. We had a succession of outside contractors, up until last year, for twenty-five years, and it was really getting to the point where it was becoming unsustainable from the council’s point of view.”

“We weren’t getting what we were hoping to get out of the payments, and the big push really in these contracts is with waste. The contracts were together, i.e. all lumped so it was street collection, bin collection, recycling, and all that part of the contract is quite a bit of money. Then you have grounds maintenance, which has always been a side issue for most of those contract managers because they come from a waste background. A lot of them don’t understand the complexities of grounds maintenance and the sensitivity of doing things at the right time.”

John adds: “Even the guys on the ground were getting frustrated with how things were going because they knew they could give a better performance; they knew they could



Even the guys on the ground were getting frustrated with how things were going because they knew they could give a better performance



As a contractor, you're getting pushed to finish by a certain time and not a certain quality. As long as you can do a job 'good enough' and the client says yeah, that will do, then it ticks the box. Now we say, let's stay here and get this right

provide a better surface, but they weren't being allowed to. Partly because they were being told exactly what you do here and exactly what you do there, and it was frustrating for them because they know we used to be doing this at this time of year or we need to finish the job off by doing this. But it was, no let's move on to the next bit. As a supervisor who started on local authority as a contractor and now going back, I hope we can get partway back to how we used to work. Doing the work when it needs it, not because you're trying to tick a box on your contractor's list, you're doing it because it needs doing and you're doing it at the right time. I believe it will happen, but it will take some time."

"As a contractor, you're getting pushed to finish by a certain time and not a certain quality. As long as you can do a job 'good enough' and the client says yeah, that will do, then it ticks the box. Now we say, let's stay here and get this right, we're being encouraged to operate that way by GEL Management as well, so even our upper management is starting to take that approach. Go out, do the job once and do it properly."

Brad continues: "I think it's a great thing. As we're on our new learning curve, there's always going to be things that come up that we weren't ready for, but we knew that was going to be the case and knew it was going to be about a year to get everything the way we wanted it on both sides. As John said, the guys don't feel pressured to get a job done. My philosophy and John's is the same, and it has always been, let's do the job right and move onto the next one, not just knock it out



John Carpenter (left) and Brad Decker

to get to the next one because you're under pressure."

"We'd rather deliver the best we can for the public, and that was the reason for changing it into a local authority trading company in the first place - to try and deliver a service for the public, not just as a private contractor. The goal is to make things better as we go along."

No one at GEL could have foreseen the long-lasting impact of COVID and its effect on amateur sport and the pressure it would put on parks. For many in the borough, going to a park is one of a very limited number of options for enjoying time outside during lockdowns, and this was reflected in the number of people using them, with the total

almost quadruple the normal amount.

Waste collection became the central issue during this time, but being ready for sport to return was another consideration always waiting in the background. Having to prepare for a last-minute cricket season in 2020 highlighted how important having their own machinery was, as well as bringing the issue of a lack of skilled workers to the surface.

A large part of the improvements on the sports side will come through new machinery and the gradual addition of skilled staff. John estimates that only thirty percent of the seventy-four strong grounds maintenance team are classed as skilled workers. This is compared to seventy percent being skilled during his early years when three hundred



Walpole Park where over 9,000 trees were planted

© Kate Jennings



One of Rectory Park's new 3G pitches

and seventy staff were employed.

Building on both these areas is crucial for the success of this project going forward, especially with fifteen sports sites hosting football, Gaelic football, rugby, bowls and cricket, as well as meadows, nature conservation sites and other green areas around the borough. Having machinery that can be used to prepare multiple surfaces is a must with a team of four working on sports. Still, with GEL investing in their own machinery and forming new partnerships, the quality is quickly improving.

"Having our own kit has already been a massive benefit with the stopping and starting of sport during Covid," Brad begins. "Last year's cricket decision took us completely by surprise when they wanted to start in June. We had to say it's going to take us at least three weeks to get it ready, and you've only given us a week's notice. So we were caught short with cricket, and we got it ready for maybe the last weekend in June, and then they basically had an eight-week season until the first week in September."

"We went right out to do the

It was the first time we were able to knock out a really nice reinstatement without calling any outside contractors in. And it's having that machinery that's important going forward

reinstatement, and luckily with the semi-in-house company we've formed, we had bought a lot of nice kit, and it was the first time we were able to knock out a really nice reinstatement without calling any outside contractors in. And it's having that machinery that's important going forward."

Brad explains: "One thing we were lucky enough to do was lease a section of Rectory Park to West Middlesex Football Association, and they built two full-size 3G pitches, and they've made that their headquarters because they were moving out of the park

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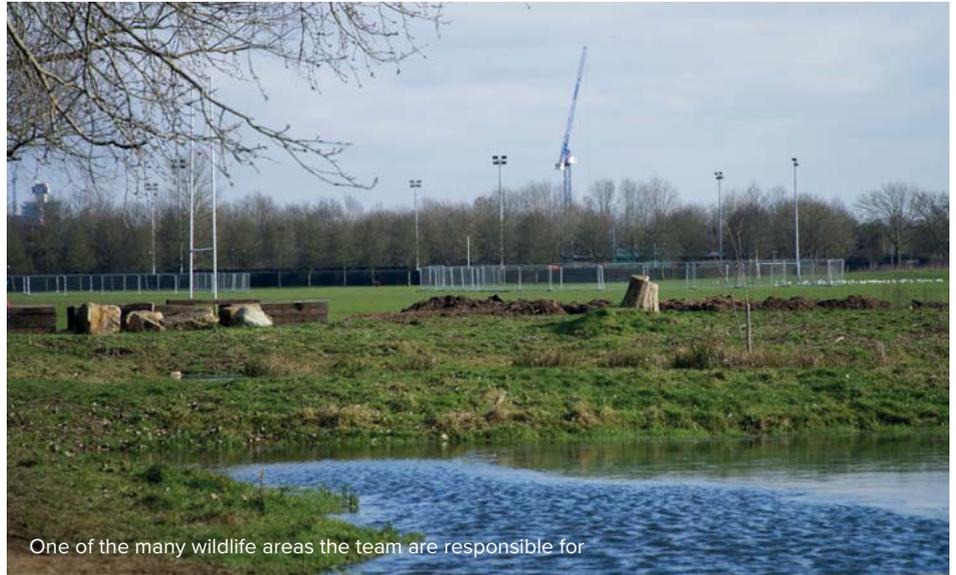
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We were able to buy some nice kit using that grant for sports and then putting the new contract together, we got a couple more tractors and a few other bits as well



One of the many wildlife areas the team are responsible for



A Ring-necked Parakeet, a common sight on Ealing Council land

they used in South London.”

“They’ve leased that space off us, and that has brought in all of the youth football to that location and, in doing so, they gave us a £100,000 grant to buy a tractor, slitter and verti-drain. That was all kit that we didn’t have, and that grant meant we didn’t need to buy that on the contract, so we were able to buy some nice kit using that grant for sports and then putting the new contract together, we got a couple more tractors and a few other bits as well.”

“It’s a combination of being able to cover the bigger areas but also the different types of grass cutting you can get out of one machine. So, rather than having cylinders that can only do cricket boundaries or your football pitches, we’ve got machines like the three wide-area Majors TD1600s that can take it down to a cricket boundary, or we can go and cut a meadow which is seventy centimetres plus high with that one bit of kit. Your driver can go out one day, and he can do three or four different types of cut just by adjusting the height - and get a good finish as well.”

“GEL has invested in some good new equipment, and that is part of enabling us to

take those skills back. Now, it’s about us giving people skills that have possibly been here for fifteen years but never had the experience of using the verti-drain, sand slitting or anything like that.”

“The sad thing is we’ve lost the percentage of skilled workers. The number of unskilled workers on grounds maintenance now is around seventy percent, whereas before that would have only been thirty percent. I’ve recently lost two guys that ran sports, and one of them had done nearly fifty years service, so he knew the job inside out, and now I’m down to one person and myself who can mark out a running track, for example. Whereas, years ago, you’d look at a board and say I’ve got fifteen guys that can do that. Operationally, trying to figure out what is going to happen can be difficult because you are falling back to the same people. Unfortunately, the older guys within the group are still doing the major works because the younger ones haven’t yet got the skills.”

“We saw it coming. About fifteen years ago, you see it isn’t going in the right direction, and then suddenly, when it happens, you think you should have done



Trying to get the contractor interested in apprentice schemes for grounds maintenance when the bigger money is on the contract’s waste management side is hard



Signage at Perivale Park



An area of wetland which still requires management

something about that earlier. But trying to get the contractor interested in apprentice schemes for grounds maintenance when, as Brad said, the bigger money is on the contract's waste management side is hard. They overlooked the grounds maintenance side because we have five percent of the overall contract. I think the way to describe it over the last fifteen years is we've coped, and that's come from the guys on the ground because they are the ones that care about it.

Over the years, we've felt like the contractors have held us back; we know what we should be doing, and we know what we can do, but we just weren't being allowed to do it."

Brad interjects: "If we can get some good quality people on board through apprenticeship schemes who want to learn - whilst we still have those last few people that can do most jobs - they can learn from some of those guys before they are gone."

John continues: "In coordination with

//

If we can get some good quality people on board through apprenticeship schemes who want to learn - whilst we still have those last few people that can do most jobs - they can learn from some of those guys

Ealing, GEL are setting up new apprenticeship schemes, so we are trying to sign up people. We've got one young lad who worked at a golf course for two and a half years, had a year out and came to us with a bit of sports knowledge and an NVQ Level 2. So we're trying to get him a level 3, but trying to find a specific course to cover just sports is quite hard. We've got a local group called Capel Manor College, and they cover horticultural training, including sports,

"We can do all the various grass heights with just one machine."

John Carpenter, Grounds Maintenance Supervisor,
London Borough of Ealing



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One of the aims with GEL is to hopefully be able to go out and find work with schools and other sports clubs once we have all the kit we need and get some people trained up



One of Ealing's new Major TDR mowers - brought in to multi-task

so they are trying to set-up a course, and we're hoping to upskill everyone on the team."

"There are courses out there, but they are very specific, so it might be to maintain a bowling green or cut a wicket, and they are quite short courses as well, about a week-long, so it's more of a refresher. We really want to cover the whole spectrum of sports and horticulture at one time. It would be nice to get back to the old style apprenticeship where you did all your shrubs, grass cutting and maintenance, sports maintenance, and trees all in one apprenticeship. But whether we get back to that, I don't know because everything has become so specialised."

Seven months in, GEL's short-term objectives are being met inside and outside of the company. Working reactively without constant time pressure is paying off, and the benefits of working that way will become more evident as time goes on.

But, not ones to settle with the progress they've made, both John and Brad are

already looking two or three steps ahead to what GEL can offer going forward.

"One of the aims with GEL is to hopefully be able to go out and find work with schools and other sports clubs once we have all the kit we need and get some people trained up," Brad explains.

"We had quite a few schools, but we lost the bigger ones that have more sports pitches over the years because we weren't able to deliver the service they wanted, but hopefully, we will be getting there shortly."

John continues: "It's trying to find little bits of work as GEL to create extra funding for us rather than trying to go to Brad for everything all the time. But hopefully, the ultimate is to take the schools back on and maybe even go outside the borough into other boroughs where they struggle as well."

"We have been getting contractors in to do end of season football renovations, but it would be good if we could do our own and then say we've got the scope to go into Hounslow to do some of their pitches. It's a

bit more ownership for the guys as well. If they feel like they own their round or that bit of work, then suddenly so and so over the road has heard about our cricket renovations and they've asked us to do theirs next year."

"I don't think we will get to a place where we are happy, because I think you always want to improve. The place to be is one hundred percent of your staff are skilled. You're never going to do that because you're always going to have a turnover of staff, but if we can get back to seventy percent or higher, then that will be going in the right direction."



It's a bit more ownership for the guys as well. If they feel like they own their round or that bit of work, then suddenly so and so over the road has heard about our cricket renovations and they've asked us to do theirs next year



Those of a certain vintage will remember Nicky Hopkins, a session musician who toured extensively with the Rolling Stones until his untimely death in 1994. He also worked with The Beatles (both collectively and solo) as well as The Who, Rod Stewart, Elton John and many more

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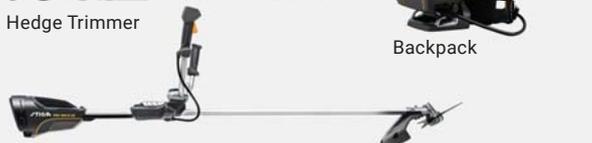
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Backpack



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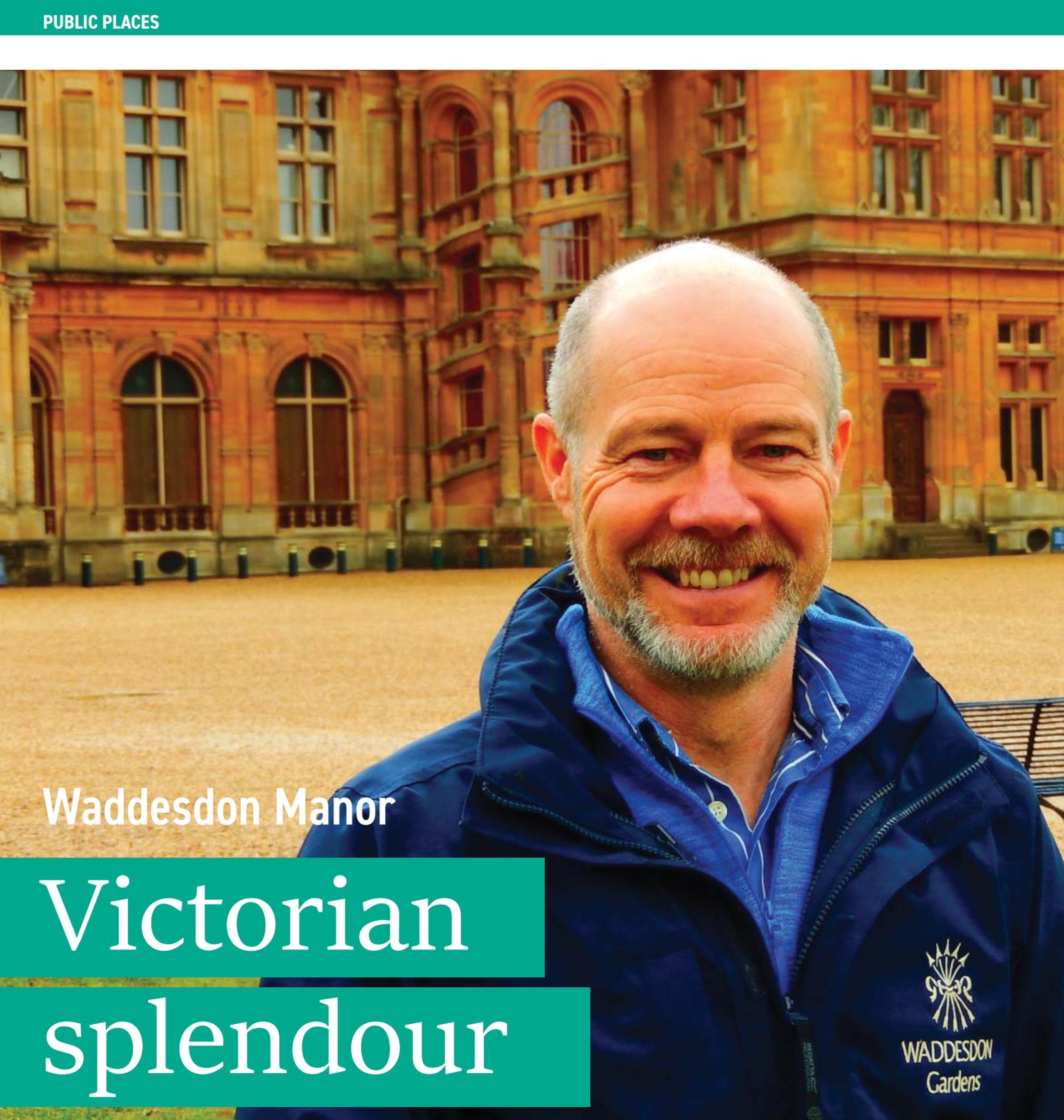
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Waddesdon Manor

Victorian splendour

Waddesdon Manor is a National Trust property in Buckinghamshire - renowned for its Grade I listed house and outstanding Victorian gardens. Last year, Peter Driver paid a socially-distanced visit to speak to Head of Gardens **Mike Buffin**

Located in the Vale of Aylesbury, seven miles west of Aylesbury, the house was built in the Neo-Renaissance style of a French château between 1874 and 1889 for Baron Ferdinand de Rothschild. It was used as a weekend residence for grand entertaining and as a setting for his collection of various artworks.

The last member of the Rothschild family to own Waddesdon was James de Rothschild (1878-1957). Upon his death, he bequeathed it to the National Trust and it

has been managed ever since by a family charity, now the Rothschild Foundation. It is one of the National Trust's most visited properties, with over 466,000 visitors in 2018, and won Visit England's Large Visitor Attraction of the Year in 2017.

The land was purchased in 1874 by Baron Ferdinand de Rothschild. Initially, it was a bare hill with a small farm building perched at the top, so to build the great house, three metres of soil was removed to create a plateau. This involved teams of local labourers digging and removing the



Head of Gardens Mike Buffin



**We are renowned for our magnificent floral displays.
We have around 466,000 visitors each year,
so the pressure is on us to produce something
really special and, hopefully, we do that**



Tulips in the Aviary garden © Mike Buffin

spoil to reshape the summit of the hill. They also had to construct the carriageways and roads around the hill to transport stone and building materials to a bare hilltop six miles from the nearest railway line.

The stone for the house, which came from Bath, and most of the bricks, which came from all parts of the country, were conveyed on a temporary steam tram from the railway direct to the foot of the hill, then the trucks were drawn up on rails by a cable engine. Other materials for the building, as well as for the farmsteads, cottages and lodges, and

the trees and the shrubs, had to be carted some miles by road.

The foundation stone was laid in 1877 and, six years later, the land had been transformed into a beautiful landscape by planting mature trees and bringing in the water supply from Aylesbury.

Since then, successive members of the Rothschild family have taken turns to enhance and nurture the aesthetics and conservational value of the estate. Baron Ferdinand and his sister, known as Miss Alice, undertook extensive planting and

landscaping before James de Rothschild added a golf course and stud. More recently, the current Lord Rothschild and his daughter Beth have recreated major features, such as the Millennium Avenue of trees linking the Manor with nearby Upper Winchendon.

By purchasing the adjoining land, the estate has grown from the original 2,700 acres in 1874 to 6,000 acres in 2011. It is managed by a team of foresters and farmers. Whilst the majority of the land is farmed 'in-hand' by the estate, five tenant farmers play an important role in its tenure.



Parterre at sunrise. Photo: Chris Lacey © National Trust

Mike Buffin, AH RHS, Head of Gardens

Mike has an impressive CV and has been a National Trust employee for more than 16 years. After completing a National Certificate in Horticulture and Amenity Horticulture at Cannington College in 1987, he spent the next three years studying at the Royal Botanic Garden in Edinburgh where he gained a Diploma in Horticulture.

In July 1990, he crossed the Atlantic to take up a position as a Tree Care Consultant at The Morris Arboretum of the University of Pennsylvania. Just over a year later he returned to the UK as Curator at The Sir Harold Hillier Gardens in Romsey, Hampshire, where he stayed for the next eleven years.

He joined the National Trust in 2003, as Gardens Advisor, providing advice and guidance at their properties across London and south east of England. In January 2018, he was appointed to his current role at Waddesdon, where he is seconded to the Rothschild Foundation and has (until last year) led a team of fourteen full-time gardeners and four students on one-year assignments.

From October 2014 until April 2018, he was Chairman of Plant Heritage - the world's leading garden plant conservation charity. Its mission is to encourage the conservation of cultivated plants in the British Isles, supporting and publishing research into these plants, their origins, their historical and cultural importance and their environments. He is also the author of two books: *The Complete Guide to Planting and Growing Trees* and *The Illustrated Guide to Garden Trees*.

The in-hand operation covers 3,200 acres of arable land and 800 acres of parkland.

The woodlands are managed under a 10-year Forestry Commission plan and significant efforts have improved the landscape as an amenity. The latest project was the creation of a 60-acre Diamond Jubilee Wood and includes ponds, diverse habitats and a wood to be enjoyed by generations to come. Much of the timber felled on the estate is sold locally and seasoned logs are used in log burners in a number of estate properties.

Screened woodchip above 30mm is used in the biomass boiler at the Estate Yard, whilst any inferior chippings are used by the Gardens department to mulch the kilometre-long footpath to the Manor House or is combined with shredded woody arisings from the gardens and composted for use in the ornamental landscape beds. This symbiotic relationship between the Forestry and Gardens departments is carefully nurtured by the Horticultural Team Leader and Head of Gardens alike, as it forms the key element of Waddesdon's horticultural management strategy, as we

will see later in this article.

Access to the estate is supported on an informal basis through the network of Public Rights of Way and other organised events, such as fundraising horse rides for charities, farm walks for groups including inner city school children or specialist farmers.

While the Rothschild's are known for their world-famous wines, over the last few years Waddesdon has branched out and started producing its own gins and ales in collaboration with local breweries. One of the latest initiatives has been the launch of a specially crafted ale, Shepherd's Gold. This involves a partnership with Chiltern Brewery, the oldest independent brewer in Buckinghamshire.

Spring barley is harvested from the Waddesdon Estate and sent to Chiltern Brewery, where it is malted and brewed to create a unique ale. The brewing process mirrors the age-old techniques of the area and long-established relationships between Chiltern Brewery and local hop merchants to secure the best of each year's harvest.

Mike Buffin is Head of Gardens at Waddesdon and heads a team of fourteen



Recently launched
Shepherd's Gold



Wildflowers are flourishing and this is because of a decision to massively reduce the regular 'in season' mowing

full-time gardeners and four students on one-year assignments. His impressive CV includes working at the Royal Botanical Gardens in Edinburgh, the University of Pennsylvania, the Sir Harold Hillier Gardens and the National Trust. The Gardens department manages over 400 acres at Waddesdon.

"We are renowned for our magnificent floral displays and every spring and summer we change the design of the beds on the

Parterre and on either side of the South Fountain. We have around 466,000 visitors each year, so the pressure is on us to produce something really special and, hopefully, we do that," he said.

"The garden year at Waddesdon begins in January and continues throughout February with the planting of new trees and shrubs as well as general garden maintenance. With the onset of spring and the first flush of new grass, we begin

mowing in earnest and the Parterre comes to life with a bold mix of Victorian splendour and a magnificent flourish of colour with the beds featuring over 50,000 bulbs planted the previous October."

"The Parterre is a French-inspired formal garden made up of a symmetrical pattern of beds set off by formal grass and contained by neat pathways and low clipped hedges. Usually designed to be seen from above, at Waddesdon it can be viewed from the raised

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terrace, the main reception rooms and the bedrooms on the south side of the house. In the centre sits a magnificent fountain, originally made for an Italian palace. The Parterre was restored in 1994 to designs by Beth Rothschild and six years later won the Europa Nostra award, a pan-Europe initiative to recognise outstanding heritage conservation initiatives.

“June is our most frenetic planting time for the gardens team. Following the second bank holiday in May, the team and

volunteers remove the spring display and spend a month planting the bedding plants for the summer display.”

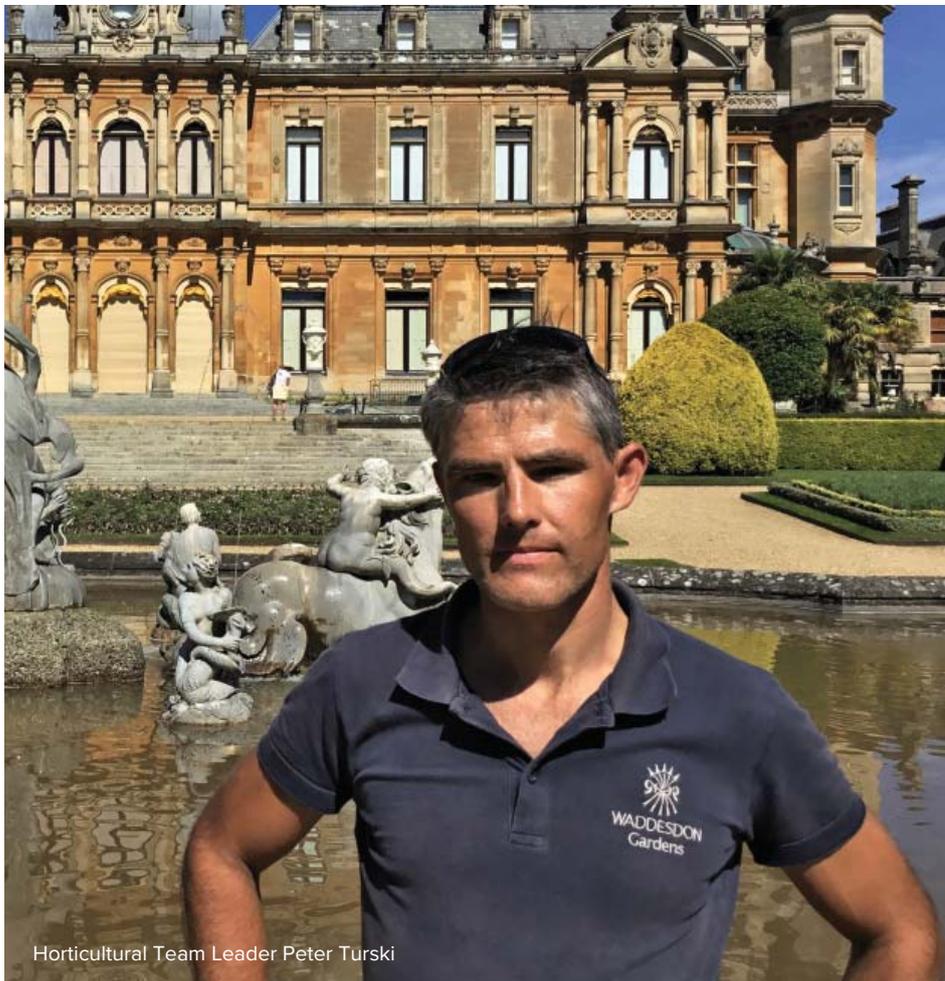
Included in this display is the carpet bed, which is changed every year and features a design taking a reference from an exhibit on display in the main house. An image is taken of the exhibit and sent to a specialist grower, Kernock Park Plants in Cornwall, who turn the image into pixels, with each pixel represented by a single plant.

Once the design is approved, the plants

are then pricked out into 84 trays and grown on to create the overall image. The trays are numbered and stacked onto pallets, which are then delivered and unloaded in the correct sequence to be laid in less than a single day.

Further heightened activity comes in October, when the summer plants are stripped out and the bulbs for the spring display are hand planted in the Parterre. In other parts of the garden more bulb planting takes place. For the first time in 90 years the Tulip Patch was full of meadow tulips, which were machine sown using a specialist planter which slits the grass, creates a furrow beneath the surface into which the bulbs fall, while at the same time applying a fertiliser mix. The Aviary formal bedding featured 32,500 tulip bulbs.

Peter Turski is the Horticultural Team Leader and joined the Waddesdon team in April 2019, having spent 20 years in various roles across the industry. A graduate from the Kew Diploma course, he was the oldest student in his year group when he received his diploma back in 2016. Commenting on the affect that the coronavirus pandemic has had on the gardens at Waddesdon, he said, “Anyone



Horticultural Team Leader Peter Turski



The gardens have been planted with green manures. This is a new way of gardening for us, and long-term, it will be very beneficial for the garden



New Ventrac all-terrain compact tractor



Inevitably, we now have to work smarter and use equipment that is more versatile in order to maintain the high standards that are synonymous with Waddesdon

who visits us frequently might be surprised at the appearance of some areas of the gardens currently. We have been working with a small dedicated team of gardeners since lockdown and have not been able to plant our usual summer bedding displays, which need a large team and close working. Last March, we focused on general maintenance and keeping the trees healthy, so the formal gardens are not as manicured as they'd usually be. It has been such a shame, because there weren't any visitors to see the spring bulb display. However, we have left the bulbs in situ and, hopefully,

they can be enjoyed next year."

"There have been many encouraging conservation benefits from taking this less intensive regime. Wildflowers are flourishing and this is because of a decision to massively reduce the regular 'in season' mowing. We have inherited an approach to both garden and nature conservation working in harmony, which has benefitted many niche wildflower species such as a range of orchids, the showy *Saxifraga granulata* (Meadow saxifrage) and the wide-scale naturalisation of bulb species including crocus and snowdrop."

Wildflower meadow management at Waddesdon is an important practice as it is an integral part of the estate's move towards a more sustainable horticultural and garden management plan. The immediate effect of not maintaining these areas frees up time, saves costs and helps preserve the tree population in two ways, as Peter Turski explains.

"Firstly, by reducing compaction of the tree root zone caused by a ride-on mower," he says, "and secondly, by allowing the uncut vegetation in the root zone area to form a buffering layer against solar heat



Parterre in front of the Manor
Photo: Derek Pelling © National Trust



Preparing the Parterre



and dehydration.

“The medium and long-term benefits of allowing wildflower meadows to develop under planned seasonal maintenance is that of increased ecosystem resilience, which in essence means that a healthy and diverse meadow provides food and a habitat for a range of insects and small mammals. These attracts larger predators such as birds, bats and owls, creating a healthy ecosystem, above and below ground, resulting in a healthier garden where pests are kept in check.”

“At Waddesdon, we are working to the legacy of Miriam Rothschild, who pioneered wildflower meadow restoration many years before its widespread adoption. We have initiated this process by bringing onboard specialist consultant, Charles Flower, who excels in wild flower meadow restoration, and specialist contractor Andy Hawes and family, who have revolutionised most of the meadow management with an impressive array of machinery and implements adapted from large-scale agricultural applications.”



Wildflower meadow management at Waddesdon is an important practice as it is an integral part of the estate’s move towards a more sustainable horticultural





Tulips in the Aviary from April, 2020
© Jo Fells

Coronavirus has severely limited visitor numbers at National Trust properties and it is such a shame that the house, gardens and grounds at Waddesdon have not been as resplendent as in previous years

“With many areas enjoying a less intensive horticultural approach, the formal Parterre and Aviary gardens have been planted with green manures, allowing for deep mulching once the foliage dies back. This is a new way of gardening for us, and long-term, it will be very beneficial for the garden.”

“We locked down at the end of March 2020 with most of the gardens team on furlough, leaving just a core team of four staff. The gardens were back open in June,

but we had but to restructure following an organisation-wide consultancy process following National Trust guidelines, reducing the team to ten and freezing the four student trainee posts.”

“Inevitably, we now have to work smarter and use equipment that is more versatile in order to maintain the high standards that are synonymous with Waddesdon. We were fortunate that towards the end of last year we purchased an all-terrain compact tractor called a Ventrac. It’s a versatile piece of equipment and has numerous attachments. Initially we bought it with a Tough Cut deck to assist sward management on the steeper slopes of the gardens and to maintain the wildflower meadows and steep slopes across the property, but recently added the Aera-vator, Turbo blower and Landscape

rake attachments.”

“We have some heavy footfall across the garden especially at our annual events such as the Christmas Fair, Colourscape in May, Summer Fest in July and Chilli Fest each September. We are one of the National Trust’s most visited properties, which means that the more formal grass areas around the ornamental core of the gardens can become very compacted.”

“The main benefit of the Aera-vator and Overseeder is that it simplifies the whole operation in one pass significantly reducing the time taken to a fraction of what it used to. No soil plugs are generated, so no collection required, and the over seeding attachment works in synchronicity with the aerating implement by dropping seed directly into the fractured surface of

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Rothschild Foundation

The Rothschild Foundation continues the philanthropic tradition of the Rothschild family and their longstanding support of arts and heritage. Central to the Foundation's vision is an ongoing commitment to Waddesdon Manor, the last remaining 19th century Rothschild house open to the public with its collection intact.

Established in 2010, the Foundation evolved from the consolidation of three previous Rothschild charitable trusts. One of these, The Alice Trust, was dedicated to the preservation, protection and improvement of Waddesdon Manor for the benefit of the public.

Taking inspiration from the Rothschild family's symbol displaying five arrows, the work of the Rothschild Foundation falls within five main areas: caring for and promoting Waddesdon Manor; curating and managing an outstanding collection of art, buildings and landscapes; convening discussion and debate; awarding grants to charities working in the fields of art and heritage, education, the environment and social welfare; and undertaking major initiatives within these areas.

Based at nearby Windmill Hill, the Foundation continues the grand tradition of Rothschild architectural patronage in the Vale of Aylesbury. With spectacular views, an old dairy farm has been transformed by cutting-edge architecture, to create a location for the archives of the Waddesdon Rothschilds and space for offices and artistic performances.



Windmill Hill. Photo: Chris Lacey © National Trust

the sward and ensuring good contact with the soil.”

“As you would expect, we have a lot of gravel around the formal areas and this is constantly being pushed to the edges by the passage of visitors. The Landscape rake makes short work of redistributing it across the pathways and other hard landscaped areas.”

“Other initiatives have included recently installed electronic badger fencing and this has proved very effective at preventing the bulbs being eaten and the estates department are currently building a significant composting facility. We are also trialling bio fertilisers using native microbes in leaf litter and bacteria in cow dung.”

The team are also responsible for the grounds at the Flint House, which was featured in the Channel 4 television series

Grand Designs, hosted by Kevin McCloud. Winner of the RIBA House of the Year Award in 2015, the Flint House was commissioned by Lord Rothschild.

In the form of an elongated, stepped wedge, it sits in the heart of the Waddesdon Estate, on a chalk seam that runs from Norfolk to Dover. It was exploring this geology which inspired the architect, Charlotte Skene Catling, to create a building clad in flint which was knapped by hand by Sussex flint-workers from The Flintman Company. The flints are graduated in colour, steely grey at ground level rising to smooth white chalk blocks at the top. Opposite the main building is a similarly stepped, smaller annex, often referred to as baby flint..

The building is now run by the Rothschild Foundation alongside all the other publicly accessible buildings at Waddesdon, including the Manor itself and Windmill Hill, (another contemporary building which houses the Waddesdon Archives).

The coronavirus has severely limited visitor numbers at National Trust properties and it is such a shame that the house, gardens and grounds at Waddesdon have not been as resplendent as in previous years. But rest assured they will bounce back. The dedicated team of gardeners, foresters and volunteers will ensure that.



The Parterre comes to life with a bold mix of Victorian splendour and a magnificent flourish of colour with the beds featuring over 50,000 bulbs



Windmill Hill. Photo: Chris Lacey © National Trust



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A day in the life of a contractor

Pure grafting

Gone are the days when the fairway mower was put in the shed at the beginning of October and then dusted off at the beginning of March. During his twenty-eight years as a contractor in the turfcare industry, **Lee Padwick** at Pure-Sports Turf Management has seen it all and he recently spoke to Kerry Haywood about the many challenges he faces

On leaving school in 1993, Lee started his career as an apprentice greenkeeper at Alresford Golf Club but, previous to that, he used to mow his local cricket outfield for a bottle of coke and packet of crisps - I'm not sure that would be legal today? Fast forward a few years and Lee now looks after two private grass tennis courts, Alresford Town FC (Wessex Premier League) and also used by Southampton Women's Football Club of the FA Women's National League Division One South West (Tier 4), Alresford Town Youth FC, Sparsholt Cricket Club who play in the Southern Premier League Division 1 and Easton & Martyr Worthy Cricket Club,

Hampshire League Division One.

I figured it must be a challenge dealing with the different soil profiles across sites. Lee commented: "It certainly makes for an interesting working week! The tennis courts are a clay soil over chalk profile; one of them was constructed in 1981 but wasn't used for several years from the late 90s to 2010. The cricket club celebrates its 75th anniversary this year. The square was relaid in 1999, to ECB club cricket specification, including drainage; drainage layer and rootzone with a clay content of 25-30%. The outfield is natural chalk downland 60-80mm of soil over chalk. Even though the pitch is situated in a bowl, it drains pretty well after rain. The football pitches are all a mix of profile sand/

soil of approximately 80mm over chalk."

"The main issue is that one of the tennis courts has a limited water supply, therefore maintaining the court during prolonged dry spells, is a challenge. An application of granular wetting agent is made at the beginning of the season and this makes sure that any precipitation that falls is made available to the plant."

Maintenance across the sites somewhat differs. Tennis: "In summer, the courts are double cut and brushed twice per week at 9-12mm, then marked out once per week with a transfer linemarker using Bowgrass Supreme Plus paint. I always do a double linemarking to make sure the lines are bright and bold, which adds to the appearance of



It's frustrating for every groundsman, but especially at grassroots level - where there are limited financial resources. Applying nematodes is simply too expensive and out of reach for grassroots sports, and it begs the question, what will the implications be to sports at this level?



Lee Padwick

the courts. Mowing is undertaken using a John Deere 220B with a Sports Metals brush attachment. During winter: The height of cut is 15mm and mown, as and when growth dictates and conditions allow, with a Dennis FT610 with 5 blade reel or Honda HRH536 with Sports Metal brush attachment."

Cricket: "In summer, the square is mown one-two times per week at 13-16mm using a Dennis FT610 with 5 blade reel or Honda HRH536 with Sports Metal brush attachment. In winter, the height of cut is increased to 16-18mm. The wickets are mown with a John Deere 220B at 4-6mm and I use string lines (rather than a frame) for marking out the cricket creases."

"During summer, the outfield height of cut

is 14-18mm with a Toro Reelmaster 5510-D fairway mower. Winter HOC is 18-22mm, mown with the Toro when conditions allow. Then the outfield is mown with a John Deere mid deck tractor mower."

"I don't maintain the football pitches on a regular basis," Lee continued. "Instead, I work with the volunteer groundsman offering advice and expertise to produce the best surface, with the resources available. However, I am more hands-on before the bigger games, for example; in the lead up to the local derby Southampton Women FC v Southampton FC Women, I worked hand in hand with the groundsman to double brush and mow the pitch prior to the game."

"I sponsor Alresford Town FC - not in a

financial way, but with contributions of my time. This works well for both of us as I get some free exposure around the ground for the Sports Turf Management side of the company. Several visiting teams have commented on the condition of the pitch and the local community are also amazed at the improvements. I cannot take all the credit though - it's very much a team effort between myself and Paddy Walsh, the volunteer groundsman."

Lee recently hired a Toro ProCore 648 to aerate two of the tennis courts, two cricket wickets, four football pitches and three large lawns. "Solid tine aeration was carried out with 13mm tines, 100mm depth at 30-40mm spacing. The football pitches had a



Tennis court renovation



Tennis court - 26 days post renovation



compacted layer at 50mm depth so, at this stage, I just wanted to open the surface and penetrate through that layer. I'll be looking to hire a Verti-Drain for the end of season renovations, to aerate to depth >150mm."

Thatch control is an ongoing task on all the surfaces. Tennis: "For the past two years, I have been managing thatch on one of the tennis courts as combined cultural control of worms and worm casts. After the removal of the chemical controls for worm casts, I set about trying to carry out everything I can culturally to reduce the effects of worm casts. Thatch control is a big part of this."

Cricket: "I would like to reduce the amount of thatch in the cricket outfield. To mine and my father's knowledge (who has been a club member since the mid-1970s), the only maintenance carried out to the outfield has been regular mowing and, throughout this time, the clippings have not been collected. It's remarkable that the thatch layer is only 15-20mm. This may be due to the fact

that no fertiliser has been applied and the outfield is not irrigated; the thatch content has probably been kept to a minimum as conditions allow the natural break down of the organic matter. Last autumn, I carried out a single scarification with a SISIS AR4, to square off the wicket and in-line with the wicket in both directions. This may appear to be a time consuming job but, carried out a few hours at a time over the course of a week, it's surprising how much can be done. With that said, I would like to scarify with a tractor-mounted scarifier this autumn."

"I've always used the Techni Turf Wicket seed (from Agrovista Amenity) for overseeding the cricket pitches and tennis courts, which is 35% Monroe perennial ryegrass, 30% Chardin perennial ryegrass and 35% Dickens perennial ryegrass."

"One of the tennis courts has a limited water supply and is predominately fescue. In October, in an attempt to combat the high wear, I overseeded with a fescue mix



For the past two years, I have been trying to control the number of worms and casts. I am trying to make the soil conditions inhospitable for worms and this has involved adjusting the pH to be slightly more acidic



Easton and Martyr Worthy Cricket Club



Lockdown magic

During lockdown, Lee was asked to mark out a football pitch in a back garden measuring 200m². The owners wanted to surprise their three sons (aged two to seven years old). Lee commented: "This was one of the highlights of the year for me. The look on the boys faces when they saw the football pitch was pure magic."



I must be careful that pH levels stay within the parameter of 5.5-6.5 for optimal growing conditions... but at least I have a plan to work with

through the court and a ryegrass mix on the baselines. I carried out a full renovation; scarification, overseeding and topdressing with 3m³ of Boughton Kettering loam. The court was overseeded twice, once with an Eliet DZC 600 at 25g/m² and, then secondly, with a broadcast - after sarel rolling with a Dennis FT610 cassette. I then applied Headland 4-3-4 + 3MgO at 40g/m². Overseeding was carried out on October 11th, I mowed the court on November 6th;

26 days for germination and establishment (no germination sheets). I must admit that conditions were favourable with consistent above average soil temperatures for that time of year."

"At the moment, the biggest concern is the amount of damage caused by the rooks looking for chafer grubs on the cricket outfield. It's frustrating for every groundsman, but especially at grassroots level where there are limited financial

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Alresford Town Football Club

resources. Applying nematodes is simply too expensive and out of reach for grassroots sports, and it begs the question, what will the implications be to sports at this level? For a game like cricket, where participation

Work history

My apprenticeship started at Alresford Golf Club, Hampshire. I attended Sparsholt College and gained NVQ Level 2 and NVQ Level 3 qualifications in Greenkeeping and Sports Turf Management. I spent ten years at Alresford Golf Club, of which five of those years were in the position of Deputy Head Greenkeeper.

I departed Alresford to take a position at Manly Golf Club, Sydney, Australia. I was a member of an eighteen-man team involved in all aspects of day-to-day course presentation - which culminated in Manly Golf Club staging the Pre-Qualifier for the Ladies Australian Open in 2003.

Upon returning to England, I worked briefly at a championship golf course in Berkshire, before taking up a position as Deputy Head Greenkeeper at Hockley Golf Club.

In 2009, I launched my own business, Pure-Lawns - specialising in grass tennis court maintenance.

From May 2018 to February 2019, I was Head Greenkeeper at Avington Park Golf Course, a 9 hole parkland course.

I worked for Surrey County Cricket Club from March 2019 to July 2019, at which time I resumed Pure-Lawns.

Due to the increased number of sports ground enquiries, I decided to launch Pure-Sports Turf Management in July 2020. I will run Pure-Sports Turf Management alongside Pure-Lawns.

“For the past two years, I have been trying to control the number of worms and casts on one of my tennis courts. This has included more cultural methods including reducing thatch and limiting the amount of nitrogen and water. I am trying to make the soil conditions inhospitable for worms and this has involved adjusting the pH to be slightly more acidic. I purchased a relatively cheap (£35) pH tester from Amazon. Although this is fairly cheap (compared to more professional models), at least it gives an indicator of what the pH is in the top 10mm of soil. When I started to monitor and change the pH, the court was reading 7.0 and it is now at 6.5. This doesn't seem a big change, but the pH scale is logarithmic; meaning a pH of 6.0 is ten times more acidic than a pH of 7.0. Marginal gains!”

“I recently read two Pitchcare articles with interest featuring The Edgbaston

Priory Club. One article mentioned about pH amendment and also the application of sulphur chips. My regime from September to March/April is as follows; monthly applications of StimZyne + Excel wetting agent + E2Pro Instant 10-0-0+11S, two applications of Tiger 90CR sulphur chips @ 15g/m² (November and March) and monthly sarel rolling. Through persistence, patience and consistency, I now have a relatively clean surface, with all but a few worm casts. I am now rolling the same programme out to the cricket square and the other tennis court.”

“Is this the panacea? I very much doubt it, as this will be an ongoing regime inline with all the other cultural methods at my disposal. I must be careful that pH levels stay within the parameter of 5.5-6.5 for optimal growing conditions... but at least I have a plan to work with.”



Worm treatment comparison. Left: no worm care, right: worm cultural practices for the past two years



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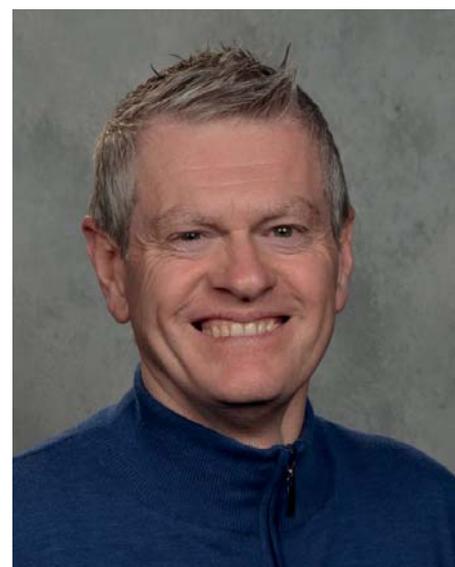
Secondary Drainage

It never rains
but it pours



GKB Drainmaster in action

What are the drainage solutions open to turf managers and how can these help deal with the pressure of maintaining fine turf surfaces whilst keeping their facility open for play? **Phil Helmn** MG looks at the options



Every UK turf manager will testify that, in the last decade, the weather has become more and more extreme. According to a recent R&A article, dramatic climate change poses major challenges to course managers and groundsmen who are under increasing pressure to deliver all-year-round playing surfaces for their members. Managers will testify that simply keeping their facility open during the wet winters is not enough. Customers expectation levels are continually rising, which is proving more and more stressful as the extreme conditions create an accumulation of problems to their facilities. As far as the climate is concerned, all we seem to hear about is record-breaking highs or lows and our golf clubs are facing immense difficulties coping with extremes of weather, the report concluded.

Damaging weather not only hurts the golf course, it also impacts on the finances of the club as it can result in major repair bills and a loss of revenue during periods of course closure.

So, is there anything we can do to limit the damage and the ever-increasing risk when combatting the strongest forces of nature? Forward thinking managers have begun to draft up drainage systems to help reduce the risk of flooding, keep playing surfaces



Primary piped drainage installation

playable, keep their courses open and protect the organisation's income. Drainage schemes can be costly but, when faced with loss of revenue, are easily justified if properly planned and phased in a logical programme. Having a drainage vision and a believable path is the sensible way to go and helps to spread the cost over a few years, which will help the club's financiers allocate funds with less pain.

In most cases, a form of primary drainage system will be required dependent on the severity of the problem. A primary system consists of a network of lateral drains that carry water to a main drain, outfall or open ditches and away from the playing surface. Primary drainage systems also form the infrastructure for any subsequent secondary systems. It is also important that pipe outfalls

going to course ditches are kept clear and form part of a manager's annual regime.

There are many secondary drainage options available to turf managers. The key to success is to understand that surface water will generally not travel much more than ten metres, therefore, the closer the spacings the more effective the secondary system. To put it another way, the closer the secondary laterals, the quicker the movement away from the surface and the quicker it becomes playable. Secondary drainage should be installed perpendicular to piped drains. The proximity of permeable backfill to the surface can often dictate the most suitable type of secondary drainage, but also cost often plays a significant part.

Options for secondary drainage are not limited to these operations, but these are the

most recognised solutions and possibilities:

Verti-draining and slitting: Both introduce air into the soil and open up the surface profile, but aren't necessarily creating a direct channel to transfer water from the surface to the drains. Good practice at the right time of year.

Mole plough: Crude but effective in the right soil type at the right time of year. Will quickly close-up with footfall and could crack open in drought conditions in heavier clay soils.

Earthquake, Shockwave, Groundbreaker: These linear decompaction units are crude but effective if slits held open with sand infill. Again, be careful of continuous slitting in heavier clay soils which will be prone to shrinkage in dry conditions.



Verti-Drain



Mole plough



Sand banding



Forward thinking managers have begun to draft up drainage systems to help reduce the risk of flooding, keep playing surfaces playable, keep their courses open and protect the organisation's income. Drainage schemes can be costly but, when faced with loss of revenue, are easily justified if properly planned and phased in a logical programme

Gravel banding: Forced slits with a hollow blade and gravel gravity dropped into the created void up to 20mm wide and 250mm deep. This process is highly effective and can be installed with larger twin leg units or smaller more versatile single leg units. It's also possible to install lightweight aggregates such as Lytag or rubber crumb through these units later in the year when weight is an issue over wet surfaces. As there has been no soil exchange and the slit has been forced open, slits will seal up at surface level in time but are easily refreshed.

Sand banding: Forced slits with a hollow blade often combined with a decompaction unit like the GroundBreaker or Shockwave. Again, this is a hollow blade behind the decompaction unit and sand is delivered by gravity into the slits up to 18mm wide and

150mm deep. The sand needs to intersect using a similar particle sized sand at surface level over the primary drains.

Sand slitting: These are trenched slits and therefore soil is replaced. These are deeper and wider than the other methods and can be installed in a variety of depths and widths with single, double or triple wheel trenchers and included standard whizz wheel trenchers or multiple wheel trenchers such as the GKB DrainMaster. By nature of soil removal and replacement with gravel and sand or just straight sand, this form of secondary drainage is the most effective and longest lasting but is understandably more costly initially.

As with most fine turf environments, timing of drainage installation and re-instatement is critical and very much

seasonal. Drainage solutions need to be planned well in advance. In winter, too much damage can be caused to fine turf areas when removing soil and replacing with imported material and can be highly destructive to surfaces. Alternatively, in dry conditions, shrinkage and cracking can occur, creating uneven settlement of imported materials which requires addition labour to make good. Turf recovery and seed germination relies on a mixture of favourable temperatures and moisture, therefore, if there is the facility to irrigate seed and/or turf over drain lines, perhaps consideration should be given to carrying out the works outside the traditional winter months.



Shockwave



Sand slitting

The frustration continues

Have you got worms?





‘What have you got for worms’ has been the most asked question I’ve received in the past year. And, unfortunately, my answer every single time has been a short and succinct ‘nothing’ much to the frustration of all concerned. But why? And what are companies doing to bring through a safe and effective solution for the control of worms, since Carbendazim was banned over twelve months ago? **Phil Collinson**, Technical Area Sales Manager of ICL reports

In most situations in nature, earthworm activity is seen as beneficial. They can help break down organic matter, improve soil structure and aid the drainage of the soil. However, worm casts can muddy the surface leading to a thinning of the sward, weed invasion and softening of the surface. So, in the sports turf world, they can pose a serious challenge when trying to maintain the quality of the playing surface.

Carbendazim was previously approved and widely used as an effective treatment for the control of worm casts, however, since its withdrawal from the market in 2019, there has been no approved chemical solution to replace it - forcing turf managers to either accept the consequences of casting worms or to seek other forms of control. There has been an abundance of ‘biostimulant’ type products and ‘soil conditioners’ coming into the market, with claims and counter claims - yet you won’t find any in our brochure or on our website.

But why is that? Well, trust us when we say we both understand and empathise with turf managers when it comes to the issue of worm casting, but despite numerous research studies, we are yet to come to a solution that we deem as both legal and effective and so have yet to unearth something we are happy to put our name



Phil Collinson

to. We could not (with a clear conscience) market substances that clearly have pesticidal properties as nutritional, soil conditioning or bio-stimulatory.

So, what’s preventing a legal and effective replacement for Carbendazim? Well, the truth is, it’s very hard - if not impossible - to currently receive regulatory approval for





a product for the control of worm casts. I appreciate that's not great news but I hope, by shining some light on the current situation from a legislation and regulatory point of view as well as some of the challenges that reputable companies face in terms of producing an effective treatment, I can bring some understanding to you that may relieve some of your frustration. Although a word of warning - if you're hoping that I'll be concluding with the offer of a proven and effective solution, then you might want to stop reading here!

Firstly, let's look at why Carbendazim was withdrawn from the market back in 2019. I often think the lack of explanation as to why products get revoked is part of the problem that leads to misinformation and ultimately frustration from a turf manager's point of view. That message doesn't always get communicated very well and it feels like we are almost left in the dark as to why a product we relied on, to help deliver quality playing surfaces, has suddenly been pulled from our arsenal. Carbendazim wasn't withdrawn to make turf managers' lives

harder, but to make the environment a safer place and to protect both the user and the wider public. Unfortunately, Carbendazim had the potential to be toxic to reproductive organs and so, as regulations tightened and cleaner, safer fungicides were approved, this widely used agriculture fungicide became a turf vermicide - until its registration could no longer be supported. I don't think anyone would want to compromise theirs or their staff's safety to control worm casting on turf, and so the answer for worm cast control lays elsewhere rather than the hope that Carbendazim will come back.

Okay, so Carbendazim was deemed unsafe for continued future use, but what research and development is going on to bring through a replacement? Surely companies understand the demand and therefore potential commercial gain for such a product? Well, unfortunately, it's not quite as straight forward as simply finding different chemistry that would be effective - as well as being deemed safe for regulatory approval. Current regulations mean; for a plant protection product to be approved for use, it actually has to show that it doesn't affect



Despite numerous research studies, we are yet to come to a solution that we deem as both legal and effective and so have yet to unearth something we are happy to put our name to





If there are none, then it seems we are left pretty much where we are - frustrated turf managers exploring ineffective or legally questionable treatments



the lifecycle of worms - quite a challenge when the product you would want approval for does the absolute opposite! We need to remember the benefits worms bring to the health of soils, and it's for this reason they are protected under the regulations and that's why products being approved for use have to show they do not pose a risk to the health of worms.

How about an emergency approval (like we saw with Acelepryn - for the control of

leatherjackets and chafer grubs), but the control of worm casting? As I write this, I'm not aware of any approved product in the turf industry overseas or in any other industry, such as agriculture, being used that would offer a solution for the control of worm casting on turf and so there doesn't appear to be any obvious solution in terms of a candidate for emergency approval.

Hasn't a chemical company been developing a product knowing the market is in need of a solution? With turf plant protection products generally 'piggy-backing' off the product development in agriculture - where worm control isn't an area of research - then I struggle to see anything coming through on this front. The turf market, whilst is everything to us turfies, isn't a big enough market to justify the cost of research and development to develop plant protection products solely specific to

turf. The commercial aspect doesn't stack up - especially when regulations mean that, even if you did discover an effective product, it is highly unlikely to be approved for sale. I think we can all understand why companies wouldn't invest resource in to this area.

So, the future doesn't look promising in terms of getting a chemical replacement for Carbenazim, but what about non-pesticidal products? We see a plethora of 'worm cast suppressants' on the market now that generally fall in to the category of sulphur-based surface acidifiers - with the idea being that we know worms don't particularly thrive in low pH situations and so, if we can lower the pH, we can lower the incidence on worm casting. This makes sense in theory but, in reality, lowering the pH of soil can be quite a challenge and so the feedback on these type of products is that they just



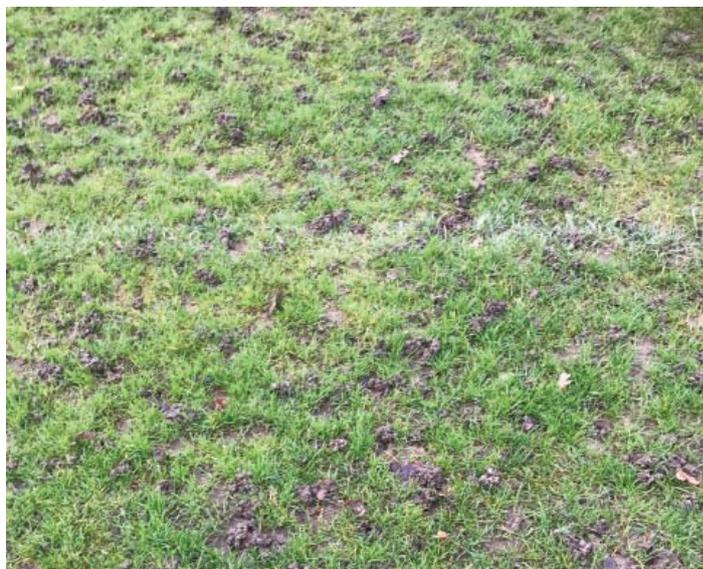
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aren't effective enough to reduce the levels of casting to acceptable levels and the cost can't be justified.

At ICL, we haven't gone down the road of producing a product in this market due to our values of only supplying 'products that perform' and, whilst we have investigated and researched in this area, we are yet to see a result that is effective enough to put our name to. It feels like turf managers are also experiencing this and hence why the debate continues around having an effective

treatment available.

What about 'soil conditioners'? They seem to have partially filled the vacuum left by Carbendazim. These tend to be saponin based which is a derivative of tea oil. This is a really uncomfortable area for me to discuss. I understand the frustrations that worm castings bring when managing turf and the pressures to deliver quality surfaces for players, but that said, it is often seen that these 'soil conditioners' are being applied to control worms and some with devastating

effect. I personally have an issue here; if we are applying a product that has a direct effect on a pest, like we see with some of these products, then it is being applied as a pesticide and therefore should be registered and regulated. This isn't to increase price and favour larger businesses that have the resources to get products registered. It is simply to keep the user, the public and the environment safe by understanding the full impact of the product. If they are killing worms, then it's safe to say there is potentially some damaging material in there that poses a risk to the user, public and environment and that should be assessed to see if its suitable for use. Of course, this won't happen due to reasons explained earlier in that when wanting to get a product approved as a pesticide, manufacturers now have to prove the product doesn't have a detrimental effect on worms. That's a pretty big obstacle to overcome when trying to get a product that eradicates them approved!

So, what is the future? Cultural practises should always be the first port of call and brushing, sanding, acidifying the surface etc. all have their part to play, however, if these were truly effective to a point that they reduce casting issues to an acceptable level, then there currently wouldn't be such levels of frustration at not having more options to control them. And hopefully we have established the current issues regarding



We could not (with a clear conscience) market substances that clearly have pesticidal properties as nutritional, soil conditioning or bio-stimulatory



Carbendazim wasn't withdrawn to make turf managers' lives harder, but to make the environment a safer place and to protect both the user and the wider public

products that are available - be it acidifiers (with their limited effectiveness) or 'soil conditioners' (which pose the question of legalities), then the future should focus on achieving an approved effective control that is safe for the user, public and environment.

But, is there a product waiting in the wings to gain emergency approval? If not then, even if the regulatory bodies accepted the need for worm control in the amenity market and were willing to discuss possible

approvals, if that option isn't there then it becomes a moot point. If so, then are the regulatory bodies being lobbied by industry bodies to be made aware of the current predicament, and is there a solution available that's more effective and safer than what's being used currently?

Turf managers just simply want to provide the best surfaces for their players and members and, rather than go down the route of unregulated, untested and often

ineffective products, then surely it's better as an industry to be having discussions with the manufacturers and regulators to understand what the options are and communicating that with them! If there are none, then it seems we are left pretty much where we are - frustrated turf managers exploring ineffective or legally questionable treatments.

As an industry, I feel we can and should be doing better than that.

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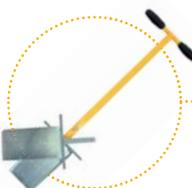
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Alastair Rowell, UK sales manager - turfcare equipment at Reesink Turfcare

In this article, **Alastair Rowell**, UK sales manager - turfcare equipment from Reesink Turfcare, considers how you can get more from your machinery

The combination of site diversity and the growing needs of the groundsman or greenkeeper to be able to operate efficiently has brought about the need for multifunctional machinery.

The sheer scale and size of some of the sites the turfcare industry is tending now demands a range of mowers and tractors that provide value for money, versatility and

a wide range of attachments to further expand the use of the machines in the shed.

It's always been important to get value from your machinery, but now probably more so than ever. There's no escaping the impact of the past year. Many places have smaller teams or budgets under pressure, and this has changed not only the way many machines are being used but also the considerations taken into account when choosing new machinery.

Tractors

Tractors are the long established workhorse in the industry, capable of carrying out a wide range of tasks. From transporting and loading materials, to hedge cutting, mowing, tilling, pulling, towing, shredding, scarifying, aerating and various other specialist works including drainage and earthmoving works

Multifunctional Machines

More bang for your buck!

to name a few, a tractor is equally invaluable on the golf course and sports field, as it is at the racetrack, cricket ground, tennis club, school grounds, public parks, gardens and private estates.

It is, without a doubt, the most versatile and multifunctional addition to any shed, but how can you make sure you choose the right one?

When buying a tractor, it's worth factoring in a number of things. First, consider your current needs and how they might change in the next few years. Is there a possibility that you may need to use larger attachments or perhaps work in tougher conditions in the foreseeable future? This will help you decide whether you would be better 'hedging your bets' and buying a tractor with slightly more horsepower than you currently need rather than opting for

something that's right on its limit for your current needs.

You may also have other restrictions that need to be taken into account. Are you restricted on storage space? Do you have weight limitations on towing or have narrow access sites to deal with? Equally, height may be an issue; do you work in areas with trees and low hanging branches? Perhaps the tractor is stored in a limited height shed for example. This height restriction may limit or negate your need for a cabbed tractor but can be overcome with an open station tractor with a folding ROPS. Tractors come in all sorts of different frame sizes and working out the size that is right for you is key to any purchase.

And, once that's taken into account, there'll be no stopping your productivity with the right spec tractor on hand. There are

multifunctional benefits to all tractors, from the smallest horsepower to the biggest. For example, TYM's T194 maybe small, but it brings productivity and versatility in huge amounts that belie its small stature, being as it is purpose developed by TYM to straddle the demands of a sub-compact ride-on mower with the power and versatility offered by a compact tractor.

Adding-value attachments

Of course, a tractor wouldn't be able to deliver anywhere near as much of its potential without attachments. This has to be the easiest way to bring multifunctional capabilities to your shed without breaking the budget or taking up too much valuable storage space.

What you need depends on what you need to do, but you're more than likely



Toro's Outcross 9060, the brand's first super-duty utility vehicle, and the Groundsmaster 1200, a new pull-behind rotary mower that uniquely has the cutting quality of the renowned Groundsmaster series



From finishing mowers, flail mowers and wide area mowers to rotary tillers, blowers, collectors and backhoes, rear- or front-mounted; it's an extensive list and there's something for every tractor, every job and every season



A tractor is a multifunctional wonder especially with value-adding attachments. Shown here is TYM's T555 with rake attachment

going to start with a loader, you're only getting half the productivity available from your tractor without one of those. And, from there on, you can get specific.

From finishing mowers, flail mowers and wide area mowers to rotary tillers, blowers, collectors and backhoes, rear- or front-mounted; it's an extensive list and there's something for every tractor, every job and every season.

For those whose budget is stretched, an aerating attachment is a good option and saves buying or replacing a standalone aerator for now. How attachments pair up with existing products such as Toro and TYM tractors is something we at Reesink have thought carefully about, and we're confident we have a good range of good quality attachment brands with extensive warranties for our customers to choose from.

Utility vehicles

It wouldn't be a feature on multifunctional machinery if we didn't mention the workhorse to beat all workhorses - the dependable utility vehicle. It's more the case of what this machine can't do rather than what it can, and I think we'd be hard pushed to find a turfcare venue without one of these trusty favourites.

There are some, like Toro's Workman GTX, which bring literally hundreds of configurations to the table. They can double as people carriers with bench or bucket seats, the options are endless, and they last, so are a wise investment.

Then there are a couple of machines that cross over categories, they defy convention with how multifunctional they are. The Toro Outcross 9060 is a utility vehicle, a tractor and has a range of attachments to fit and turn this into a multifunctional powerhouse. Of course, something that can handle so much is a significant investment but, if you have a project coming up, something like the Outcross would provide its weight in gold.

A cross between a tractor and utility vehicle, with this machine you can spread fertiliser, load sand and haul pallets, as a tiny snapshot of its capabilities. Golf courses who have any building or renovation works in the offing would benefit greatly from having something like this on hand. And there's an attachment that makes this a dual-purpose machine - the Groundsmaster 1200 pull behind makes it a rotary mower too.

Ride-on mowers

For most, mowing is likely to be the top job and having a range of mowers for all the different areas that require cutting will be unavoidable. So, with that in the case, are there any ways to bring in extra value with a mower?

Yes, of course there are! You can, for example, bring close trimming to a large ride-on, negating the need for a separate

alternative such as a pedestrian mower or strimmer, by choosing a ride-on with a Sidewinder.

This is one nifty bit of innovation. Available on the Toro Reelmaster 3100-D small area mower and Groundsmaster 3500-D rotary mower, the Sidewinder system allows you to move all three cutting units 12 inches (30cm) right or left from their centre position - on the fly - for a full 24 inches (61cm) of travel.

It means you can get under trees and other hard-to-reach places and bring precise control to delicate jobs such as trimming around sand traps, water features, tee boxes and greens edges on the golf course.

It means too that more junior members of staff can perform expert edging, trimming neatly and closely around sensitive areas whilst keeping the mower's wheels a safe distance away. This is especially handy



Demonstrating the Outcross's versatility, here it is with the ProCore 1298 aerator which boasts an impressive working width of 98 inches for maximum productivity



Toro's LT-F3000 can work as a powerhouse triple flail mower or, with attachment, a fine-cut cylinder



It means you can get under trees and other hard-to-reach places and bring precise control to delicate jobs such as trimming around sand traps, water features, tee boxes and greens edges on the golf course

around bunkers where you want a close cut and want to keep the tyres back from the edges at the same time.

But it's not just golf courses that benefit from how versatile it can be, landscapers, sports venues and local authorities do too.

In fact, the way a Sidewinder is able to transform an easy maintenance rotary mower into a precision cutting cylinder mower is what really puts it in another league for getting more from your machine. It means there's no need to sacrifice quality of cut for the productivity required to maintain large green spaces with longer cutting cycles.

By having one efficient machine for areas that typically require two different machines saves time and money in the long run. A classic example of this is another cross-over whereby adding an attachment can take a machine from a powerhouse triple flail

mower to a fine-cut cylinder; perfect to meet the challenges of increasing demands presented by longer cutting times and cutting both long and short grass. This innovative solution to tough budgets can be seen in the Toro LT-F3000 triple flail mower with cylinder attachment.

Dual-purpose machines

What you should always be looking out for is the most amount of productivity from one purchase.

For landscaping customers with large areas to mow, grass collection is a must, or for those on a parkland golf course with plenty of leaves and debris to clear, having a mower that can collect can save an inordinate amount of time and effort, space and money.

Look for a truck bed so there's no need for a separate utility vehicle and a high lift

system which makes it easy to empty the clipping straight into the truck bed, as well as a large capacity hopper which means the job keeps going for longer.

Collection doesn't just apply to leaves, grass and debris either, you can get ones that can collect the cores after aerating too. One machine that can mow, collect cores and take care of big piles of leaves provides not only the utmost convenience from one machine but adds value throughout the year.

Budgets may be tighter and teams may be smaller, so it's time to ask your machinery to do more.

Reesink is available to help you decide which machines will work best for your specific requirements and budget. There are always flexible finance deals available with deferred start dates, subsidised rates or that can be aligned to peak income months to help manage cashflow, too. It only takes a conversation. Make contact online at via [reesinkturfcare](http://reesinkturfcare.co.uk), by phone on 01480 226800 or by email at info@reesinkturfcare.co.uk.



"I've used a cut and collect machine before, but not one with enough capacity and power to pick up large piles of leaves, which was no issue for the ProLine. It will serve us well for core collecting after aerating and is agile enough to easily manoeuvre while cutting in and around the trees."

John Quinn, course manager, The Mere Golf Resort about Toro's ProLine H800 direct collect rotary mower



⁶Carbon

Understanding the key elements

Carbon, a name that you will most likely have become increasingly familiar with in recent years, and one which fundamentally shapes the planet that you inhabit. What is so special about this element and by which means does it transcend in to many areas of turf management? **Derek Fullerton** aims to provide some transparency to these questions, and ultimately highlight how turf managers possess the ability to alter the carbon footprint of their land



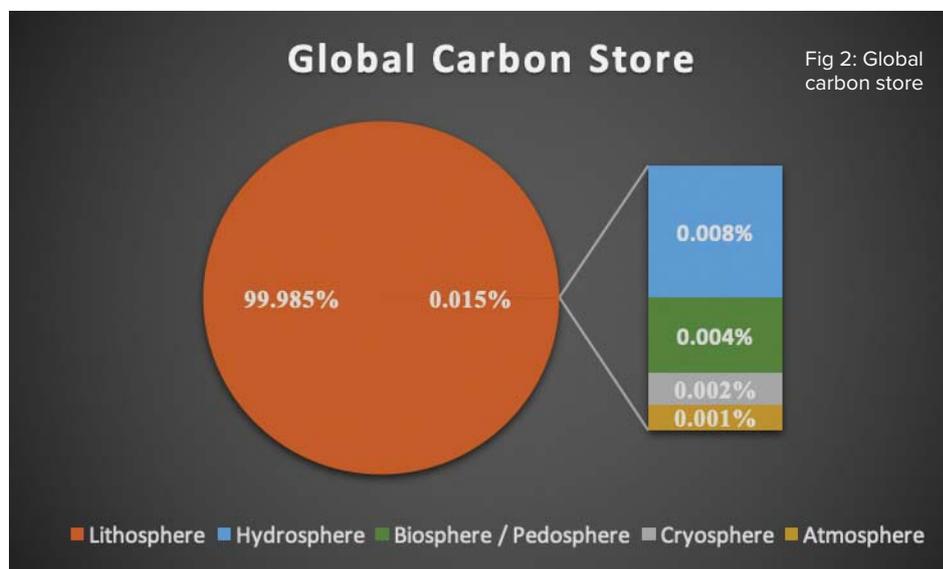
Derek Fullerton

Since the birth of the planet, the chemical element carbon (C) has played a pivotal role in its evolution. Deposited from comets and asteroids, both organic and inorganic C is recognised to have been a key ingredient for the initiation of life on Earth; this underpinned by the fact that it is a building block for 95% of the compounds known to man^[1]. Derived from the Latin word carbo, meaning coal, C is estimated to make up 0.032% of the Earth's crust and upper mantle^[1] (Fig 1). It is naturally occurring in the atmosphere in the form of carbon-12 (C-12), this ultimately incorporated into the bodies of animals via the primary & secondary consumer food chain. Prolific growth and

colonisation of the planet's surface by vascular plants over millennia, leading to huge accumulations and reserves of organic matter (OM). This becoming a resource increasingly utilised by humans, one often referred to as fossil fuels. Its structural complexity and flexibility is unique, making it possible for both some of the hardest and softest materials known to man, such as diamonds and graphite, to emanate from it. No other element has or will exert more influence in shaping the planet that you inhabit (Fig 2).



Fig 1: Shungite mineral rock with a carbon content greater than 98%





The decomposition process that occurs in a functioning soil is fundamental for achieving equilibrium in the C cycle

To start our journey, let's take a closer look at the molecular properties that make C special. C-12 is the most abundant form of inorganic C. It has an atomic number of 6 (6 protons in the nucleus) and an atomic mass of 12 (6 neutrons and 6 electrons), this accounting for the C-12 categorisation (Fig 3). A unique feature of C is its ability to bond with itself, leading to the term 'pattern maker'. This ability allows it to create exceptionally long and resilient chains known as polymers, seen everyday in natural and synthetic forms, including proteins, nylon and plastics. It is capable of making covalent bonds with other organic molecules such as oxygen and nitrogen. These exceptionally strong single, double and treble bonds enable the production of the organic compounds that are present in all living things.

On a global context, evolution over millennia has enabled processes, fluxes and exchanges to achieve regulation and equilibrium of the levels of C currently present in soils, oceans and the atmosphere. These providing the foundation for the multitude of life supporting services that humans are dependent on. The production

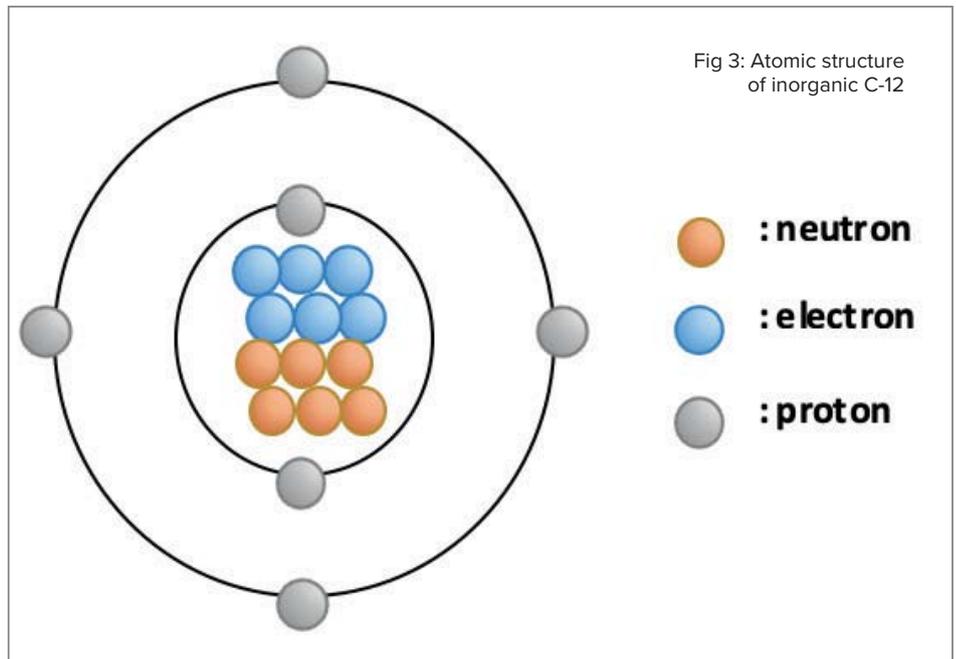


Fig 3: Atomic structure of inorganic C-12

and decomposition of all living material and the subsequent production of OM are a constant addition and subtraction to these C rich reservoirs. Advances in technology and a changing climate has made previously secure stores of C now accessible. OM newly exposed to its nemesis oxygen, resulting in accelerated rates of decomposition. The greatest depths of the oceans are a resting place for huge accumulations of carbonates, these now threatened by warming waters. Onset of the industrial age and the growth of the human population has placed pressure on the natural world's C equilibrium. Anthropogenic inputs from industry, as well as land change driven by agriculture and urbanisation, has had a destabilising impact. Simply put, more C is being produced than the planet's buffering mechanisms can absorb (Fig 4).

Why should increased levels of atmospheric C be of concern? A term that I am sure you will be familiar with is that

of greenhouse gases (GHG). C plays a prevalent role in two of these, carbon dioxide (CO₂) and methane (CH₄), with the other perhaps less well known, but equally potent, GHG being nitrous oxide (N₂O) (Fig 5). The presence of these gases at increasing levels in the atmosphere has an insulating affect on the planet, preventing heat rebounding from the Earth's surface from escaping. Think of the stratosphere layer of the atmosphere as a large porous umbrella covering the planet, with the permeability of the umbrella reducing as concentrations of GHG increase. This subsequently leading to a warming of atmospheric temperature, hence the term 'global warming'. The scale of this issue emphasised by the fact that estimated atmospheric CO₂ levels in 1860 were 260ppm, while in 2018 they were 407ppm^[2]. An increase of 64%.

Lets now concentrate on an area that I hope is of particular relevance to the majority of readers, the relationship between C

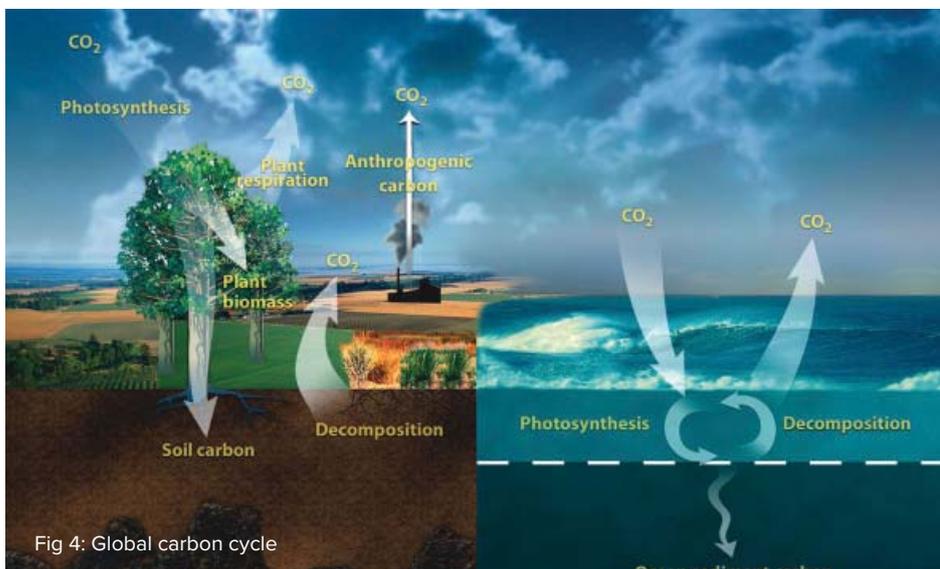


Fig 4: Global carbon cycle



Evolving technology is providing land managers with an increasing armoury at their disposal for monitoring soil moisture levels, providing the greater transparency that comes with the collation of data



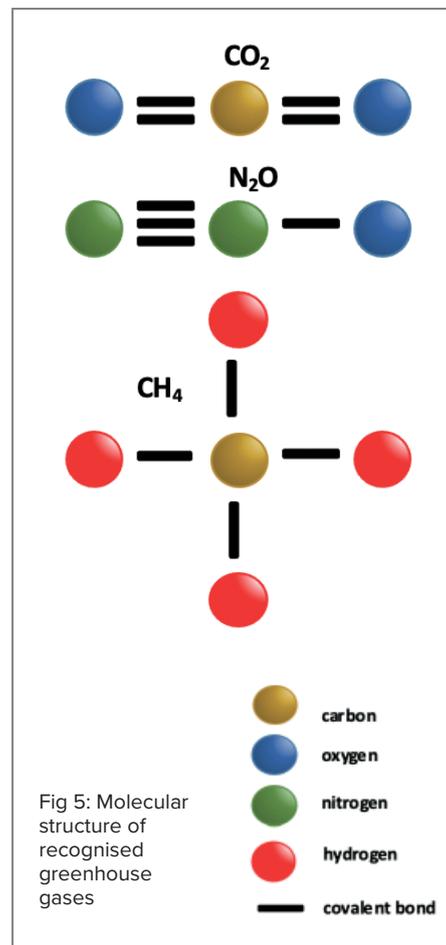
The background to writing this article has been that of a global pandemic. It has brought with it changes and challenges that none of us ever expected to experience

and turf management. The physiology of vascular plants, including grass, is ultimately geared towards a few relatively simplistic goals. These being the capture of light, regulation of water uptake and loss, defence against pests & disease, reproduction, and the fixation of C from the atmosphere. The process of photosynthesis enables our planet to create and support life via the conversion of solar energy into organic carbohydrates. Possessing the capacity to fix C is pivotal to achieve this. Exposed to changing biotic pressures, plants have evolved specific mechanisms to achieve maximum efficiency in this area.

The most common method utilised is referred to as C3, with the stomata able to fix C during daylight hours, with the insertion of two 3 C molecules into the Calvin cycle

(Fig 6). An alternative C4 method meanwhile provides the plant with extra protection from water loss resulting from photorespiration. This is achieved by incorporating the location of the Calvin cycle in bundle sheath cells, in this instance, a 4 C molecule is produced. The final method is referred to as CAM (Crassulacean Acid Metabolism), this being most common in arid conditions where water loss must be kept to an absolute minimum to enable survival. This method allows for the fixation of C during night hours, enabling the stomata to remain closed during the day (Fig 7).

Whichever method is employed, the objective is the same, to allow for the fixation of these all important atmospheric C molecules and subsequent insertion in to the Calvin cycle. Management practices that



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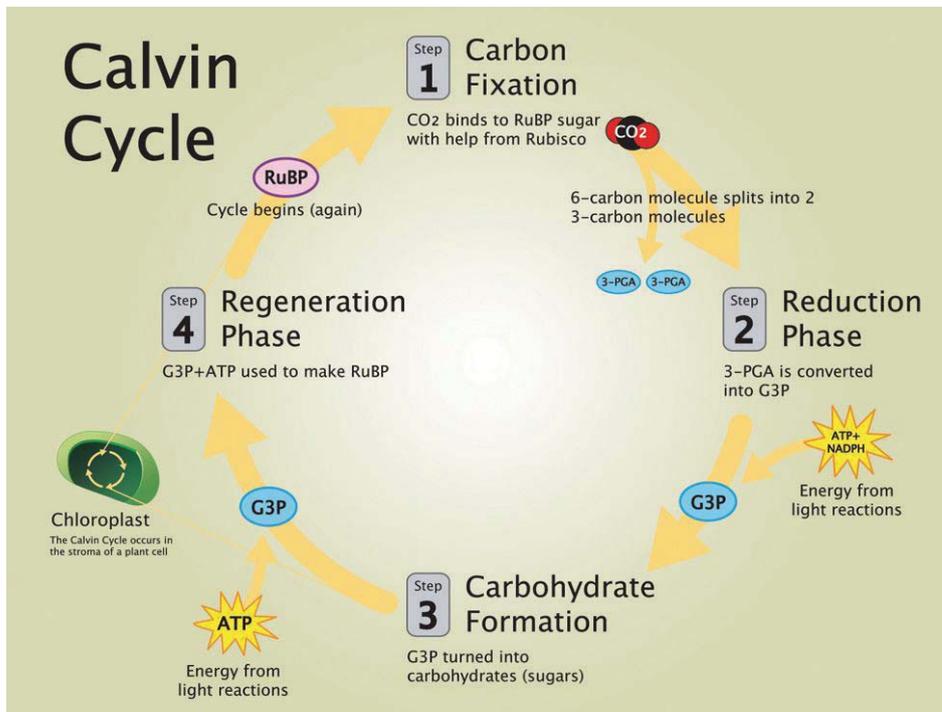


Fig 6: Calvin cycle phases

Through empowering young turf professionals with a greater insight and understanding of the key elements and processes, progress will be accelerated

maintain stomatal health, particularly during times of increased stress, will be the most successful in aiding the grass plant to achieve this. Differing methods of C fixation are examples of plant evolutionary change over millennia in response to climatic pressures. In recent decades, biologists have increasingly observed such changes, with one example of this being a decrease in stomatal density in response to elevated atmospheric CO₂ levels. It may seem obvious to assume that an increase in the availability of CO₂ would be beneficial to plants, but the contrary is actually true, with research indicating that once concentration reaches 1000ppm, photosynthesis is in many cases impeded^[3]. This referred to as CO₂ saturation.

Moving the focus of attention below ground, it soon becomes apparent the magnitude of the role that C plays in a functioning growing medium. As noted,

photosynthesis enables the conversion of inorganic atmospheric C into organic carbohydrates. A proportion of these are deposited via exudates into the area surrounding root tips, this referred to as the rhizosphere. These providing a source of energy for the microbial community which inhabit this region. The utilisation of these C rich deposits is exemplified by the fact that the average C:N ratio of a soils total microbial biomass is believed to range from 4:1 to 8:1^[2]. The plant - biota C relationship is very much a mutualistic one. Mucus and discharge from biota act as cohesive binding agents for soil particles, enabling the formation of aggregates (Fig 8). The macro & micro pores that these aggregates provide ensuring porosity, and subsequently the availability of oxygen and water to plant roots. Meanwhile, vast networks of mycorrhizae fungi are eager to exchange nutrients and water with plants for C rich

compounds. These all crucial components to achieving a healthy soil structure.

Availability of C compounds in the soil matrix is also an essential building block to enable the process of decomposition. Even the most resistant of OM such as cellulose and lignin is ultimately decomposed by specialist fungi and bacteria. However, when oxygen limiting conditions prevail inhibiting decomposition, resistant OM can result in stable soil C pools persisting for thousands of years. The decomposition process that occurs in a functioning soil is fundamental for achieving equilibrium in the C cycle, with the vast amounts of CO₂ released by respiring biota an essential input. Ultimately, this can be recognised as contributing to the restocking of the atmospheric C pool for your grass to utilise. These types of feedback loops are a regular occurrence in the natural world. Soil conditions, particularly water levels, will impact these and the compounds omitted. Saturation of a soil profile results in denitrification through anaerobic bacteria, with a bi product of this being N₂O. Meanwhile, CH₄ is produced from microbes via a process known as methanogenesis

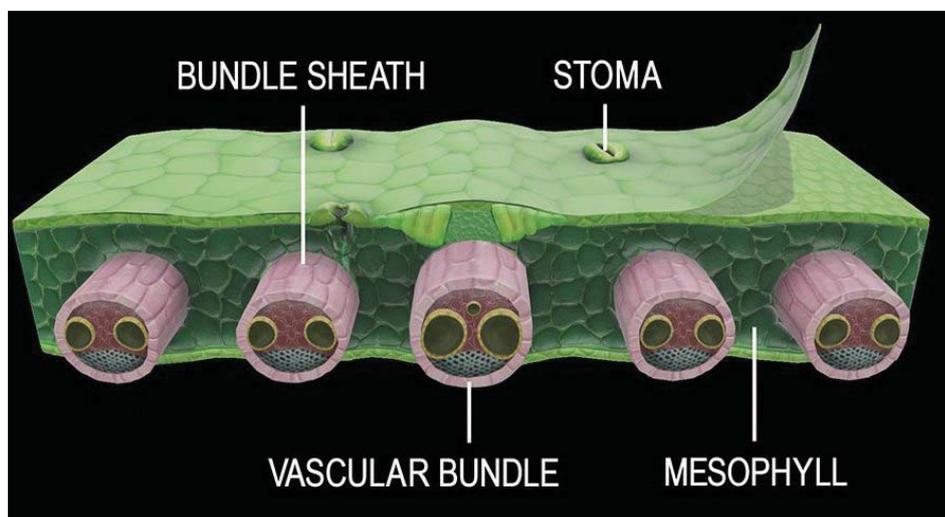


Fig 7: The physiology of a monocot leaf such as grass



(Fig 9). This highlighting the complexity of the relationship that exists between land management and GHG omissions.

The field of agriculture is increasingly recognising the benefits to be gained from maintaining levels of C within soil. Modern methods increasingly focus on organic materials, cover crops, crop rotation, and reduced disturbance of the land, by avoiding aggressive maintenance practices. In doing this, farmers are able to harness the benefits of the sun's solar power through maximising the input of root exudates. Thus maintaining the health of their soils and increasing the net primary productivity (NPP) of the land. Leading to the term 'light farming' (Fig 10).

Practical decisions taken on a daily basis will ultimately determine how the C footprint of your land is regulated (Fig 11). Feedbacks will vary from the obvious to the more discreet, where your impact is perhaps less appreciated. Keystone blocks in your maintenance programme such as nutrition, irrigation and the consumption of aggregates are all of relevance. An increasing industry emphasis placed on a biological approach to nutrition recognises the importance of

maintaining the biological capacity of a growing medium. Whether through the use of compost tees, bio-stimulants, or via the incorporation of a top dressing material with a suitable OM content, maintaining a consistent input of C should be a primary objective. This helping to avoid the pitfalls of an over reliance on synthetics. Additionally,

this reduction in use and resulting demand for synthetic fertilisers helping to counter the high C cost of their production. The industrial process in question, which enables the fixation of atmospheric nitrogen to ammonia, is known as the Haber-Bosch process, and is believed to consume more than 1% of the world's total energy consumption^[4].



The physiology of vascular plants, including grass, is ultimately geared towards a few relatively simplistic goals

Fig 8: Carbon rich root exudates enhance aggregate formation



Fig 9: Drainage efficiency impacts emissions of CH₄ and N₂O gasses

Benefits to be gained through astute irrigation management may be an area that is less obvious. Evolving technology is providing land managers with an increasing armoury at their disposal for monitoring soil moisture levels, providing the greater transparency that comes with the collation of data. Utilised fully through precision targeting, energy consumption can be minimised by way of streamlined run times and reduced pumping requirements. Consumption of aggregates, whether this be sand, gravel, or divot mix, come with a C cost. While recognising the use of these are a requirement for many maintenance practices, does the option to resource them more sustainably exist? The recycling of on course materials for the production of top soil and divot mix is a practice employed by a number of golf courses. This often providing a material with a higher nutritional and biological value, along with a saving to your budget. It must be recognised that the extraction, processing, and carriage of aggregates does have an impact, even if this impact

is out of sight. A commitment to minimise this where possible, by thinking outside the conventional, will bring with it long term benefits closer to home.

As previously touched upon, natural C fluxes constantly occur in land management. The opportunity to impact these exists through the implementation of responsible woodland management, re-wilding and rough grass land management programmes. This can be achieved through the re-establishment of native species, perennial grasses, and increased bio-diversity. Harnessing stakeholder understanding and participation, be this member or public, will be key to ensuring long term success for these types of land reforms. Resource consumption is also relevant in areas directly away from land management. For many businesses this will specifically apply to energy, waste and catering. Recent evolution and affordability of renewables has made improved efficiency in the first two areas

increasingly accessible and attractive to many. For the latter, by ensuring catering supply chains are local and maximising 'in house' productivity, positive changes are achievable. All bringing with them financial incentives as well as a positive C trade off.

The background to writing this article has been that of a global pandemic. It has brought with it changes and challenges that none of us ever expected to experience. The fallout is uncertain, with the long term financial cost to society and sectors of industry unpredictable. However, history has shown that in the face of adversity of such magnitude opportunity can arise. The chance to re-set, re-think, and re-route our direction of travel. To be big, bold, and brave in our decision making, enabling change and regeneration. Lockdown has brought many people closer to nature, awakening a greater appreciation in the importance and value of the natural world. This coming November, the 26th UN Climate Change Conference



**Practical decisions
taken on a daily basis
will ultimately determine
how the C footprint of your
land is regulated**



Fig 10: Cover crops used to replenish soil carbon levels

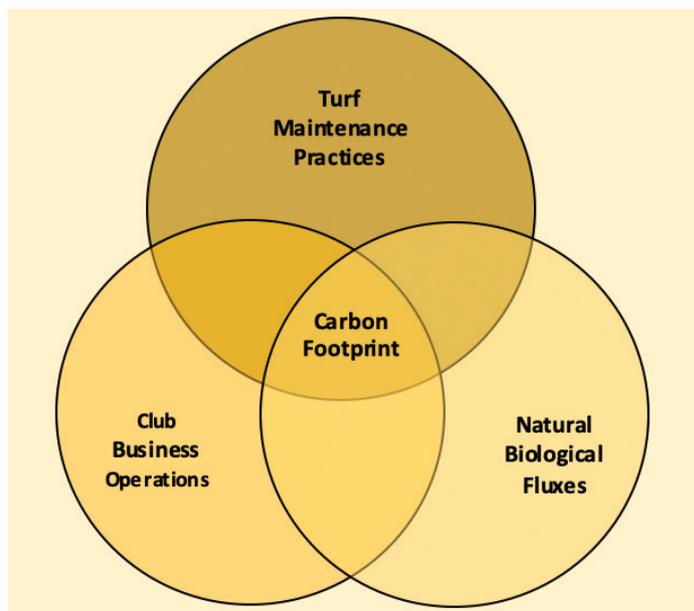
Fig 11: Overlapping carbon footprint of a land management business

will take place in Glasgow. An opportunity for countries to evaluate and commit to action with the aim of achieving set 2030 global carbon emission targets. These, to the outside person, can seem very abstract. How can 'my' actions, 'my' business, or 'my' industry really have any impact on such a global context. The reality however is that these targets can ONLY be achieved through action at a granular scale. Through individual responsibility evolving in to collective responsibility. Community action creating societal change.

The turf industry is a prime example of this. YOUR actions on a daily, weekly, and monthly basis help shape the carbon footprint of the land you manage. By embracing this responsibility, your rewards can be multifaceted. Financial, ecological, biological, industry recognition, public perception, product value, customer experience, sustainability,

robustness, to name but a few. Not losing sight either of the benefit, understandably perhaps of greatest importance to many turf managers, that of enhanced turf quality and performance through improved soil health.

The actions or inaction of the current generation will impact the well being of future generations. The knowledge base and technology exists for us as an industry to play its part, accept its responsibility, firmly anchoring its seat at the table. Through empowering young turf professionals with a greater insight and understanding of the key elements and processes related to turf management, progress will be accelerated and with it the industries contribution and long term prosperity. I sincerely hope that this article has provided you with a greater insight into one of those elements and its influence on your profession. The father of them all, carbon.



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Frank Newberry

Whether you are a team leader, or a team member who wants to make a difference, you will find that some people problems at work are more complex than others. In this article, Trainer **Frank Newberry** outlines a simple, logical and powerful three-step approach to solving the more complex people problems at work



Solving People Problems

Some people problems can be quite mundane - like personality clashes, individuals not fitting in, people not pulling their weight, others not working in a safe way.

Sometimes, the whole work team can have a problem. Team members may not be pulling together, or cliques have formed, and negativity is setting in. It might be that motivation and morale are suffering.

Sometimes we do not know that we even have a problem

The problem solving process outlined in this article was devised by Gerard Egan, (author of the best-selling book: *'The Skilled Helper'*) and is for these more complex problems we sometimes face with people, problems that we may have always had, problems that will not go away, or respond to our efforts to resolve them.

Sometimes we do not know that we even have a problem until we ask specific and penetrating questions of work team members.

Sometimes appearances can be deceptive. Once, as I waited for my turn to speak at a turfcare conference in Portugal, I was a little more intimidated than usual. My talk was on the topic of motivating people, and, in the twenty-four hours I had been in the country, people had been very nice to me. Everyone seemed very happy and motivated.

Our biggest problems are people problems

As the other speakers continued to give their technical talks and sales presentations, I leaned over and quietly whispered my predicament to a Portuguese golf course manager sitting near me. I quietly expressed my concern that I did not think there were any people problems in Portugal. His reply? 'Are you kidding? Our biggest problems are people problems!'

Gerard Egan has put together a simple but powerful three-step problem solving process, which can be as effective in one-to-one meetings with individuals as it can be with moving an underperforming team (or organisation) forward.

Watching the problem unfold but doing nothing about it

Egan breaks his process down into three steps. I will break down each of the steps into three more logical parts (making nine in all) showing

the actions you can take to solve a priority problem.

Essentially, these are questions that you will ask the people experiencing the problem, those causing the problem, and those who are just watching the problem unfold but doing nothing about it.

The three steps with their accompanying questions are:

- (1) the current situation (not good),
- (2) the preferred scenario (better), and
- (3) action strategies (to move the problem from 1 to 2 above)

Current Situation

In this first diagnostic step there are three headings (in capitals), each with a 'prompt' question for you to ask the individual, the team or representatives of the organisation.

1. STORY

Question: What are the issues and concerns you have?

2. BLIND SPOTS

Question: What are the real problems in there?

3. LEVERAGE

Question: Which ones of these can you work on?

Preferred Scenario

After probing for facts and evidence as much as you reasonably can, it is time to move on to the second step: The Preferred Scenario.

4. POSSIBILITIES

Question: What would it look like if it were better?

5. VIABLE AGENDA

Question: Out of that, what can you realistically achieve?

6. COMMITMENT

Questions: So, what's in it for you and are you sure you want to do this?

Action Strategies

After probing to establish the viability of the preferred scenario and testing the level of problem ownership* it is time to move onto the third and final step: Action Strategies.

7. STRATEGIES

Question: So what are the different ways you might do this?

8. BEST FIT

Questions: Out of those different ways, what do you think will work, and what are you going to do first?

9. PLAN

Questions: What's going to help you do this and what will get in the way?

N.B. These questions are only potential prompts to help you get started. Each answer will need probing to get the data that will move the individual, team or organisation onto the following step.

*At this point, problem ownership is very important. If people can accept at least some of the responsibility, if people will acknowledge that they are accountable to some extent, then we have ownership and engagement.

If no one wants to own the problem then we would need to work first on getting people to see the problem as an opportunity to make things better. They are, in reality, helping to solve a problem, rather than be blamed or punished for it.

Just another part of everyone's work life

As the problem solving work starts to grow, you might have a number of short meetings - to accommodate people's work commitments - rather than one long meeting that disrupts their working day. Shorter and more regular meetings would help normalise the activity, suggesting that it is a just another part of everyone's work life.

So, whether you are a team leader, or a team member who wants to make a difference, I wish you good luck with getting to the bottom of what is wrong, when it is wrong, and taking effective action to solve people problems at work.

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- Cleaner, Quieter, Safer - New mower is zero emission, quieter than petrol and low vibration

At 52cm, the extra wide cutting width is ideal for covering large areas quickly, while the 70-litre cutting bag with fill-level indicator means less time-consuming trips to the compost heap.

The Select Cut™ multi-blade cutting system consists of an EGO Upper Blade used in combination with a lower blade to slice the grass into fine fragments; this greatly enhances cutting performance with all grass types. The Bagging Blade supplied with the mower is a heavy-duty blade that ensures cut grass is collected and thrown efficiently into the grass bag. The Mulching Blade, set which can be purchased separately, is ideal for weekly mowing, giving you the cut quality and run time expected from a high-end petrol mower. Both blades can be used interchangeably based on the desired cut.

www.egopowerplus.co.uk

Engineering and software enhancements to the agria 9600 remote-controlled rotary mulching mower have made it smarter and more effective on even steeper banks and verges.

The huge H&S benefits of the agria 9600 mean it is an already popular choice for contractors, local authorities and course managers. Risk to staff is minimised because the operator can take a safe position up to 100 metres away using a hand-held control pad. Impressive on 50° slopes and banks, a 10% increase gives it a 55° capability which brings scope to tackle even tougher areas.

Manufactured in Germany, and distributed by Agria UK, sister company to Wiedenmann UK, the all-new version for 2021 has a heavier duty design with thicker steel. The electric motors and generator are more powerful and now brushless. Stronger and greased seal bearings have been introduced while the V-belt now tensions automatically.

The agria 9600 comes in two widths, 112 cm and 80 cm. It cuts and mulches in two directions and is effortless on a variety of applications, including fine turf, while offering an adjustable cutting height of 50 -185 mm. Highly productive, it can cover up to 10,000 m² / hr assuming a forward speed of 10 km / hr.

Extra smart technology has been applied inside



the easy-accessed control box where the electronics are protected from dust, vibration and moisture. Equipped with sensor technology, the software communicates constantly with the sensors and intervenes in critical circumstances.

Innovative 'electric hybrid drive' allows the agria 9600 to be more efficient and environmentally friendly than other hydraulic concepts. Safety Extra Low Voltage (48V) electricity is generated as the petrol engine drives the mower blades and generator. Accordingly, the maintenance-free motors convert the current into powering the tracks. A replacement fuel canister system makes refuelling safe and easy, even on difficult terrain.

www.agria.de/en-gb

Kubota continues to expand its groundcare machinery offering, with the addition of the F-251 to the company's front mower range. This professional mower benefits from the latest engine technology to offer enhanced performance alongside features designed for productivity and high-quality cutting.

The new model uses a powerful three-cylinder 1123cc Kubota diesel engine which complies with the most recent EU Stage V emissions directive, while delivering 25hp for increased productivity.

A highly efficient two-range HST transmission offers on demand four-wheel drive (4WD) with the capability of selecting permanent 4WD.

This new F-251 model will also see the introduction of newly designed 1.52m (60in) side and rear discharge mowing decks with improved cutting quality. Both new decks have optional mulch kits available which offer a high-quality finish.

All the controls are perfectly positioned, and the instrument panel is clear and easy to read in all light conditions. Operators can set the adjustable steering wheel to the position that suits them best for comfort and convenience, and the F-251 is equipped with LED headlights



for optimum visibility and as a key safety feature.

To add extra reliability, the decks are equipped with puncture-proof tyres and for ease of maintenance, the engine cowling can be fully opened, and blades are quick to replace. It has also been designed for easy transportation, with tie down points at the front and rear for reliable and secure anchoring when transported on a trailer.

www.kubota-eu.com



With sustainability an increasingly key consideration for turf managers, many are discovering the benefits associated with DLF's 4turf® Tetraploid Ryegrass technology.

New in the 4turf® stable for 2021 is Tetragame, a cultivar which significantly improves disease resistance and sward recovery, as well as demonstrating strong germination and establishment even at temperatures as low as 4°C. Tetragame features in the new formulation of J Outfield, together with updated J 4Turf and J 4Turf 100 mixtures to deliver the strength and durability demanded for winter sport and equestrian use.

With a trusted track record for high performance, Johnsons J Premier Wicket and J Premier Pitch mixtures will continue to set the standard for cricket and football respectively – with ProNitro® coated options available for even faster establishment and reduced input costs. DLF's ProNitro® 5G seed coating contains a targeted combination of controlled

release nitrogen, together with hydroactive water management technology, which leads to stronger germination and improved nutrient utilisation during the early stages of plant growth.

Also new for 2021 is Absolom. This highly-rated Slender Creeping Red Fescue cultivar delivers exceptional disease resistance and tolerance for close mown management, making it a great addition to a number of Johnsons golf mixtures including J Fescue, J Premier Fairway and J Green. In addition, all mixtures across the Johnsons putting surface range are now 'DLF Select' purity as standard, meaning Course Managers can be assured that only seed from the purest crops and meeting the stringent cleanliness grade makes it into the bag.

Visit the Pitchcare Shop to view the full range



The V-Ride is a stand-on mower designed for professional use; the compact machine size, ease of manoeuvring and clear view for the operator have led to the V-Ride becoming increasingly popular for intricate mowing areas.

The Ride-On SCAG machines, because they are purpose-built for grasscutting, place the operator directly above the cutting deck, and one of the main features on the new V-Ride Stand-On is that this configuration follows the same concept, placing the operator nearer the centre of the machine.

The new version of the original V-Ride was announced in 2017 and had revised features that exhibit SCAG's policy of continuous improvement and response to operator feedback, which combine to make them such a successful machinery manufacturer.

The latest machine in the range addresses the need for gate-access.

Full model name is the V-Ride 32A-16FX:

- 32" Advantage Deck
- 16HP Kawasaki FX
- Electric start
- Drive wheels: 20 x 6.5 - 10
- Fuel capacity: 4 gallons
- New style 2020 V-Ride operator pad

The machines are available through the STM dealership network.

www.st-mach.com



Reesink brings invisible and complete top access in-field irrigation to Toro's B Series sprinklers with a new natural turf cup.

This innovative addition to the popular sprinkler head allows grass to grow in the cup on top of the sprinkler to create a seamless and continuous area of turf. The quick release rubber cap pops up, allowing all the access needed to service the internal parts of the sprinkler without digging it up. It's available in full-circle or adjustable part-circle configuration.

Designed to fit perfectly on the popular Toro B Series sprinklers, this turf cup further enhances the many benefits the B Series sprinkler is known and appreciated for. In action, the heads evenly irrigate a span of some 13 to 29 metres and the volume can easily be altered to deliver exactly what's required with adjustment from 25 or 15 'Dual Trajectory' options without having to change the nozzle.

www.reesinkturfcare.co.uk

STIHL has launched a range of service kits for petrol handheld tools that enable professional and domestic owners to carry out simple routine engine maintenance themselves, increasing their tools reliability and longevity.

Developed by STIHL to make routine maintenance quicker and easier, the new service kits allow owners to maintain the optimum performance and reliability they expect from STIHL products.

The kits contain everything needed to carry out routine servicing on a STIHL petrol hand held power tool engine and include an air filter, spark plug and fuel filter, plus additional items depending on the specific machine. The kits also come with a QR code and short URL so users can quickly access how-to videos to give them step-by-step instructions for replacing the air filter, spark plug and fuel filter.

Twenty-three variants of service kit are available, covering the most popular STIHL petrol chainsaws, brushcutters, blowers, pole pruners, hedge trimmers, cut off saws and earth augers.

In addition to professional and domestic users, the new service kits can also be used in-store by STIHL approved dealers, making the process of ordering and carrying out a service quicker and more cost-effective.

www.stihl.co.uk



Building on the success of its versatile, dependable L1 Series, Kubota has introduced a brand new model, the L1-382.

With its enhanced features, the L1-382 model ensures greater durability and productivity, whilst also improving performance and efficiency. Its attractive new styling reflects Kubota's new design strategy, combining a dynamic appearance with superior robustness.

Amongst its most significant improvements is a new Kubota stage V three-cylinder 38hp engine with CRS, EGR and DPF technologies designed to minimise exhaust emissions and reduce fuel consumption. The L1-382 also boasts increased fuel tank capacity at 42 litres for longer working days.

In addition to its improved efficiency and enhanced performance, this tractor offers increased visibility and comfort, with a new platform design and impressive ergonomics, all controls being optimally placed and easily within reach.

The 8F+4R manual transmission has a two-



stage clutch which allows the pto to be operated while engaging the main clutch. This is particularly useful when needing to change gears when working without stopping the pto. Alternatively, the L1-382 can be specified with the popular three-range HST transmission for easy operation and smooth control of implements requiring constant speeds.

Routine maintenance is simpler and quicker thanks to a one-piece fully opening hood, and a newly designed bonnet and side cover.

www.kubota-eu.com

Ventrac has added two Flail mowers to its growing list of dedicated attachments.

The two available models, Fine Cut (MW series) and Fast Cut (MY series), feature unique knife choices and offer two width options for more versatility of cut, speed, and application. Cutting widths for the decks are 1.42m (56") and 1.83m (72") and offer the most versatility for specific property needs.

The Fine Cut Flails (MW560/MW720) are equipped with scoop knives, and will achieve a quality cut with a more finished look on grassed areas mowed between three and eight times per year.

The Fast Cut Flails (MY560/MY720) feature Y-shaped knives, for taming dense and brush-type material. The Fast Cut is an excellent choice for areas of overgrown brush and woodland margins that do not require regular mowing, while providing a superior finish to that of a typical rotary rough-cut mower.



The introduction of these two new flail options complements the existing Tough Cut rotary mowing deck. All decks have a flip-up option for easy maintenance, enabling access to the knives for sharpening or replacement.

www.priceturfcare.com

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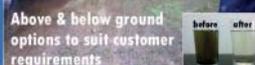


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OFFSIDE

The not so serious side
of the industry

Golfing in the dark at 12.01am

A golf club in Derbyshire said the demand for its venue was so strong that it opened as soon as it was allowed on March 29 - at one minute past midnight.

Most English golf clubs reopened when daylight started, but Morley Hayes Golf Club chose to reopen with a late-night charity tournament.



The venue's Tower Course has floodlights, which light up seven of its holes.

Seven teams of four players took part in the tournament, which had a shotgun start - with all teams teeing off from a different hole at the same time.

A silent flare was let off at 12.01am to mark the start and golfers played with special balls that lit up as soon as they are hit.

All proceeds from the tournament will be donated to the Nottingham Breast Cancer Research Centre. Strict safety measures are in place at the golf complex.

As seen on social media ...



Apparently, he's the best worker they have at Drayton Park Golf Club!

Bizarre email error

Bayern Munich forward Eric Maxim Choupo-Moting will not appear for Cameroon during the international break due to a remarkable email mix-up.

Whilst trying to call up one of their most important players, ahead of two Africa Cup of Nations qualifiers, the Cameroonian Football Federation fired out an email call-up. Except, according to a report in Bild, they accidentally sent the email to themselves.

So, the email never reached Choupo-Moting and, subsequently, the player was not officially called up to the Cameroon squad. Apparently all because of an email error.



Frankly, accidentally emailing ourselves is a not unheard of admin mistake. But it's probably best to check the 'send' address twice when you're trying to put together a squad of international footballers.



Unused refuge for brent geese taken down

A fenced-off area of coastal space has been returned to public use after geese snubbed it as a potential refuge.



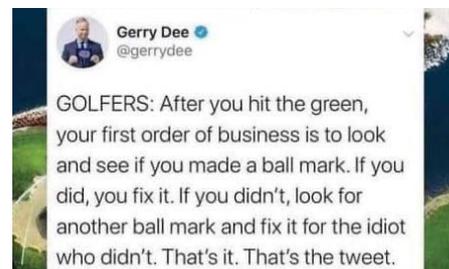
Castle Field in Southsea was set up as a sanctuary for brent geese in October with decoy birds and devices giving off goose calls to entice them in.

But, the geese spurned the site in favour of a nearby pitch-and-putt golf course and Portsmouth Cricket Club. The space was put in place to offset the use of Clarence Playing Field during ongoing sea defence works.

The council was required by Natural England to make the alternative provision for the birds, which arrive in large flocks from Siberia in early October.



Goal line technology might struggle a little with this pitch in Romania.



10 best caddy replies

10 - Golfer: "Think I'm going to drown myself in the lake." Caddy: "Think you can keep your head down that long?"

9 - Golfer: "I'd move heaven and earth to break 100 on this course." Caddy: "Try heaven, you've already moved most of the earth."

8 - Golfer: "Do you think my game is improving?" Caddy: "Yes sir, you miss the ball much closer now."

7 - Golfer: "Do you think I can get there with a 5 iron?" Caddy: "Eventually."

6 - Golfer: "You've got to be the worst caddy in the world." Caddy: "I don't think so sir. That would be too much of a coincidence."

5 - Golfer: "Please stop checking your watch all the time. It's too much of a distraction." Caddy: "It's not a watch - it's a compass."

4 - Golfer: "How do you like my game?" Caddy: "Very good sir, but personally, I prefer golf."

3 - Golfer: "Do you think it's a sin to play on Sunday?" Caddy: "The way you play, sir, it's a sin on any day."

2 - Golfer: "This is the worst course I've ever played on." Caddy: "This isn't the golf course. We left that an hour ago."

1 - Best Caddy Comment Golfer: "That can't be my ball, it's too old." Caddy: "It's been a long time since we teed off, sir."

DIARY DATES

MAY

8th: Football - Scottish FA Cup Final (scottishfa.co.uk)

15th: Football - FA Cup Final, Wembley Stadium (thefa.com)

17th-23rd: Golf - US PGA, Kiawah Island Golf Resort, South Carolina (pgatour.com)

22nd: Football - Women's FA Cup Final, Wembley Stadium (thefa.com/competitions)

29th: Football - UEFA Champions League Final, Atatürk Olympic Stadium, Istanbul (uefa.com)

JUNE

2nd-6th: Cricket - 1st Test Series, England v New Zealand, Lord's (icc-cricket.com)

11th-11th July: Football - UEFA Euro 2020 (uefa.com/uefaeuro-2020)

15th-19th: Horseracing - Royal Ascot (ascot.co.uk/royal-ascot-2021-2)

17th-20th: Golf - US Open Championship, San Diego (usopen.com)

18th-22nd: Cricket - ICC World Test Championship Final, The Ageas Bowl, Southampton (icc-cricket.com)

28th-11th July: Tennis - 2021 Wimbledon Championships (wimbledon.com)

JULY

10th: Tennis - Wimbledon Championships Ladies Final (wimbledon.com)

11th: Football - UEFA Euro 2020 Final, Wembley (uefa.com/uefaeuro-2020)

11th: Golf - Open Championship, Royal St. George's (theopen.com/royal-st-georges-149th-open)

11th: Tennis - Wimbledon Championships Men's Final (wimbledon.com)

21st-22nd: Trade Show - BIGGA Festival of Turf, Warwickshire Event Centre (bigga.org.uk)

27th-29th: Trade Show - SAGE 2021 - The Sports & Grounds Expo, The Three Counties Showground, Malvern (sportsandgrounds.co.uk)

To have your event included in this magazine diary section, please email details to kerry@pitchcare.com

QUOTE ME HAPPY

"I don't talk about anything that I'm not an expert in. But the reality is the grass is not good. All the players know how the grass is, the weather conditions are tough, but there are stadiums where the grass is better than us." **Pep Guardiola admits that Manchester City have a big problem with their Etihad Stadium pitch.**

"Why is it always for these close calls the cameras are the ones last used for someone's submission to You've Been Framed in 1993?" **The BBC's Henry Moeran bemoans the apparently dated technology being used in modern technology.**

"He makes me feel rubbish. That's pretty much where he's at the moment, he makes everyone else around him look not very good." **Ben Stokes on Joe Root after the England captain's 218 in Chennai.**

"Honestly, I haven't seen a review as bad as that since film critics saw Cats." **The BBC's Matt Henry on India's decision to call on DRS in England's first innings in the third Test.**



Joe Root

When describing Murray Walker's commentary style, the late broadcaster and writer Clive James hit the nail on the head: "In his quieter moments, he sounds like his trousers are on fire."

More on Murray. In his main job as an advertising executive he coined the phrase "Opal Fruits - made to make your mouth water."

"He's able to arrange songs with the expert ear of a pop maestro and cultivate original songs and sounds like a well-appointed groundsman." **Far Out's Jack Whitley praising the writing skills of Sir Paul McCartney.**

"I nutmegged the captains of Dortmund (Marcel Schmelzer) and City (Vincent Kompany) and they said: 'don't do that again.' They don't like it." **Jadon Sancho admits he used to perform plenty of skills in his early days at The Etihad, but as time went on he dropped that part of his game.**

"I got that wrong. When you see all the s*** that comes back and, of course the s*** is going to come back, I felt the need to contact him." **Pundit Ian Wright reached out to Arsenal striker Alexandre Lacazette after he made a stupid mistake.**

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