

PITCHCARE

The turfcare magazine from pitchcare.com

June/July 2019

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DON'T MISS

Major irrigation project

A review of the recent work undertaken at Berkhamsted Golf Club



MBE OF THE MANOR

Jim McKenzie MBE, Director of Golf Courses and Estates Management at The Celtic Manor Collection, is the latest of our Keynote interviewees. He speaks to editor Kerry Haywood about how a bucket of water thrown over him one day paved the way to a career in the golf industry

Battery Power

One noticeable development in groundcare machinery has been the emergence of a wide range of battery powered professional tools, so we invited five leading manufacturers to supply machines for testing in the diverse environment of Shrewsbury School's grounds



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Artificial intelligence?

Regular readers of this magazine - and our website articles - will know that we have been championing natural turf pitches ahead of artificials for a number of years.

Yet, in the past year, our website news pages have featured close to forty new 3G installations courtesy of the Premier League, FA Facilities Fund and the Football Foundation; the majority of these at schools or junior football clubs. That number would likely double when 'private' installations are taken into account.

Now, apart from the health concerns surrounding rubber crumb - we still await the long overdue EPA report from the States - and the issues around injuries and burns to players, there is another equally pressing concern.

With many 3G pitches up for replacement in the coming years, the problem of disposing of acres of plastic - very much the hot topic at the moment - is being highlighted across the European Union.

The Dutch appear to be taking a sensible approach to any further installations, with many existing pitches being removed and returned to natural grass. The Netherlands is a country of artificial turf. No country in the world has more artificial turf per capita. Last summer, over 200 artificial grass pitches were replaced in the Netherlands. No less than 1 million square metres of artificial turf had to be removed. All waste that cannot simply be dumped.

But, according to the media, two Dutch waste disposal companies are simply flaunting the rules.

The correct procedure is to remove the sand and rubber crumb for re-use (where possible) and recycle the plastic but, instead, across Holland, there are mountains of artificial turf building up and left unprocessed. Much of this turf ends up being used for other projects across Europe - pathways, landscaping and such like. There's even instances

of Cruyff Court artificial turf ending up being used in Africa. How do we know? Because the Cruyff Court logos are clearly visible at the new sites! Many former Eastern Bloc countries are also reusing Dutch artificial turf - illegally.

I am not, for one minute, suggesting that the same is happening here in the UK. I would like to think our waste disposal companies act in a more responsible manner. I certainly hope so.

But, as we are now twelve or so years on from the rise in popularity of 3G turf, many older installations will now be coming up for replacement here in the UK.

Much like it should be the responsibility of supermarkets to not sell single use plastic, so too should it be the responsibility of the installer, and indeed uninstaller, to ensure that end of life plastic pitches are disposed of in a correct and environmentally accountable manner.

Of course, you wouldn't have any of these issues with natural turf!

**Cheers
Dave Saltman**



SAY THAT AGAIN!

"I understand now that my skills as a golf course superintendent don't just allow me to grow grass and improve the golf course. I can use those same skills, as we all can, to grow better people and improve the community around me"

Bryan Bergner, Westmoor Country Club

"My partner Elina started working with me last year, marking out wickets by hand painting them, putting out boundary ropes, rolling and mowing. This season, she has got her first wickets out from start to finish"

Howard Waters, The Mote Cricket Club

"Given that, in the early days, there were around eighty gardeners and now we have six - and, just as an example - there are fourteen miles of hedge on the estate - the scale of the work becomes clear!"

Gill Forrester, Elvaston Castle

"If you think of your irrigation system as a single, large, complex machine which spreads over 100 acres, you can begin to understand how important it is"

Gerald Bruce, Berkhamsted Golf Club

"We need colleges and our governing bodies to work together to help promote what we do as a career, and one where, if you work hard, it can be very rewarding"

Chris Ralph, Plymouth Argyle

Meet the Pitchcare team



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Issue 85 June/July 2019

Jim McKenzie MBE, The Celtic Manor Collection

COVER STORY: MBE of The Manor

Jim McKenzie MBE, Director of Golf Courses and Estates Management at The Celtic Manor Collection, is the latest of our Keynote interviewees. He speaks to editor Kerry Haywood about how a bucket of water thrown over him one day, paved the way for his career in the golf industry. **P46**

GOLF

Commitment pays off

Harleyford Golf Club lies about two miles west of Marlow, Buckinghamshire on a country estate near Harleyford Manor, which dates back to the 13th century. This is where Lee Williams met up with BIGGA award-winning Course Manager Craig Earnshaw. **P14**

Excellence personified

It would need to be something special to prise Peter Todd away from the London Club where he had 'grown' it to become a European Tour venue. So the opportunity to take on one of the largest new builds the UK has seen in recent years was one that he simply could not turn down. **P22**

'Pioneering' spirit

Looe Golf Club sits beside the A387 on the main road into the south Cornish fishing port of Looe. It occupies a high point known as the Bindown and, as a result, offers up some truly spectacular views over the coastline and surrounding countryside. On one of the wettest days a dry spring had provided, Lee Williams met with Mat Edwards to discover more about the course and his diverse role. **P30**

King of the Castle

The beautiful Cotswold village of Castle Combe is perhaps best known for its motor racing circuit, but nestled away in 350 acres of rolling Wiltshire countryside is the Peter Alliss and Clive Clark designed Manor House Golf Club, complete with mature oak trees, manicured fairways and spectacular par 3s, together with the By Brook dissecting the course to bring both drama and beauty. **P38**

WINTER SPORTS

March of the green army

Plymouth Argyle are one of two English Football League clubs in the county of Devon in south-west England; the other being Exeter City, their nearest and closest rivals. Next season, the two clubs will renew their rivalry in League Two following Plymouth's relegation by the narrowest of margins and Exeter's failure to make the fourth tier play-offs in similarly unfortunate circumstances. The club are nicknamed 'The Pilgrims', after the historic sailing to America made by the Mayflower out of this important Royal Navy city, whilst their supporters are the 'Green Army'. **P56**



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PRODUCT TEST

The charge for new groundcare tools

One noticeable development in groundcare machinery has been the emergence of a wide range of battery powered professional tools, so we invited five leading manufacturers to supply machines for testing in the diverse environment of Shrewsbury School's grounds, by kind permission of Head Groundsman Andy Richards and with the help of his team. **P64**

SCHOOLS & COLLEGES

Straight shooting

Pocklington School is an independent day and boarding school for boys and girls aged 3-18. Located in Pocklington, a pleasant, small market town able to boast the services of a Town Crier. David Mears visited recently and met Andrew Woodhall, Head Groundsman at this old established school situated at the foot of the Yorkshire Wolds in the East Riding of Yorkshire. **P74**

SUMMER SPORTS

Howard's Way

Howard Waters has enjoyed the best of both worlds, playing cricket at The Mote and tending its idyllic grounds, but his journey has proved to be a challenging one, Greg Rhodes discovers. **P82**

MULTI SPORTS

South coast's spice of life

The Saffrons Sports Club, a delightful multi sports venue on the south coast was, and still is, part of the Duke of Devonshire's estate, where in Victorian times the most expensive spice in the world was harvested. Neville Johnson visited the eponymous Saffrons to find out more about it, with a surprising discovery. **P90**

PUBLIC PLACES

Public patronage a challenge

Balancing the need to preserve the unique features of a historic estate with the demands of free public access to a council-owned country park is a challenge that many grounds managers would find daunting. But for the happy team at Elvaston Castle Country Park in Derbyshire, it is all in a day's work. **P98**

Left: Mat Edwards, General Manager and Head Greenkeeper at Looe Golf Club in Cornwall

EQUESTRIAN

Follows the leader

Lee Williams headed over the Pennines to meet Pontefract Racecourse's Head Groundsman Martin Follows; a man whose career began as a car mechanic and tyre fitter before going 'flat out' into the equestrian world. **P108**

INDUSTRY

The quintessential British mower

Very few lawnmower brands can claim to have as vast and rich a heritage as British manufacturer Hayter. They have designed and manufactured quality lawn mowers at their headquarters in Hertfordshire since 1946, and are proud to hold the Royal Warrant as supplier of horticultural equipment to Her Majesty the Queen. **P114**

CONSERVATION

An apple a day?

With the move towards sustainability, wildlife encouragement and protection and membership enhancement, how many have considered planting an orchard? As Peter Britton discovers, there are many benefits from doing so. **P120**

Scrape out a future for pollinators

Corhampton Golf Club in Hampshire won this year's prestigious Syngenta Operation Pollinator Award, presented at BTME. However, its work in pioneering restoration of natural downland habitats has also won the praises of ecology conservation bodies and the club's own members alike. **P126**

TECHNICAL

Major irrigation project

Berkhamsted Golf Club has installed a comprehensive new irrigation system which will see a seven-fold increase in sprinklers and better playing conditions at the 129-year old golf club. Andy Hiseman gives us a review of the project. **P130**

Management techniques for longevity

Successful pond and lake management, especially for recycled waters, begins with a basic understanding of how the three mechanisms that operate in a pond or lake affect its overall condition says Reg Varney, international region manager for water quality management specialist, Otterbine **P136**



Battery power test day



Pocklington School



Elvaston Castle



Corhampton Golf Club

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Eddie Seaward MBE

The turfcare industry pays tribute to a really 'gentle' man

The team at Pitchcare were saddened to hear the news that former Head Groundsman at the All-England Lawn Tennis Club (AELTC), Eddie Seaward MBE, has passed away.

Eddie was head groundsman for twenty-two years and was at the helm during the AELTC's most vibrant period of change, which provided a number of challenges, including the roof over centre court in 2009 and the hosting of the 2012 Olympics tennis tournament just a matter of weeks after the annual Grand Slam event.

In that same year, he featured in the Pitchcare magazine as our Keynote Interview. Close to retirement, but with a busy schedule still ahead of him, it speaks volumes for the man that he found the time to impart his knowledge to our readers.

Eddie Seaward never sought the limelight. To him it was all about the team working with him, yet he was always prepared to pass on his considerable knowledge through training and education, or simply by 'having a chat'.

Tributes have come from all sectors of the turfcare industry.

Neil Stubley, who took over from Eddie in 2012, and worked as part of his team for many years,



commented; "Words cannot express the deep sadness of the news this morning of the passing of our former Head Groundsman Eddie Seaward. He did so much for the industry but, more importantly, what an inspiration he was as a boss, mentor and friend to myself and many more. RIP."

Peter Craig, once touted as his replacement, said: "He was a man of integrity and kindness with a mountain of knowledge which he made his goal to share. The industry was blessed to have him and will be poorer without him. I will never forget Eddie. RIP."

Pitchcare Managing Director Dave Saltman first met Eddie twenty years ago. "I was a fresh-faced young groundsman with the seeds of an

idea for an online training and education resource; one that Eddie embraced and supported throughout his career. He was a true 'gentle' man who always had the welfare of the industry close to his heart. He will be sorely missed."

Everyone who came into contact with Eddie will have learned something from him. His gentle manner and quiet sense of humour hid an inner steeliness to ensure everything was as it should be and, allied to his willingness to impart his knowledge, he will have inspired and influenced so many people currently working in the industry.

A true legend of the turfcare profession.

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BARENBRUG

Emergency Chafer Summit a success

The Turf and Amenity industry united to declare that an integrated pest management strategy (IPM) is needed for Chafer and Leatherjacket control. This was the conclusion of the sell-out Emergency Chafer and Leatherjacket Summit that took place recently.

With many chemicals now removed from the turf and amenity sector, crucial practices such as monitoring and using a range of preventative measures within the IPM approach was encouraged. It was also recognised that the identification and understanding the life cycle of these pests is key to successful control.

With limited time to act upon, a cross section of industry stakeholders gathered at Burton Albion Football Club and agreed that a co-ordinated industry-led Chafer and Leatherjacket centred strategy from all areas of the supply chain is needed.

Speakers covered topics including pests and disease problem, natural solutions - including plant extracts and biocontrol - biostimulants,



pest monitoring and case studies on Chafer and Leatherjackets.

Alternative controls, such as biopesticides and entomopathogenic nematodes, were discussed throughout the event and attendees were encouraged to consider options available based on plant susceptibility, growth stage, crop culture (indoor/outdoor) and to focus on the behaviour and life cycle of the Chafer and Leatherjacket in identifying suitable products, treatment times and application methods.

The event established the true extent of the problem faced by the turf and amenity sector and gave a more in-depth look at the pests and the current controls available. An important element of the day was hearing first hand from course managers who had successfully

reduced their reliance on conventional chemical treatments. Phillip Chiverton, course manager at The Grove Golf Resort shared his experience where chafer grubs had caused around £70,000 worth of damage. Phillip said, "There was light at the end of the tunnel as how effective a nematode biological approach has been which provided up to 80% control in year one."

Speaking in the emergency summit, Prof John Moverley, Amenity Forum said: "The demand for high quality pest-free turf is higher than ever and greenkeepers, racecourse managers and groundsman's jobs are all the more strained because, at present there, is no 'silver bullet' control option due to the removal of conventional chemical pesticides".

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Ascot honoured

Ascot Racecourse Honoured in Racecourse Groundstaff Awards

The Ascot Racecourse Groundstaff team celebrated the start of the turf flat season by lifting the Racecourse Groundstaff Award for dual-purpose racecourse, sponsored by Pitchcare, Watt Fences and Fornells.

A presentation party, including sponsors Bill Watt and Tom Challinor of Pitchcare, were on hand to award the celebratory plaque to Head Groundsman Reon Sanford and his team during a race meeting in May.

Upon winning the award in 2018, the judges commented: "Ascot produced a top-class racing surface throughout the year and the course during Royal Ascot was impeccable. Despite only having 1.6mm of rain in June, the surface was consistent and safe throughout the five days."

"Their scientific approach to turf husbandry is one we encourage all racecourses to employ and the results have made a significant improvement to the racing surface. Ascot excels in the Continuing Professional Development of their team, showcased most recently when two members of the team were sent on a study tour to Sydney and Melbourne to learn more about international practices of turf husbandry."



John Richards, Operations Director of sponsors Pitchcare, commented; "Last year was a very difficult one for all racecourse groundstaff; a very cold spring followed by a very dry summer. Despite these challenges, the work of the team at Ascot was exceptional, providing a top class surface throughout the year which has earned it this richly deserved accolade."

Holly Cook, Racecourse Services Manager at the RCA, added; "the Racecourse Groundstaff

Awards recognise the exceptional commitment, dedication and excellence of Racecourse Groundstaff at British Racecourses, and we were thrilled to be able to celebrate the presentation of the Award for best dual-purpose racecourse 2018 to the Groundstaff Team at Ascot Racecourse."



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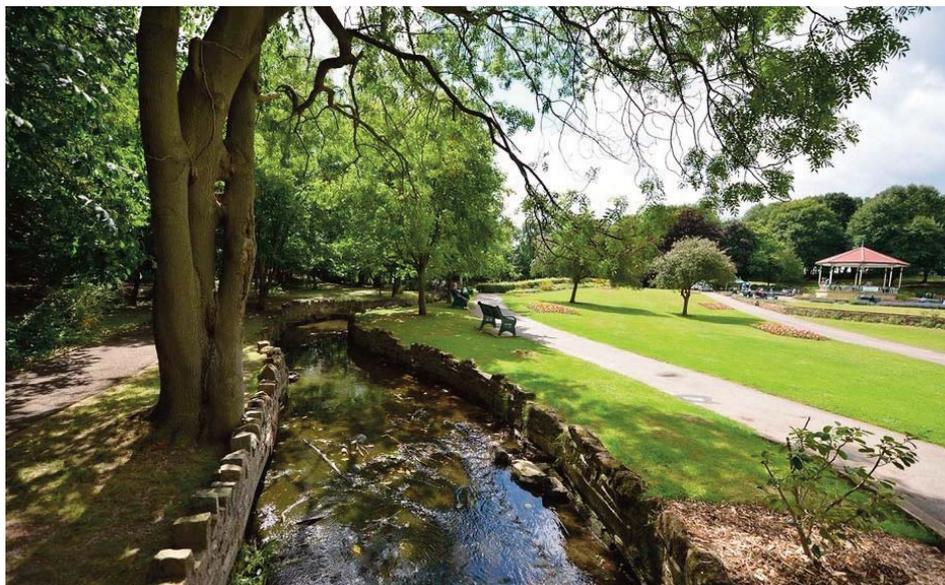
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Fields In Trust launch nationwide campaign



Chairman of Trustees at Fields in Trust, Tim Phillips, said, "Parks and green spaces are not simply nice to have, they are a necessity for healthy happy communities, positively impacting on a range of key wellbeing issues from physical and mental health to social cohesion."

"This Award recognises the vital role that local parks play in our neighbourhoods, bringing people together and creating places for play, sport and the enjoyment of nature; places that should be protected for everyone. We want to celebrate these much-loved green spaces and invite all park users to vote for their favourite."

Nominations for the UK's Best Park open as Fields in Trust publish new research. The Green Space Index reveals that over 2.5 million people across Great Britain live more than ten-minutes-walk from their nearest park or green space.

The charity has developed the Green Space Index which, for the first time, uses new Ordnance Survey data to comprehensively analyse park and green space provision across Great Britain.

UK-wide green space charity, Fields in Trust, has launched a campaign to find the UK's Best Park.

The competition is open to all public green spaces across the UK through an online

nomination at www.fieldsintrust.org/best-park

Having first been awarded in 2015, the UK's Best Park Award returns this year in a new summer time-slot which sees it form part of Fields in Trust's 'Summer of Parks'.

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Tree of the Year 2018 - Nellie's Tree (Photo © Rob Grange / WTML)

The Woodland Trust is searching for the UK's most spectacular trees

The Woodland Trust is searching for the most loved, visually stunning tree, with the most fascinating story, for Tree of the Year 2019.

Now in its sixth year, Tree of the Year highlights and celebrates special trees across the UK. A tree may be a village's oldest inhabitant, a founding figure in a region's identity, or a landmark in the nation's story.

If it's phenomenal-looking too, then that's even better! Any individual, group or organisation can nominate a tree and share its story at www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/treeoftheyear/ from now until 19 July 2019. The entries will then be shortlisted by a panel of independent experts before facing a public vote.

It could be a majestic, knobbly, knotted centuries-old oak planted at the time of the War of the Roses, that's endured the ravages of time. It might be a mighty beech tree grown from a seed planted by a child in the field behind their house. Whatever the species, whatever the story, it's what sets it apart from the rest the Trust wants to hear.

Last year's English winner, Nellie's Tree - three beech trees grafted together into the shape of the letter 'N' - from Aberford near Leeds, stole hearts with its century-old story of love and courtship. Nellie's Tree went on to represent the UK in the European contest based in Brussels.

Lead campaigner at the Woodland Trust, Kaye Brennan, said:

"Tree of the Year has helped discover lots of amazing trees - but nothing so far that could

beat the best in the European contest. We know that we have some of the most incredible trees in the world - but we need the public's support to find them, and vote for a winner. Tell us your tree's stories. What do trees mean to you? Why are they important to you? What is the best known, most loved tree in your city, town or village and why?"

"You can also share your special trees on Twitter and Instagram using the hashtag #TreeOfTheYear."

Shortlisted trees could potentially be eligible for up to £1,000 of tree care products and services to help secure their future and celebrate their importance, thanks to support from players of People's Postcode Lottery.

One tree to be awarded a care package was the Parliament Oak that was shortlisted in 2017.

Ian Major, community heritage landscape manager at the Sherwood Forest Trust, said: "All trees are special, but we have connection to trees that should be celebrated. Tree of the Year is a great way for anyone to celebrate a tree that is special to them. Sherwood Forest has hundreds of ancient oaks and many amazing trees, some with stories, others with special memories to the public."

"We got good support from the Woodland Trust and being shortlisted helped our tree and increased the visibility of our organisation. Even though the Parliament Oak didn't win, this ancient oak benefitted from a £500 care award."

"The money can be spent in many ways, at your



Christoph Städler (centre) takes over from Ross McMurray (left), with Tim Lobb (right) becoming vice president

Städler takes the EIGCA reins

German golf course architect Christoph Städler, the principal of Städler Golf Courses, has been appointed president of the European Institute of Golf Course Architects, following the organisation's annual meeting in Paris, France.

Städler takes over from European Golf Design's Ross McMurray, who has led the EIGCA for the past two years. Tim Lobb of Lobb + Partners becomes the institute's vice president.

In a speech to attendees of the meeting, Städler - who played golf for the German national team from 1968 to 1987 - said that he was inspired to move into golf course architecture in the 1980s, after competing at Pete Dye's Teeth of the Dog course in the Dominican Republic.

Like Dye, Städler had worked in the financial services industry before turning to golf design. But, unlike Dye, said Städler, most of the golf courses he has built since the foundation of his firm in 1987 have required modest budgets. Städler said he intends to promote affordable and sustainable golf courses during his presidency.

Städler has become well known for his sustainable approach to golf course design, recently evidenced in his overhaul and extension of Golf Resort Oeschberghof in Germany, owned by the family responsible for supermarket chain Aldi.

discretion, a celebration or a survey for instance. The Sherwood Forest Trust wholeheartedly recommend that you nominate your favourite tree."

The winner of Tree of the Year 2019 will represent the UK in the battle for European Tree of the Year in early 2020.

www.woodlandtrust.org.uk/treeoftheyear



BASIS Points for magazine subscribers

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

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David McGregor



Matthew Gourlay



Andrew Sprunt

Superb 6 set Master Greenkeeper record

The British and International Golf Greenkeepers Association is proud to announce that a record number of members have achieved the Master Greenkeeper certificate following examinations in April.

The six BIGGA members have joined the ranks of course managers, head greenkeepers and superintendents who can count themselves among the most highly-qualified and respected individuals within the industry.

First awarded in 1991, the Master Greenkeeper Certificate is awarded to those BIGGA members who have reached the highest standards of greenkeeping and golf course management.

To be eligible, a BIGGA member must have spent at least 10 years working in greenkeeping, with a minimum of three in a head greenkeeper,

course manager or superintendent role. They must also have been responsible for their current golf course or courses for a minimum of two years.

The successful BIGGA members who achieved Master Greenkeeper status are:

Bob Vaughey, Rolling Hills Country Club, California, USA;

Sam Evans, Fulwell Golf Club, UK;

Rob Clare, Brough Golf Club, UK;

David McGregor, Westwood Country Club, Virginia, USA;

Matthew Gourlay, Colbert Hill Golf Course, Kansas City, USA;

Andrew Sprunt, Florissant City Golf Course, Missouri, USA.

In achieving the certificate, Andy has become BIGGA's 80th Master Greenkeeper.

For more information about Master Greenkeeper, visit the BIGGA website and click on Master Greenkeeper Certificate in the Education tab.

To find out more about the latest group of Master Greenkeepers, head to the BIGGA website.

www.bigga.org.uk



Work begins on the 2022 Commonwealth Games athletes village

Construction work has begun on the Birmingham 2022 Commonwealth Games Village - the largest infrastructure project directly related to the Games.

The £520m development in Perry Barr will provide a home for around 6,500 athletes and officials during the Games and is due for completion in early 2022.

Post games, the development will be converted into more than 1,400 homes, forming the first phase of a long-term regeneration plan for Perry Barr.

In legacy mode, the village will sit alongside improved open space, a redeveloped Alexander Stadium and related community, sport and leisure facilities as well as transport improvements.

The masterplan for the village was designed by a team led by local firms Glancy Nicholls Architects and Glenn Howells Architects.

"Perry Barr will provide a magnificent base for athletes in the summer of 2022 - and then go on to provide a genuine long-term Commonwealth Games legacy, by helping house the people of Birmingham in high-quality homes," said Ian Ward, leader of Birmingham City Council.

Just 82p per hour!

Qatar World Cup stadium migrant workers being paid as little as 82p per hour!

The Daily Mirror has discovered that an eye-watering £5 billion is being spent on seven new stadia and infrastructure including transport and roads, built by an army of 28,000 workers who are being paid as little as 82p per hour.

Slogging away in blistering heat in Qatar, an army of workers (many from Nepal) is doing the graft so the super-rich nation can bask in the glory of hosting the World Cup in 2022.

That paltry amount is the minimum wage of 750 Qatari Riyal (£158) a month for a typical 48-hour week.

The nation is ranked the world's richest and could ask the world cup contractors to pay far more than this.

Visiting some of the venues being built, the Mirror spoke to workers - many who are from among the poorest nations - and found out how little they are paid.

Unite assistant general secretary Gail Cartmail described pay, working conditions and accommodation in Qatar for migrant construction workers as "appalling" in many cases.

She added: "We secured agreement for inspections on construction and accommodation with workers' committees."

"While a huge step forward in a country where trade unions are illegal, it is limited to the World Cup venues."

May Romanos, Gulf Researcher of Amnesty



International, said: "Things are not changing as fast as Qatar would like us to believe."

"We believe that [football's world governing body] FIFA has a responsibility to respect human rights in relation to workers on infrastructure."

"In October 2017, Qatar introduced a temporary minimum salary of QR750 per month. It is less than the QR900 that the Nepali government has requested. Qatar risks falling behind on its promise to tackle widespread labour exploitation and abuse of migrant workers."

Oil-rich Qatar owns French football club Paris St-Germain, and paid £198million for Brazilian star Neymar two years ago on a contract said to be worth £500,000 a week.

£5billion is being spent in Qatar on the new stadiums as well as transport links and roads. There had been reports of 1,200 deaths of workers, but organisers say there have been three fatalities recorded in accidents on construction of the venues.



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Rise in salaries say GCSAA

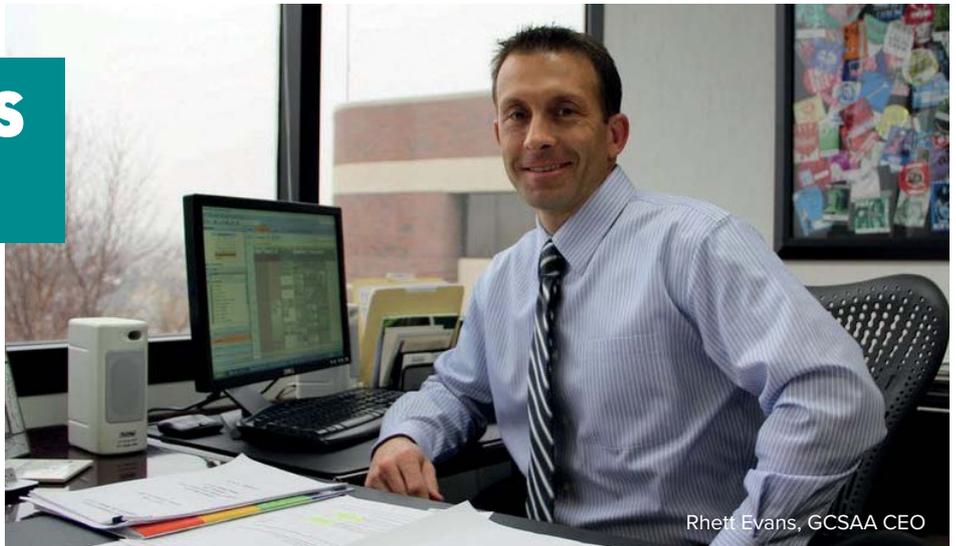
GCSAA Survey shows rise in salaries for Golf Course Superintendents

Employers of golf course superintendents continue to reinforce the value they place in golf course facility leaders as the average annual salary for the profession climbed to more than US\$93,000 (£72,750) in 2019.

The average salary and additional data come from the latest biennial Compensation and Benefits Report from the Golf Course Superintendents Association of America (GCSAA).

The 2019 report showed that the US\$93,176 average salary was an increase of 4.5% over the 2017 report, continuing the trend of increases in every two-year period since GCSAA began tracking the data in 1993. Superintendents' salaries have more than doubled in the last quarter century since that first report, when the average salary was US\$44,500 (£34,816).

Certified golf course superintendents, those who have achieved the highest level of recognition through education, experience and service, saw an increase of more than one per



Rhett Evans, GCSAA CEO

cent over 2017. Their average salary rose to US\$111,250 (£87,000), an increase of US\$1,630 (£1,275) over 2017.

Assistant superintendents and golf course equipment managers also saw increases in their incomes. Assistant salaries rose 7.3%, and equipment managers saw a seven per cent increase from the average salary two years ago.

"It is heartening to see golf course owners continue to invest in golf course superintendents and their staff," said Rhett Evans, GCSAA CEO. "They know the value of these highly educated professionals who oversee the golf facility's top asset."

The report also gives a good picture of the

profile of GCSAA superintendents and their operations. The average age of a superintendent is 46.5 years, and they have spent 16.4 years in the profession. The average number of years superintendents have spent in their current position stayed steady at 10.5 years.

Between December 2018 and January 2019, the association research firm Industry Insights sent the 2019 survey to all GCSAA Class A and Class B members and the response rate was 45%, with a margin of error of +/-1.3% and a 95% level of confidence



Obituary - Andrew Rodwell



SCH (Supplies) Ltd founder and former managing director Andrew Rodwell has died age 80. Many will know Andrew from the company's 33 years of extensive attendance at turf machinery shows across the country.

In 1986, Andrew recognised that the ordinary lawn mower tractor was capable of a lot more than merely mowing grass. With the help and encouragement of Malcolm Vandenberg at Wests Engineering Ltd, the pair set about designing and manufacturing a range of grass care machinery. Before long, SCH (Supplies) Ltd was created and began selling products to a handful

of local dealers.

Through sheer hard work and determination the business flourished and expanded, and now has a catalogue of over 200 products, and a vast network containing hundreds of machinery dealers across the country.

From the early days of SCH, Andrew was an advocate of training local aspiring engineers. He nurtured and mentored his young apprentices, some of whom have remained with SCH for over twenty years. The business now employs 25 people who design, manufacture and deliver the machinery.

In December 2018, Andrew and his family decided to hand over the running of SCH to two of his long term employees - John Free and Ian Holder. SCH had been Andrew's passion for over thirty years, and his hard work has put the company's future on a successful trajectory. SCH will continue to trade as normal, so that his legacy is maintained.

Andrew has been described as a larger than life character, he was gregarious, often hilarious and a great British eccentric. He had a passion for anything mechanical from vintage tractors to classic cars. He will be sorely missed by SCH and all who knew him.

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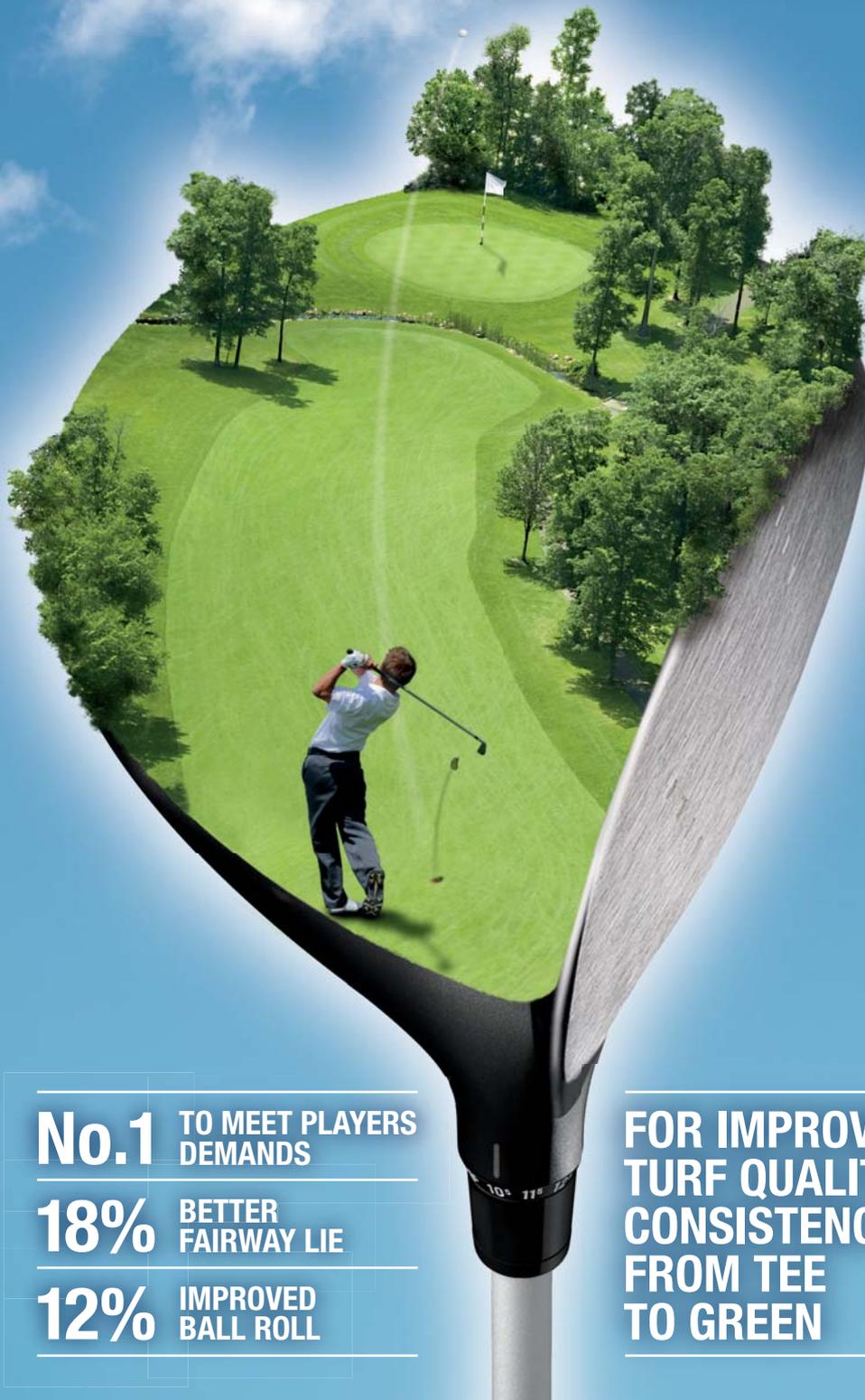


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Harleyford Golf Club

Commitment pays off

Harleyford Golf Club lies about two miles west of Marlow, Buckinghamshire on a country estate near Harleyford Manor, which dates back to the 13th century. This is where Lee Williams met up with BIGGA award-winning Course Manager **Craig Earnshaw**



As I turn into the entrance to the golf course, I am greeted by a security guard who points me in the direction of the clubhouse. A long driveway takes me through the course where I then get a glimpse of the beautifully converted flint barn and other Victorian buildings that, in the 19th century, formed the farm element of the Harleyford Estate.

As I walk towards the club shop to meet Craig, I can't help but notice one of many delightful driftwood sculptures by James Doran-Webb. These are dotted around the course providing a great focal point. Craig tells me the owner first saw the sculptures at the Chelsea Flower Show and fell in love with them. James now uses the course to showcase his art.

At fifteen years of age, Craig completed his work experience at Dartmouth Golf and Country Club in Devon in his holidays, influenced by his cricket coach Terry Farkins, who was also the Head Greenkeeper at the time.

"At sixteen, I was offered a youth training scheme, which I accepted. I spent six years at Dartmouth, before it was suggested I should move on to further my career. I moved to Harleyford Golf Club as assistant greenkeeper for one year, but was then offered the chance to return to

Dartmouth as the first assistant, where I did another four years working closely with the mechanic. A job then came up for a Deputy Course Manager at the Lambourne Golf Club not far from here. They wanted someone with mechanical experience, so I got that job. After two years at Lambourne, a job became available within Crown Golf as deputy course manager, but I knew they were looking for a course manager at the same time, so I went for both jobs. I got the deputy position but, within three months, I was made course manager at Oak Park Golf Club in Surrey. Six years later, I got a phone call from Harleyford asking me to come and sit an interview for the roll of course manager."

Craig has dyslexia but has never let it hold him back when it comes to gaining his qualifications and improving his knowledge. "I found it very difficult to do college work during my first six years at Dartmouth. I never really thought I would make it further than being an assistant. My old boss, Terry Parkins, really pushed me and gave me the confidence to go for it and he has helped me throughout my career. Even when I was at Crown, I would get people to write on the board for me, but over the years my confidence has grown."

I certainly admire how Craig has not let his dyslexia hold him back. He now holds



Craig Earnshaw





many qualifications, including NVQ Level 2 and 3 Sportsturf, carried out a BASIS course at the STRI, supervisory management courses, spraying certificates PA1, 2 and 3, chainsaw licence and would like to take more courses in the future.

When Craig first took the job at Harleyford, the club had money problems and, within a year, things went from bad to worse. Craig explains; “there was no money for products, and machines were constantly breaking down. We were leaving machines out on the course, as our sheds are a mile and a half away. It takes us twenty minutes to get from the greenkeeping compound to the first.”

“In June 2014, the administrators came in and, to make matters worse, due to all the hours I had to work, I lost my marriage. Four of us were doing our very best, for about a year, to keep the golf course up to the same standards of the surrounding courses.”

I told Craig that I could directly relate to what he went through, as I lost my first marriage to the job. Like many

greenkeepers and groundsman around the country, we don't just do the job for the money but for the love of it.

Craig continues; “I couldn't just sit back and watch the course deteriorate, pride for the job keeps you wanting to provide the best possible surfaces.”

Once the course went into administration, the landowner bought the club off the bank and, with Craig's help, wanted to get the course back to its former condition. “The owners have been great to me. After I lost my marriage, I needed somewhere to live, so they let me put a static caravan in the compound where I have lived for four and a half years now. From July 2014, that's when Harleyford started for me, as the two previous years were poor. They weren't suddenly able to throw loads of money at it as they had bought the club in July, so had none of the membership money from April, which would have usually taken us through the year. It was made clear to me it was going to be a difficult few years, but I was assured that, whatever money the



When we had the event, we went through appalling weather conditions, minimal staff, poor machinery and struggled with the distance from the shed



Many driftwood sculptures appear around the course



30-40 tonne of sub soil on the 14th as part of recent bunker renovations



Bunker on 14th - April 2019



We need to be going into schools, advertising what some people have achieved in this industry, show them it's a career, and that you don't need a BA honours

club made, would be put back in and, to be honest, they have stuck to their word. Alongside the investment badly needed in my department, they were also having to fix problems in the clubhouse."

The club is now in a healthy position where they can allocate more money into Craig's department, and the first big project was the new and very impressive greenkeepers compound, which I had a tour of. "The owner came to me and

asked me what I would rather have - new machinery or a new compound up on the golf course? I explained that we needed to be up at the course before we invested in machinery so, three years on from our first conversation, we moved in this May. At the same time, I have had to remind him that, although three years ago machinery wasn't the main issue, it is now! We have now signed and are awaiting delivery of a new fleet of Toro machinery, supplied by

Oliver Landpower, a local Toro dealer. The new compound, combined with the new machinery, will be a game changer once everything is in place. It will mean that more time will be spent out on the course, and a lot fewer machinery breakdowns will make us more time efficient, which will show in the coming years."

The new greenkeeper facility is being built in an area of outstanding natural beauty; this has meant the wastewater

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Getting Personal

Craig Earnshaw - I would love to know what he won't tell us!

Who are you? Craig Earnshaw, Course Manager, Harleyford Golf Club.

Family status. Engaged.

Who's your hero and why?

My brother. I always look up to him and he's the nicest guy I know.

What would you change about yourself? My dicky shoulder.

What's your guilty pleasure?

Chocolate and gin - but not together!

What's been the highlight of your career so far? Winning an award with my greenkeeping team.

What are your pet peeves?

The toilet roll on the wrong way or people who drag their feet.

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

Wherever Cheryl Cole lives.

What's the best part of your job? Mornings on the course.

... and the worst? Trying to recruit staff.

Do you have a lifetime ambition? Yes, but it's not printable.

Favourite record, and why? Dune Buggy by The Presidents of the USA. I remember it from my old cricket days.

Who would you choose to spend a romantic evening with? Madonna ... fifteen years ago.

If you won the lottery, what is the first thing you would do? Visit the local BMW bike dealership.

If you were to describe yourself as a musical instrument, what would you be and why? The violin as I'm very hard to play.

Which three people, living or dead, would you invite to a dinner party? Tuffers, Prince Harry and Martin Johnson.



If you could be anyone for a day, who would it be and why? God, as I would love to play with the weather.

Do you have any bad habits? Lots.

... or any good ones? Probably not.

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

What are you reading at the moment? Again, not printable.

What's the best advice you have ever been given? Work hard play hard, never give up and communicate as best you can in work and home life.

What's your favourite smell? The sea.

What do you do in your spare time? Watch sport and socialise.

What's the daftest work related question you have ever been asked? Can we play golf today? (When there is four inches of snow on the greens).

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

What three words would you use to describe yourself? Friendly, happy and a workaholic.

What talent would you like to have? I have always wanted to twizzle a pen around my thumb.

What law/legislation would you like to see introduced? To not ban a product if there is nothing as good to replace it.



12th green

for the washdown area for machines has had to be below ground. The roof tiles used have had to fit in with the other buildings around the estate, it had to be oak clad, with specific brickwork at lower parts, and also had to be low enough so you can only see the roof from the road. They have faced many little challenges along the way, but it will all be worth it in the end.

The next few months will see Craig going through some staff changes. "I have a greenkeeping contractor who has worked with me for a while now, and he has always said if a job came up at his local club where he has been a member for twenty years, he

would take it, and it's literally just come up, so we will lose him. I will also lose one of my other qualified lads due to unforeseen circumstances. We were working at six staff and this will now go down to five full-time staff, and two part-time summer staff."

"We have promoted our trainee, Aaron Hurdwell, who has been greenkeeping since the age of sixteen. He is now eighteen and completed his NVQ Level 2. He got into the final of the Toro student greenkeeper of the year awards last year, which was a great achievement. He now wants to get another twelve months experience under his belt before he starts his



Drainage issues on the 10th



NVQ Level 3. I then have my Deputy, Joe Drummond, who has his NVQ Level 2 & 3, plus his PA1, 2 & 6 spraying certificates.”

Craig tells me 2108 was a memorable year for him and the team. “I applied for the Bernhard Delegation trip for a second time. I got an interview and thought I did really well, but a month later I got a phone

We have quite a lot of wildflowers that grow around our deep rough, so we cut and collect but, this year, we had to leave it out as I was getting squeezed on my budget

call saying I didn't get in. I was gutted. So, I applied again, got the interview and, whilst I didn't think it went as well as the previous one, I got in. It was a great feeling. Also, last year in January, we went to watch the welcome ceremony at BTME where they give out the awards. Whilst watching the awards, I nudged my Deputy and said 'that will be us next year', because I knew we had the Matchroom Sport Championship on the PGA EuroPro Tour coming up and it was for an event award. My Deputy replied, 'it would be brilliant just to be sitting down there as nominees'.”

“When we had the event, we went through appalling weather conditions, minimal staff, poor machinery and struggled with the distance from the shed as well. A lot of people who I knew in the industry wrote off to BIGGA nominating us and, at Christmas time, BIGGA phoned me

to say we had been nominated for the Championship Greenkeeping Performance of the Year award at BTME. We were up against Matthew Wharton CGCS MG and the team at Carolina Golf Club for preparing and maintaining the course during the 2018 United States Mid-Amateur Championship, just a week after the club was hit by Tropical Storm Florence; and Stewart Duff and the team at Gullane Golf Club for preparing and maintaining the course during the Aberdeen Standard Investments Men's and Ladies Scottish Opens 2018. I didn't think we would win it so, when it was announced we had won, the lads and me were over the moon and it was nice to share the moment with my girlfriend who got up on stage with us, as she helped us out for two weeks solid, as well as working her own job.”

Craig and his team are currently carrying out bunker work around the course. “We



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Whilst watching the awards, I nudged my Deputy and said 'that will be us next year'. He replied, 'it would be brilliant just to be sitting down there as nominees'



What's in the shed

Old machinery

Jacobsen Eclipse 322
 Jacobsen Greens King 522
 Ransomes HR-6010
 John Deere 2653B
 Toro 5400 Reelmaster x 2
 Toro Greensmaster 3250
 Toro Multi Pro 5800 sprayer
 Toro Workman MDX x 2
 Turf Iron
 Kubota tractor
 New Holland tractor
 Volvo mini excavator
 John Deere 22B x 4
 John Deere 26A x 3

New Machinery

Toro Greensmaster TriFlex 3420 x 2
 Toro Groundmaster 4300
 Ransomes HR-6010
 Toro Reelmaster 5410 x 2
 Toro Greensmaster 3250
 Toro Multi Pro 5800 sprayer
 Toro Workman MDX x 5
 Turf Iron
 Kubota tractor
 New Holland tractor
 Volvo mini excavator
 Toro Greensmaster 1000 x 4
 Toro Greensmaster 1600
 Toro Groundmaster Sidewinder



Left to right: Aaron Hurdwell, James Otterway, Craig Earnshaw, Martyn Metcalf and Joe Drummond

had a bunker on the 14th hole, which was really deep, making it difficult to maintain, with really high faces to Flymo and was stony and right into the chalk. We have raised it up using fill from the new compound, which was handy, and we have revetted it. We have also reshaped various other bunkers around the course."

Craig does what he can to help improve the ecology around the course. "We have quite a lot of wildflowers that grow around our deep rough, so we cut and collect but, this year, we had to leave it out as I was getting squeezed on my budget as we had to reseed some fairways after the drought but, following a year of little growth, it doesn't matter too much. We have deer on the site, buzzards and red kites that nest and we see kestrels. Whenever we cut trees, we put together eco piles, and I would like to get some bee colonies around the course. I feel once we have some of the big projects out of the way, this will be one I would like to get my teeth into."

Craig tells me his thoughts on the industry. "I think the industry now is in a good place, but I'm apprehensive about the

next ten years, because it's tough to get people into it. I think we have had a lot of education over the last ten years, with a lot of people who know what they are doing who can go and get the big jobs. But, in ten years' time, I think we are going to struggle because people don't want to come into it and that's where we are going to find the issues. We need to change the way the industry is viewed now to get people in so that doesn't happen."

"We need to be going into schools, advertising what some people have achieved in this industry, show them it's a career, and that you don't need a BA honours in turf technology to be a course manager; that you can achieve it by working hard and progressing through the ranks."



HARLEYFORD



New maintenance facility nearing completion in April 2019

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Royal Norwich Golf Club

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It would need to be something special to prise **Peter Todd** away from the London Club where he had 'grown' it to become a European Tour venue. So the opportunity to take on one of the largest new builds the UK has seen in recent years was one that he simply could not turn down. Blair Ferguson met up with him in the Turfcare Centre of Excellence; just one of many innovations at the all new Royal Norwich Golf Club



From day one of planning, Royal Norwich Golf Club aimed to do things differently. Their opportunity to build a new £17m golf club at Weston Longville was treated as a chance to construct a benchmark facility in the region; one built on a sustainable model that moved away from being a traditional committee run members club.

In fact, the entire face of the club has changed. There is now a particular focus on welcoming families, women and the younger generation into golf with a six-hole academy course and a completely fresh approach to

running the club by installing a board of directors, including experts in their field, and that is how Peter Todd came to be Estates Manager and Director at Royal Norwich.

For this interview, we meet at Peter's office, some six months before the official opening of the course and new clubhouse in September 2019, where Ian Poulter will play a round on the course. That moment will signal the end of a long process for Royal Norwich, who first looked to develop a golf facility on this site in the late 1980s and will officially start their life at this state of the art facility.

The building we meet in, called the Turf



Care Centre of Excellence, is a shining example of what this process is all about. Addressing the greenkeeping team's needs with modern, well-equipped facilities is part of the business philosophy to make staff feel valued and happy. In turn, happy staff are then in a much better mindset to look after customer's needs. He also saw an opportunity to work with companies like Bernhard to allow other greenkeepers to use the facilities for learning.

Peter explained: "There was a necessity to build a brand new greenkeeping facility here because Royal Norwich didn't purchase the old agricultural buildings on site as they

belonged to a neighbour and were never an option to use. Once it was decided the building would be centrally located on the course, I was asked, as part of my initial consultancy role, to look at the design of the greenkeeping facility, so I designed it working out what storage space was needed, workshop space and staff room etc."

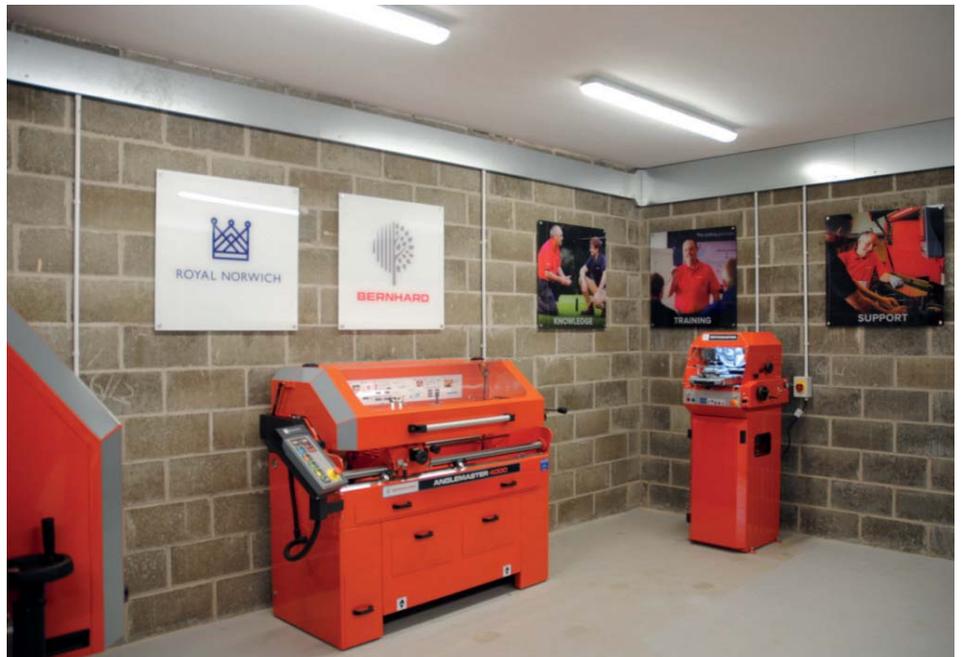
"Integral to that thought process was having a space to hold training classes or meetings that was separate to the staff break room, so you could have a training course running independently that wasn't disturbed by the daily routine activities.

There was also a strategy to build partnerships with industry so they could also use the facility, and we could build stronger relationships with key players within our industry. This dedicated room was key to that and having the latest IT technology in there, large screen, fibre optic internet and air conditioning make it a high-quality learning space."

"A part of that learning space is the sharpening room. Cutting units today are precision pieces of equipment requiring specific training in how best to set them up on a daily basis, as well as look after ongoing maintenance. Whilst there are many



Cutting units today are precision pieces of equipment requiring specific training in how best to set them up on a daily basis, as well as look after ongoing maintenance



The greenkeeping facility was the first significant aspect of the project to be finished and was a landmark for those who began the long journey years ago

club's with skilled greenkeepers looking after machinery, there's no substitute for having someone who is a specialist technician. By being a specialist you have time to work on all of the intricacies and, having operated a workshop at The London Club with two full-time staff on a 36-hole fleet of machinery, those guys were flat out the whole time to keep the fleet in top condition and follow the manufacturers recommended maintenance."

"When we planned it here, I recognised that we are only an hour and a quarter from Bernhard's production facility in Suffolk and it made obvious synergy, having worked with them in the past, to work together to make a great sharpening room. It wasn't only good for us but good for them to be able to bring other people from the industry to look at how to optimise this type of equipment. The fact we were building one from scratch meant we could get the design right. I sat down with Steve Nixon from Bernhards at the USGA San Diego show and sketched the layout for the sharpening room to make sure there was sufficient space. There was a lot of thought and discussions that went into it, and it should stand us in good stead long-term."

The greenkeeping facility was the first significant aspect of the project to be finished and was a landmark for those who began the long journey years ago. Peter's involvement started in 2016, and he explains how the fresh approach to the project was enough to take him from his previous role as Estates Manager at The London Club.

"I was doing one or two days a month consultancy work for Royal Norwich in 2016 and, at that point, they hadn't signed the deal with the housing developer to buy the old golf course and, to be honest, at that stage I hadn't envisaged working with them beyond being a consultant. There was no reason to leave The London Club because, having spent years fine-tuning it, hosting televised tournaments and getting the

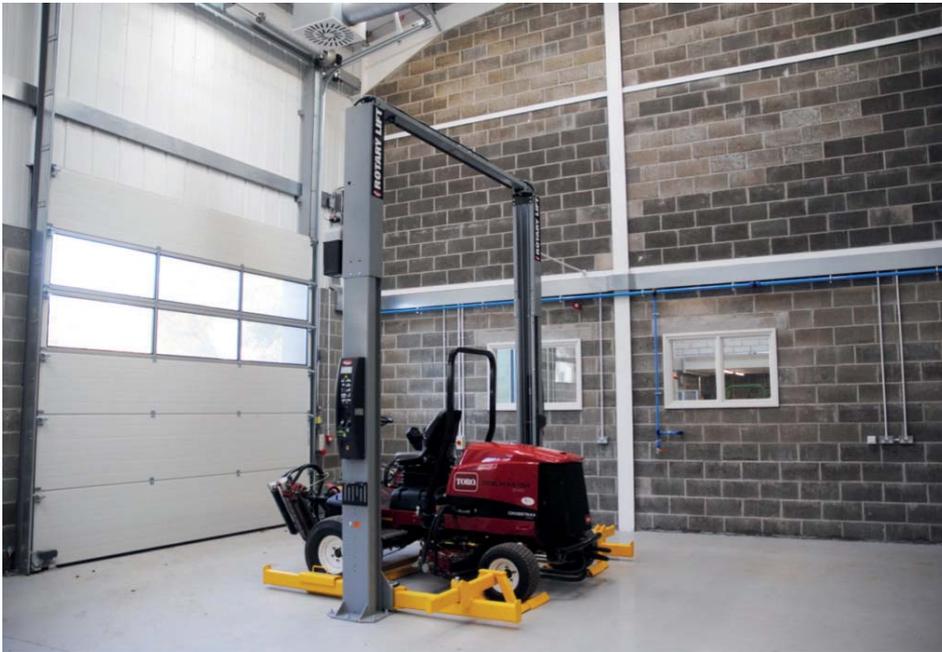
operation how you want it to be, it was running extremely smoothly, with a fantastic team and boss."

"During the development's planning stages, it became apparent to the club that they needed expertise within the team to run a project like this, essentially, grow in and establishment skills. I was asked if I'd be interested in being involved on a full-time basis."

"What came over to me was the enormous potential of the project. Firstly, the team involved on the Royal Norwich side. You had people who were giving up all of their own time simply because of their passion to see Royal Norwich survive and prosper well into the future. The existing club probably wouldn't have done so as the old Royal Norwich, like a lot of members clubs, needed reinvestment and they didn't really have the cash. So, you had this stalwart group of members who were steering the development project with a passion and I was greatly encouraged to see that happening."

"There are very few sites where you get the opportunity to put a golf course on such a fabulous piece of ground. To have 400-year-old oak trees and mature Scots pine on what is a relatively sandy loam soil; it doesn't get much better than that. The enthusiasm from the members of the team that I'd met and the fact Ross McMurray from European Golf Design (EGD) was going to be the architect all helped to convince me of the merits of the joining the team. Ross had done an excellent job at Woburn on the Marquess course, and I was used to working with EGD after working with Gary Johnson prior to one of the tournaments at The London Club doing some minor amendments. I was enthused by all the different aspects, and the fact they were going to construct it to a high standard was the other key selling factor to me. My driver is doing it once and doing it properly."

"It was a big decision, but I'm not daunted



During the development's planning stages, it became apparent to the club that they needed expertise within the team to run a project like this

by big decisions. I think a lot of these things come down to research and making sure you've asked all the right questions and got the right team and finance involved. I was very enthused by the fact that the Chairman, David Coventry, worked with the rest of the committee to change the governance model for Royal Norwich because he recognised that trying to run a multimillion pound

redevelopment project by committee, where you had to make daily decisions on things, just wasn't going to work."

Peter regards the change in the governance model as fundamental to move the club in a new direction and why further progress will continue. The complete shift away from a committee saw nine directors appointed, five of which are members, with

the other four being compiled of industry experts in their field. Recruiting people with experience in greenkeeping, finance, catering and golf club management allows the club to be run more like a proprietary business, with each person accountable for their own areas. A specific business plan is in place along with financial and membership targets, turning Royal Norwich



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It was a big decision, but I'm not daunted by big decisions. I think a lot of these things come down to research and making sure you've asked all the right questions and got the right team and finance involved



into a hybrid members club that is being run along business lines, making them a lot leaner, focused and targeted.

The approach of using experts has been used throughout the entire process, from the initial team that visited Peter at The London Club on a fact-finding mission to Peter's own research into materials and machines for the course.

Somewhat uniquely, Peter started his professional life with Reed International, a paper and publishing company, where he honed his skills in negotiating and working in a commercial environment; two skills that lend themselves to project management. His interest in horticulture had been present throughout his young life, and he helped maintain a four-acre Georgian garden every Sunday from the age of sixteen as one of his first jobs, and he continued to do so until he was twenty-three. A change in his position with Reed led to him leaving to pursue full-time studies at Merrist Wood College in Landscape Management, ultimately leading to him beginning work at The London Club following a spell in golf course construction.

His formative years at Reed, and his greenkeeping career, combined perfectly for

the task at Royal Norwich and played a pivotal role when it came to working with the course architects and selecting materials for this multi-million-pound project.

"I came on board as the person who would sit down with Ross and look at the specifications and tune aspects of it to suit this locality. A good example of this is the rootzone. A decision had to be made, and we looked at various options with EGD of rootzone amendment; people stopped using peat with sand construction greens years ago, and they've tended to go down the route of green waste compost, but there are alternative non-organic amendments like zeolite and our chosen material, Profile porous ceramic."

"This was one very crucial aspect and also where was the sand coming from to mix with the rootzone amendment because that was a significant cost to the project. Rootzone choice was going to be the key decision, as well as grass species on greens and the rest of the golf course."

"Some of the rootzone research involved going abroad because no one had used Profile porous ceramic in the United Kingdom. The only projects I could find

near to the UK were a 10-year-old project in County Cork and the new Adare Manor project that opened last year. I met Alan MacDonald at Adare Manor, and also met Trevor Norris who constructed Castle Martyr in Cork, to get an idea of how 10-year-old greens had performed, whilst being able to look at the new greens at Adare Manor, so it was a perfect scenario."

With the specification in place, a contractor had to be appointed. A scoring system was used to judge candidates on categories such as financial stability, in-house or sub-contracted labour and previous experience. After this process, MJ Abbott was awarded the project, with their expertise in construction and irrigation installation proving pivotal.

Deciding on an irrigation system was another chance for things to be different from the norm.

"I went to Scandinavia and looked at Rain Bird, and I went to look at Toro systems down in the West Country, just wherever people were installing new ones," Peter explained. "There were aspects to the specification I shaped, with some very specific ones to do with the irrigation control





I went to Scandinavia and looked at Rain Bird, and I went to look at Toro systems down in the West Country, just wherever people were installing new ones

systems. Communications between the pump house and the PC that controls the irrigation. We specifically put some things in there that weren't the norm in the industry. They weren't the standard thing, but they are things I see as being the future of the industry, like our pump house being internet connected, so the pump engineers don't have to come on site, they can interrogate the control panel remotely. Grundfos can look at the operation of the pumps and, for

example, see how much current they're drawing."

"That hasn't been the norm in our industry, but if you look at other industries that use big pumps, like a water company, they would have some of those systems in place. We're embracing new technology in the specifications. I think there's a slight tendency in all industries for people to take the 'off the peg' specification because it's the most economical, but it isn't that difficult

to tweak specifications to suit the locality, the client situation and what their long-term aims are."

"For us, it came down to who was in a position to do what we needed, and it became apparent that our best partner with irrigation was Rain Bird."

Irrigation would become an important theme of the construction process, which began in June 2017. A lack of rainfall for all of June and July 2018 made the seeding



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very difficult on areas that weren't covered by irrigation. Eventually, after a lot of discussions, the decision was made to seed and leave the seedlings dry because it was lower risk than encouraging germination with a chance of no rain. Ultimately, this was the correct decision with no rainfall until August, but there is still some recovery work to do on the course's roughs.

The rough areas are one line on Peter's list of critiques that he hopes to have cleared by September, but the progress that's already been made shouldn't be forgotten. Peter's team of twelve staff have been working hard across both the old and new courses during construction. Logistically, this has been a challenge with the twenty minute distance often feeling much longer, but their commitment is evident as you walk around the course that has almost taken its full shape.

Two years ago, soil was being moved to resemble a golf course when Peter moved into the temporary accommodation for a year located in the middle of the site. From there, Peter, his team and everyone involved in the project have been able to enjoy the milestones along the way.

"One of the great satisfactions of working in this industry, unlike many jobs, is that we see the fruits of our labour. If you do an excellent job cutting a green, you can look at it and think that looks fantastic, and that satisfaction is the reason I think people are very passionate in greenkeeping and do what they do."

"I think construction is even more rewarding, because you start with something that's a plan on a piece of paper and then you start ground modelling like a piece of clay and sculpting the golf course. Once it's grassed and being mowed it's all revealed, and it reveals itself in stages, and I think there's great satisfaction in



It's when the grass starts popping that you see people's faces start to change and that first cut of the fairway is a pivotal moment

seeing all those stages as you go through construction and see them come to fruition. The grow in, and establishment are the most satisfying because you see grass; up to that point, everything is soil. It's when the grass starts popping that you see people's faces start to change and that first cut of the fairway is a pivotal moment."

"Now the guys are coring out the bunker sand lines so you can see the shape of the perimeters in the bunkers. Up to six weeks ago, they were just full of grass with no shape, and now you can look down the golf

holes and see those sand lines and that, in itself, is very satisfying."

Royal Norwich has always been clear about their aims for the new courses and facilities. Building a benchmark facility for Norfolk will be achieved, and the drive of everyone involved will likely garner a much wider reputation for a members club that has built for the future.



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Looe Golf Club

‘Pioneering’ spirit

Looe Golf Club sits beside the A387 on the main road into the south Cornish fishing port of Looe. It occupies a high point known as the Bindown and, as a result, offers up some truly spectacular views over the coastline and surrounding countryside.

On one of the wettest days a dry spring had provided, Lee Williams met with **Mat Edwards** to discover more about the course and his diverse role







Looe Golf Club, designed by the legendary six times Open champion Harry Vardon, was established in 1935. It is an 18-hole heath and parkland course measuring 5,940 yards. Set in an area of breathtaking beauty, the panoramic views from the course are stunning; to the east are the peaks of Dartmoor and the Tamar estuary, to the south, Looe Island and the English Channel, to the west and north, glorious countryside and Cornish moors.

Inside the clubhouse, I am given a very warm welcome by Mat Edwards, the Head Greenkeeper ... and much more, as I was about to discover.

Mat joined the club four years ago, after spending ten years running a pub in Looe. So, how did he make the transition from landlord to greenkeeper?

"My very good friend, who was manager and professional here at the time, told me he needed help on the course, so I sold the pub and joined him. It was as simple as that. After two and a half years, I had worked my way up to Head Greenkeeper."

And, had he had any previous

greenkeeping experience? "Not really. I have always played golf up here and always had an ambition to work on the course, but it never happened until quite recently. I have gained a lot of my experience so far through sales reps like David Bevan from ALS, who has imparted a lot of information, although much of it is just common sense. I've not been on any courses, except for my spraying licences."

Mat is more than just the head greenkeeper for the club though. "I oversee the clubhouse; I have to keep tabs on all the paperwork, manage the golf course and its budgets, and I'm responsible for all aspects of health and safety for the club ... and I now look after the stock in the pro shop. But I'd much rather be out on the course getting my hands dirty than working in the office or pulling pints in the bar."

Even his staff have varied roles. "My team includes Dan Payas, who is behind the bar now as we speak. He is my deputy head greenkeeper. Greenkeeper Steven Allman also helps out in the clubhouse. And then there's Kieran Faulkner, who doesn't do many shifts in the clubhouse, he is our



We are all in a position now where we are getting the rug pulled out from underneath our feet because we are not allowed to use certain products



Left to right: Mat Edwards, Dan Payas, Kieran Faulkner, Stephen Allman



general greenkeeper and currently plays golf for Cornwall. I would say we are in a unique position; our owner likes to call it pioneering; it's fine when it all works, but you only have to have one man off sick, and we are struggling to say the least."

Mat depends on the help and advice of reps David Bevan, ALS, and Richard Shapland from Headland. "They both take soil samples for me at the start of the season, and then we work out a plan between the

three of us, because I will buy things from both. We decide what our weak points are on the greens and go from there. So far, the results and methods we use are pretty similar year-on-year."

"In the past, we have suffered with a heavy thatch layer in the greens, so it's just been a matter of getting as much out as possible and getting more air into them. They also used to be covered in moss at this time of the year, so we have put some high rates of

What's in the shed

Baroness LM315GC greensmower
 John Deere 7700 fairway mower
 Kubota L4250 tractor
 Trimax Snake rough mower
 Toro 2000D triple mowers x 2
 (soon to be replaced)
 Toro ProCore 648 with
 Groundsmaster core collector
 attachment
 Toro 3100 greensmower for
 verticutting
 Toro 1000 pedestrian mowers x 2
 Cushman Truckster - for the Widespin
 spreader and Gambetti 600 litre
 sprayer
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Getting Personal

Mat Edwards - he loves bacon and the Foo Fighters

Who are you? Mat Edwards, Head Greenkeeper, Looe Golf Club.

Family status. Sophie and I have just bought our first house and it's just the two of us.

What would you change about yourself? Around three stone!

What's your guilty pleasure? Estrella and chinese food.

What's been the highlight of your career so far? Hearing the great comments from members and visitors about how much the course has improved in the last few years.

What are your pet peeves? Things getting broken by staff, but not being told... it drives me insane.

If you could go anywhere right now, where would it be? I'd like a nice big villa on the Cote d'Azure.

What's the best part of your job? Seeing all our work transform into great playing surfaces.

... and the worst? Managing staff at the moment is becoming increasingly hard with such a small work force. It's hard to fit in everyone's holiday especially if someone goes off sick.

Do you have a lifetime ambition? At the moment it would be to get our course to a position where there is little room for improvement.

Favourite record, and why? I'm a Foo Fighters fan so probably the Wasting Light album, although The Colour and the Shape takes some beating. I've always listened to them from the beginning of the group.

Who would you choose to spend a romantic evening with? It would have to be the Mrs in Monaco.

If you won the lottery, what is the first thing you would do? Travel the world, fix up the house, and help out our friends and family.

If you were to describe yourself as a musical instrument, what would you be and why? A set of drums... noisy and takes a beating.

Which three people, living or dead, would you invite to a dinner party? Jimmy Carr for comedy value, Gordon Ramsey to complement us on our food, and Jack



Bauer for the Mrs.

If you could be anyone for a day, who would it be and why? Superman obviously.

Do you have any bad habits? I bite my nails and I can be a little untidy at times.

... or any good ones? I do the dishes.

Do you go to bed worrying about the next day's workload? Constantly! Although, if we have enough staff there is less to worry about. Being quite impatient I sometimes try to do too much at once.

What are you reading at the moment? Jo Nesbo, the Devils Star (online).

What's the best advice you have ever been given? Forgive your enemies but take a note of their names.

What's your favourite smell? BACON!!!

What do you do in your spare time? Sophie and I work on the house when we can or just try and chill. We both work long hours so by the time we get a day off we sometimes don't want to do very much.

What's the daftest work related question you have ever been asked? When will the fog clear? We also had people phoning up during the winter snow to see if the course was open.

What's your favourite piece of kit? Toro ProCore 648 which was the first machine I bought when I took over. It's made such a difference.

What three words would you use to describe yourself? Childish (at times), hard working and creative.

What talent would you like to have? The ability to fly would be amazing.

What law/legislation would you like to see introduced? I'd like to see us getting more help with regards to managing pests such as leatherjackets. At the moment, for some courses, it is a real issue.



iron on the greens, then scarified it all out. We have now got to a point where there is no moss in them and they are looking really healthy."

The greens are all old push-ups which cause Mat some problems. "They are okay at this time of the year but, in the winter when we get heavy rainfall, they are more or less unplayable; we have no drainage in them whatsoever, and we often find ourselves using a sump pump to clear the water from the greens. We could definitely do with some drainage on four or five of the worst greens, but there is literally nothing we can do at the minute except try and get some air into them. The soil profile of the course varies from areas of granite pushing up through fairways, peaty areas and, down the bottom, it's normal farmland soil."

The course has an old irrigation system which the club is looking to replace. "Our system is thirty-five years old and is now pretty much obsolete. For one reason or another, we have gone through three pumps in the last two years at £2,500 each. Last year, in the drought, it failed, and it took us five weeks to get it fixed, so we are currently looking at installing a whole



In the past, we have suffered with a heavy thatch layer in the greens, so it's just been a matter of getting as much out as possible and getting more air into them



new irrigation system.”

“We had an appraisal from Irritech a month ago, and I have got Wesley Henshaw from Hunter Irrigation coming in to have a look in the next few weeks. Initial assessments have been that the sprinklers are under old clay, coverage is not even, a lot of them have failed, and all the manual points at the back of the greens have corroded. We also need to look at a water treatment facility as the water is coming straight out of the lake and, at present, does not have a treatment facility in place.”

Mat talks me through the general maintenance of the greens. “We have just dropped the height of cut to 4.5mm. We hollow cored about a month ago, so they have just recovered from that. In winter, depending on ground conditions, I try and keep it between 5 and 6mm, which gives us decent ball roll as long as it is dry enough. I



I write a newsletter every month telling them what we are up to for the next few weeks and it keeps them in the loop if they are planning on playing any matches or competitions

would like to complement the cutting with a greens iron which I am currently looking at purchasing.”

“Aeration on the greens comprises hollow coring twice a year - with 6mm cores in the spring and up to 13mm cores in the autumn. This is followed by a topdressing of straight sand; over the last two years, we have applied around 300 tonnes. We will also use the Toro ProCore throughout the season with solid tines going as deep as possible.”

“Last year, we overseeded with an all bent mix of Johnsons Pro-Nitro - using a GreenTek Dyna-Seeder - as we had a lot of burnt off areas on the greens from that five weeks of hot weather. They came back really quickly and now the greens are packed with bents, whereas before it was pretty much all poa, so we are going to try and overseed at the end of this season as well.”

Now the greens are going in the right direction, Mat has started to look at improving the tees. “We’ve been hollow coring the tees the best we can, followed by an application of ICL’s Sportsmaster Cleanrun Pro to weed and feed. We are also going to run the Verti-drain and ProCore over the tees once we know they are clear of rocks underneath them.”

Mat likes to use a liquid-based fertiliser programme on his greens and has seen little disease so far. “At the moment, I am just going with a liquid approach. I’m using SeaAction seaweed, Biomass sugars,

HumiMaxx, Phosphites, PrimoMaxx and Chelated iron. I try to put on as little nitrogen as possible. The last hit they had was after we hollow cored in March at a rate of 35g/m².”

“We’ve not seen any real disease all winter, except for a little bit of fusarium on one of the greens a few weeks ago, but I think that was more to do with the stress of the hollow coring and it has grown through already. I do have a healthy stockpile of fungicides in the chemical store, and I have just ordered some BannerMaxx, Instrata and Dualitas from ALS this week, so they are on the shelf ready to go.”

Mat has inherited a lot of old machinery, which they are gradually starting to replace thanks to the support he gets from the owner. “A lot of the machinery is starting to get old and decrepit, and we prefer to buy new outright, rather than lease or buy on finance.”

“We have recently bought twelve new ClubCar petrol buggies. We did look at going electric, but the feed into the building is not big enough. A new Baroness LM315 ride on greensmower which is very good, a rough cutter and the Toro ProCore, so we have done alright in the last few years.”

“The majority of our machines are purchased through Vincent Tractors as the owner and their area rep are both members here, and I used to play with the rep in the juniors. Next on our wish list is replacing the





triples and investing in a turf iron. It would help the cause no end because, even with a growth regulator down, I am still cutting every day in the summer so, if we could cut one day and iron the next, it would help keep a lot of stress off the grass."

"Servicing of machines and any small breakdowns are taken care of by one of our members who wanted part-time work after moving back from abroad. He's a qualified mechanic and, as none of us are mechanically minded, it works well for us."

Mat likes to keep the members up to date with developments around the course. "I write a newsletter every month telling them what we are up to for the next few weeks and it keeps them in the loop if they are planning on playing any matches or competitions. Also, because I am in the clubhouse constantly, they see me anyway, and they are always asking me questions. I am always happy to give them an honest answer."

With the help and advice from David Bevan, Mat and his team are currently working on a project to develop a wildflower

area. "We are working on a few areas at the top of the course which was just bits of scrubland that was not doing a lot. So, we have bought a little rotovator and turned it all over and prepped the surface. We are going to get some honeybee and cornfield annual wildflower seed mix down; it will help to brighten that whole area up. I'm keen to mention the owner also planted some three thousand trees over the last twenty years, which has greatly improved aesthetics of the course."

The course has suffered a lot of damage from leatherjackets this spring. "They have affected quite a few of the weaker fairways that were almost killed off in the drought last year. These areas have not been able to withstand their chewing away as well as everywhere else, and obviously, there is nothing you can really spray now, so we will just have to ride it out." I asked if he had ever considered using nematodes to control them? "We have thought about using them and spraying Acelepyrn. You have to be spot on with the treatment, and you are not guaranteed one hundred percent control.

Plus, the cost is fierce which makes it almost too hard to justify."

Mat believes the job has become more of a challenge in the last few years, for many reasons. "We are all in a position now where we are getting the rug pulled out from underneath our feet because we are not allowed to use certain products, and other ones are coming off the market all the time. So, we have got to change the way we go about managing the course. Another issue I have is staff. I have a minimal workforce, and there doesn't seem to be any new recruits coming through the system - as far as I can tell, and I am not the only one in this area who has concerns. It's frustrating as this isn't through choice, nor lack of funding, but the new recruits just aren't there."



I have always played golf up here and always had an ambition to work on the course, but it never happened until quite recently



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Manor House Golf Club

King of the Castle

The beautiful Cotswold village of Castle Combe is perhaps best known for its motor racing circuit, but nestled away in 350 acres of rolling Wiltshire countryside is the Peter Alliss and Clive Clark designed Manor House Golf Club, complete with mature oak trees, manicured fairways and spectacular par 3s, together with the By Brook dissecting the course to bring both drama and beauty.

Lee Williams met with 37-year-old Course Manager **Rob Preston** to discover more



The Manor House course is a relative youngster, opening for play in 1992, but the maturity of the setting, where stately oak and beech trees line the magnificent fairways, make it appear much older. Peter Alliss and Clive Clark made the most of the undulating terrain, fitting the course into its surroundings like a silk glove. The By Brooke punctuates the layout bringing its share of beauty and drama, especially at “Brunton Brooke” the 17th, where you’ll find the best and most exciting par 3 anywhere.

On a cloudy, but dry afternoon in April, I am welcomed just outside the greenkeeper’s sheds by Rob Preston. We first sat down for a chat in Rob’s office, before he took me for

a tour of the course and the Manor House Hotel which, I must say, was a pleasure.

Rob explained how he first got into this industry and the challenges he has faced throughout his career so far. “Firstly, I am a Castle Combe boy. That estate just behind the woods, next to the greenkeepers sheds, is where I grew up; my nan still lives there. I knew this land before the golf course was even built. I used to play soldiers and various other games when I was younger on the land the course now sits on. When the course was being built, the locals were not very happy. It was like ‘this isn’t good’, but clearly, later on, it worked out alright for me.”

“When I left school, I didn’t have a clue what to do, so I took a summer job here as



With fungicides and chemicals disappearing, it was a shock initially but, believe you me, we will manage as an industry



What's in the shed

John Deere 2500E greens mower
 John Deere 2500B (tees, collars and approaches)
 John Deere 8800 (tee and green surrounds)
 John Deere 7500 & 3235C (fairway mowers)
 Toro 4500 (rough mower)
 5x4 HPX815E gator x 2
 John Deere Pro Gator 2030A (vehicle used for sprayer and topdresser)
 Toro 5040 Sand Pro
 John Deere 3045R tractor
 Massey Ferguson 362 with front loader
 Tru-Turf roller



I used to play soldiers and various other games when I was younger on the land the course now sits on



an apprentice. They then took me on full-time I was here for five years. I met my lovely wife at that time and we needed a mortgage, so that led me to move out of the industry. I worked as an engineer for Honda I for eleven years travelling around Europe. One day, I got home, looked at the children and thought 'you know what, I'm not really happy with the work-life balance and not seeing my children grow up'. This led me to get back into the industry that I have always loved, so I came back here in 2013 as a first assistant working my way up to deputy head within a year or two. When the club wanted a change at the top, I slotted into the Golf Course

Manager position, which I have been in for the last three years now."

Since Rob first came back to the club as the first assistant, he has completed various educational courses. "I was able to go straight to my NVQ level 3 in sports turf management due to the qualifications I had gained at Honda, so I was able to bypass an NVQ level 2. I have all my spraying certificates and various management qualifications that I have gained through the club."

Rob has a strong team comprising: Deputy Course Manager, Mark Bolton (five years), Qualified Greenkeepers Sean Riley (four years) and John Murzyn (fifteen years), Assistant Greenkeeper, Jake Jones (one year), Assistant Greenkeepers Jordan McClean (one year) and Johnny Capp (ten months), part-time Mechanic Charlie Gaisford (twenty-four years) and part-time Assistant Greenkeeper Tony Simmons (eleven years).

The Par 72, 6500-yard, parkland course is built on Cotswold brash which enables it to



Course Manager Rob Preston



Italian gardens



The 12th



A fellow greenkeeper I know once said to me 'this golf course has more microclimates than I have ever seen on any other course'

drain really well. The course, along with the hotel, Italian ornamental gardens, croquet lawn, tennis courts and an allotment, covers 365 acres.

It has a 27-year-old irrigation system which Rob is continually trying to improve. "The course has changed over the past few years. For example, on the 18th fairway, the irrigation goes down the side instead of through the middle. On the wish list each year we put a certain amount of money into

the irrigation system as it is getting old. Now we are pinpointing individual holes and the fairways have become a big priority. Greens and tees are also getting attention; slowly! This involves replacing heads, looking at the electrical side of things, changing pipes and isolation valves. It will be a matter of slowly ticking the jobs of the list."

Rob talks me through the seasonal maintenance on his USGA spec greens. "In the growing season, we cut the greens at

3.5 mm. As we approach the winter months, we lift the height of cut to 5mm. For club and open championships, plus the Pro-Am (which took place on 28th May this year), I will go down to 3mm. I am quite lean with my nutrition on the greens so, when the grass is growing quite strong, I like to be coming in with my boxes full but not emptied once in the whole 1.2 hectares of greens. To help keep the nutrition down, I will check the greens daily; why make more work for

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Getting Personal

Rob Preston - he's a family man who loves the gym and NASA

Who are you? Rob Preston, Course Manager at the Manor House Golf Club.

Family status. I met my lovely wife at sweet seventeen and we have been together for twenty years. We have four children (three boys and one girl).

Who's your hero and why? My gramp Ted, who recently passed away. He's always been my idol and, together with my nan, brought me up since I was eight years old. He was such a hard working guy and gave me plenty of advice. Our five month old baby boy is named after him, Teddie.

What would you change about yourself?

I can get bored very easily so I can lose focus if I am not interested in the topic.

What's been the highlight of your career so far? It has to be when I was promoted to course manager in a very short space of time. I am very proud of what my team have achieved during my six years at the Manor House.

What are your pet peeves? Laziness, being inefficient and people making excuses.

If you could go anywhere right now, where would it be? Disney (family) and the Maldives (me and my wife).

What's the best part of your job?

Working with a great team to achieve a manicured golf course, then see what you've achieved at the end of the week. I love being outdoors, especially out in the surroundings of Castle Combe.

... and the worst? People who work alongside you that don't understand your industry, and golfers that believe they are all head greenkeepers.

Do you have a lifetime ambition? I'd like to drive Route 66 and to be the best I can within my career.

Favourite record, and why? Neil Diamond - Sweet Caroline (Reading Football Club pre-match song).

Who would you choose to spend a romantic evening with?

My wife ... and not just because I have to say that. She is my world!

Which three people, living or dead, would you invite to a dinner party? My gramp, Bobby Moore and David Jason.

If you could be anyone for a day, who would it be and why? I would love to work with NASA for the day - anything outside this world is exciting and fascinating.



Do you have any bad habits? I'm impatient and have OCD with cleanliness.

... or any good ones? Going to the gym to keep myself fit and healthy (self discipline).

Do you go to bed worrying about the next day's workload? In the first year as course manager I did, but now I don't. You can't do anything about it at that time, and like many things in life, some things are out of your control (mother nature).

What are you reading at the moment? I'm not a big book reader, but I read loads on football and stuff on gym fitness.

What's the best advice you have ever been given? You can't please everyone maintaining a golf course but you can only do your best and try to go with the majority (happy medium). Life's too short!

What's your favourite smell? Frosty mornings at work and the smell of my baby boy after a bath.

What do you do in your spare time? I go to the gym a lot. I have a season ticket for Reading and I love spending time with my family.

What's the daftest work related question you have ever been asked? A member asked if greenkeepers need to work at weekends. He was not happy that we sometimes got in the way, even though we start as early as 4am to try and get ahead of the golf. My response was as diplomatic as possible.

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

What three words would you use to describe yourself? Direct, adaptable and loyal.

What law/legislation would you like to see introduced? I would like to see higher levels of Health & Safety in general. I strongly believe that no matter what resources/budgets is like, it has to be the priority.



yourself by putting down loads of nitrogen and double verti-cutting every other day, when I don't need to."

"I am very organic with my fertilisers. I don't use too many granules and what I do use is low in nitrogen. My general mix, during the growing season, would be a chelated iron, seaweed, phosphite and a liquid feed. I have also started to use MolTurf to get some sugars into the greens at certain times of the year. We suffered badly with nematode stress in my first year as course manager. Alongside the help of my main supplier AGS, we have the nutritional values and health spot on now with the nematode damage under control. Over the three years, I have worked closely with Sam Honeyborne, we have a great relationship where we can bounce ideas together and stride for better results."

"With having sand-based greens, I like to adjust what we use based on the current health of the greens plus the weather. I don't





Eighty-five percent of the course is a conservation site - SSSI and ancient woodland - and, therefore, restricts what work we can carry out



think you can work on the basis of 'I always put that down every two weeks', it just doesn't work like that."

Rob has a regimented aeration programme for his greens. "Every four weeks we will do a solid tine and a light dressing, no matter what. We are fortunate we are on Cotswold brash, so this means we can get a big tractor with either a Verti-drain, brush, topdresser and roller around the course all year round. In January 2018, we hollow cored the greens and applied forty-five tonnes of dressing, which caused a little bit of a stir on social media. Then, this year, I used the Graden at 20mm, followed by the Toro ProCore and fifty tonnes of dressing. A lot of greenkeepers wouldn't do this, but the fact of the matter is we are a very busy golf course and, in January, expectations are lower at that time of year. This means, when the growing season starts, my greens are ready and my renovations are done which keeps our members and our green fee

customers happy."

"I know some greenkeepers may have the same thinking as me, but they are not able to do it because they are on clay and can't get a machine on. Everyone is different and has their own hurdles to face; it's site-specific what we are doing. If I was to move to another course, I couldn't promise I could carry out the same renovation work as I do now."

The club owns all their machinery, but Rob has a preference when it comes to manufacturers. "I tend to go towards John Deere, but I don't think you can go wrong with either John Deere or Toro. We do have a Toro 4500 rough cut mower which, to me, is second to none; it works brilliantly. The reason I use John Deere is the care I get from the local supplier, Tallis Amos Group in Bristol. If I'm honest with you, the whole experience, from the demoing to purchasing and then the aftercare, is excellent. We have been well supported over the last

few years upgrading our older fleet of machines. Only last year, we added four new pieces of kit to the fleet. The best purchases I have made have been the Toro ProCore and the Sweep-N-Fill brush, by a long way."

Rob's main project has been to reduce the thatch layer in the greens and, now he has got this to a level he is happy with, he is turning his attention to other projects aimed at improving the course. "We have planted some wildflower areas. We cut the rough down, collect it and take it away; we are now seeing some great wildflowers coming through. Being a local boy, I wanted that back."

"I have also looked at our tee surrounds and asked myself why we cut everything? So we have started to grow certain areas out. The members weren't fans of the idea at the beginning but, now it's grown out, they see the benefits."

"One problem we have always had is our bunkers. They are built directly on top of the brash with no liners, so we get a lot of contamination of the sand as a result. I presented a plan to the managing director to install Blinder bunker liners, which will need some heavy investment. Fortunately, he has fully supported it. I looked at all the options,



18th water hazard



Clubhouse

but I felt the Blinder system offered the best solution for us, plus the guarantee you get with it.”

“We did the par 3 4th last year. We actually remodelled the hole as there was a huge bunker which meandered from tee to green. So we filled that in as maintenance was a nightmare and, in truth, no one ever went in there until the last point of the bunker close to the green. Profusion Environmental, with the help of myself and the lads, have now lined the bunkers around the green, so I can't wait to see how they perform. We have now had the go-ahead to do one of the par four's next, so we have that to look forward to.”

“Eighty-five percent of the course is a conservation site - SSSI and ancient woodland - and, therefore, restricts what work we can carry out. For example, I can't go around with a chainsaw and cut down whatever trees I would like; it takes months to have the work approved. I work very closely with the parish council. Although we are on private land, it's always nice to communicate with the local council on the plans we have for the course.”

“We also have the Wiltshire wardens who

History of the Manor House

The Manor House is noteworthy for several reasons. Its land is the site of a Norman castle settlement which once hosted a number of Lords throughout its history; the most famous being Sir John Oldcastle, the figure Shakespeare based his character of Sir John Falstaff upon in his play Henry IV in the late 16th century.

It was also the home of English geologist and political economist George Poulett Scrope throughout the 19th century. He lived at the Manor House from the start of his first marriage until the death of his wife Emma (the great-granddaughter of Sir Robert Long), in 1866; his wife's family had owned the land since the 14th century.

Scrope was responsible for the creation of the ground's Italian, Classical and medieval Gothic styled gardens and summerhouse in the mid-19th century, which can still be seen today.

During World War II, the New Zealand Forestry Officers used the Manor House as their headquarters.

In 1947, the owner of the Castle Combe estate sold the houses of the estate and the Manor House became a country club. After eighteen months, the club left the premises and the house was shortly thereafter sold to Bobbie Allen, an amateur hotelier, and her husband. Over time, they established the Manor House as a premier country hotel, run almost as a club. A quite glamorous clientele ensued.

Certain of the London hotels would refer guests in search of 'authentic

England' to the Manor House. Bobbie Allen was a noted horsewoman, and the grounds of the Manor House were known for their suitability for riding. She was from Lancashire and known for her forthrightness. She wrote a book of her experiences, *From Claridge's to Castle Combe*, which reflects her character and the post World War II era.

After many years, the Allens sold the Manor House to Mr and Mrs Oliver Clegg, who sold it to the present owners.

Many people go to Castle Combe for the motorsport. It's one of the longest established circuits in the UK were, in 1950, a young Stirling Moss won the 2.5 L race.

Yet, the 13th-century village of Castle Combe is something entirely different and light years away in feel to the race circuit. The village is simply gorgeous and undoubtedly one of the prettiest, most beautiful in England. It was recently voted the most picturesque village by English Heritage magazine.

The village was a location for the 1967 film musical *Doctor Dolittle*, but its frequently rainy summer climate, plus the residents' irritation at the producers' arbitrary modifications of the area for shooting, was severe enough to incite attempted sabotage to frustrate the production.





An abundance of wildlife



look after the castle remains, the Castle Combe tower is on the golf course under a lot of trees, so we must be careful around that area."

"To help with ecology around the course, we have already started the wildflower project. We've also got bird boxes around the course, and we have also started to build bug hotels from trees we have felled. In the coming years, we will do more, which will only add more beauty to this special site."

I asked Rob what he thought about the state of our industry. "We have had a lot

going on recently with the fungicide and chemical situation. A fellow greenkeeper I know once said to me 'this golf course has more microclimates than I have ever seen on any other course'. So, from a disease point of view, it's tough out there, and it's the one thing that kept me awake at night during my first two years; it was horrific. So, with the fungicides and chemicals disappearing, it was a shock initially but, believe you me, we will manage as an industry. I would say, in greenkeeping, we do tend to adapt to what is put in front of us quite well."



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Keynote interview

MBE of the Manor

Jim McKenzie MBE, Director of Golf Courses and Estates Management at The Celtic Manor Collection, is the latest of our Keynote interviewees. He speaks to editor Kerry Haywood about how a bucket of water thrown over him one day paved the way to his career in the golf industry



Pitchcare: Are you still hands on or do you generally oversee everything?

Jim McKenzie: I like to get out on the practical side whenever I can. Just last week, I had an afternoon whereby I had no meetings planned and managed to get out on the 2010 course to mow the approaches. Of all the directors and managers within the company, I'm the only one who doesn't wear a suit! If I came to work corporately dressed, I think it would give the impression that I'm not willing to help, whereas I can always jump in to lend a hand washing down machines or cutting where necessary and I think my team respect that. Having said this, about five years I got a bit of a shock when I had carried out some work on the course and one of the summer guys turned to

me and said 'I didn't realise you were a greenkeeper' ... so maybe I should do practical work more often? However, after half an hour of practical work now I realise that it hurts more as you get older to carry out physical tasks.

Were you interested in golf or any sports as a youngster?

I played football, as most kids did from the west of Scotland, and I also played a lot of golf from the age of twelve - which was when I first became attracted to the industry.

How did that lead you into this career?

Originally, I didn't want to get into golf, and I had spent time at school thinking that I wanted to work in the Forestry Commission. I liked the idea of jumping in the back of a Landrover and cutting trees down (it's at this point Jim asked me to picture the muscly guy from the Yorkie advert). However, my

father died when I was just sixteen and, as the eldest of three boys, I felt it was important to be around for my mum and brothers, particularly as my mother didn't have immediate family close by. At that point (and without my mother knowing), I applied for a job to be a printer and, one Thursday afternoon, she returned home from work early and intercepted the letter from the Job Centre. This caused a blazing row, but I told her I'd made my mind up and was leaving school.

So, on the Friday, I lay in bed technically unemployed and my aunt came around to put some money in our rented television (this will make no sense to readers under the age of forty - but that was life). She realised I was in bed and proceeded to throw a large pan of water over me and dragged me to the Job Centre. It was on that day (in 1978), that I saw an advert for an apprentice greenkeeper at Haggs Castle, so went to the interview and got the position, where I stayed for the next six years. I was very fortunate that the Head Greenkeeper



I think it will be very different for people coming into the industry in five years' time, but this is going to be an interesting transition for all of us. We can't just say 'chemicals are gone, let's do something different.' It's going to take a long time to learn new methods and for the grasses and soil to adapt



When you think there is light at the end of tunnel, it's usually a train coming the other way

was Chris Kennedy, who later moved to the prestigious Wentworth Golf Club and, during this time, we held the Scottish Open where Bernard Langar won his first European Tour event and a grand total of £13,000. I then moved to Cawder Golf Club for three years on one of their courses where we hosted the Ladies European Tour and I gained a vast amount of experience working under Course Manager, Alistair Connoll.

From there, I went to Renfrew Golf

Club and I got my first Head Greenkeeper position at this amazing place. It was one of the first modern style courses to be built in Britain by Commander John D Harris (*Architect Extraordinaire*), who only designed three courses for this country, and they all had the reputation of being very tough courses to play.

In 1990, I went back to work for Chris Kennedy at Wentworth as Head Greenkeeper on the West Course. Amongst many events, I was involved in three PGA Championships and three World Match Plays and stayed there for three years before joining Celtic Manor.

Chris had received a phone call from the Trent Jones Group, who were building the courses at Celtic Manor, and they were using George Shields to spec the materials. He had been involved in a couple of projects we carried out at Wentworth and had recommended me to Trent Jones. The rest, as they say, is history and I've been here for twenty-six years.

How many job titles have you had during this time?

I've had many titles throughout my time at the Club but the current one is probably the longest standing. In the early days, I was Construction Manager then I was Course Manager. Between 1999 and 2004, I was also Director of Golf which meant I also ran the shops and every aspect of golf operations, including memberships. I don't mind admitting that this was a time I didn't particularly enjoy! As a greenkeeper, despite the fact it's early starts and late finishes, you usually get home at night and have most of the weekend for family time; however, when I was Director of Golf, I would get phone calls at all times of the night to say a buggy had broken down or someone hadn't turned up for a shift etc. and it was never ending.

In 2003, we started to think about construction of the Wentworth Hills course which was built, developed and then subsequently closed down to build the 2010 Ryder Cup course. At that point, the job got much harder and, fortunately, I had a



Director of Golf Courses and Estates Management, Jim McKenzie MBE



Over the last few months, I've been thinking more about publicising things that we have tried that maybe haven't gone so well, which provides an opportunity for others to learn from us

really good number two on the golf side, so he was promoted and I could concentrate on the Ryder Cup and Montgomerie construction.

Can you pinpoint the highlight of your career?

There's actually been a few. The first Head Greenkeeper position I got at Renfrew was certainly a pivotal point for me. Leaving home and going to Wentworth was another. And obviously coming here ... meeting the owner of Celtic Manor for the first time, Terry Matthews, was a huge turning point. I had never met Terry before but, after half an hour in his company, if he had asked me to punch a hole in the wall, I would have replied 'do you want me to use my left or right hand'. He is so inspirational, and he's still involved to this day.

People always ask if the Ryder Cup was the highlight. It wasn't a particularly enjoyable week due to the pressures, and I think if you ask many greenkeepers who have been involved in tournament golf, they will all agree that they don't define your

career. You learn so much during events such as the Open and Ryder Cup, but you will never be able to put those skills into practice again - unless you're fortunate enough to go to another tournament venue, but then it might not be the same anyway. I learnt so much and would do things a lot differently, if I ever got the chance again!

How has the industry changed since you joined?

The biggest thing is education. When I first joined the industry, opportunities were limited. It's with thanks to people like Cecil George (who recently passed) and a few others, that the education side was slowly ramping up. Certainly, over the last few years, there has been a lot of good education programmes at BTME and publications like Pitchcare all help to share information and educate.

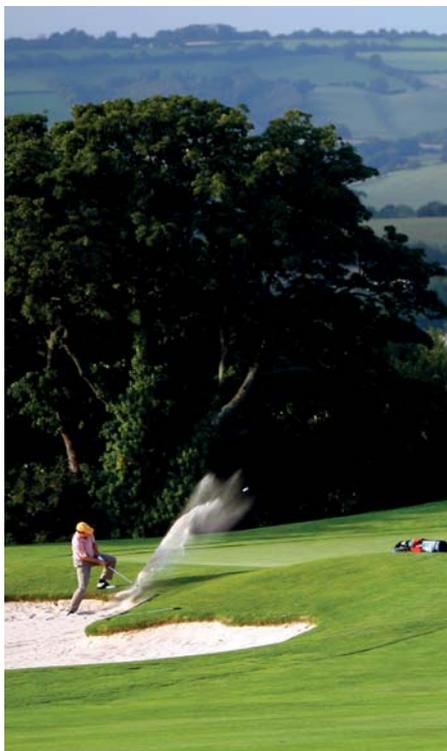
The other major change is machinery. When I first started, we would drag mowers along banks and ditches without much in the way of health and safety provisions, and we certainly didn't have help from

hydraulics like the machines of today. I think the job is much easier now with the help of technology. I actually have a couple of guys who complain with recurring back problems after sitting on machines for too long and, when they do something physical, they're not used to it. In my day, you were on the go all the time.

Another important change is the professionalism. When I first came into the industry, the PGA had done a great job in persuading clubs that the guy who sold the Mars bars, took the greens fees and held the odd lesson was a professional, and we greenkeepers weren't held in any regard. I think we are now viewed very differently.

The biggest, most recent change though is the non-certification of certain chemicals and how this effects maintenance and disease control. It's going to become harder over the next couple of years without moss killer, insecticides and worm control. There are new fungicides being released, and we wait with bated breath to see what they are, but the learning process will be a long one. I think it will be very different for people





coming into the industry in five years' time, but this is going to be an interesting transition for all of us. We can't just say 'chemicals are gone, let's do something different.' It's going to take a long time to learn new methods and for the grasses and soil to adapt.

90% of the golfers who play here do so for the first time and the remaining 10% are members. Therefore, we only have one chance to make an impression and the stakes are high here. In the summer, the courses are busy from 7.00am right through to 4.00pm, which means I can't topdress or cut tees/fairways in the afternoon like private member clubs might do.

We have trialled a few of the new products coming into the market but it's very difficult to ascertain success to one particular method or product. These are not laboratory conditions, where you can set temperatures and conditions to be 100% certain what has worked. We currently buy a vast amount of BioMass Sugar from ALS and this seems to work well for us in conjunction with keeping the height of cut short (even throughout the winter months).

Do you have to treat each course differently?

There are very slight differences. The 2010 and Montgomerie courses are fairly similar given the USGA construction. However, the Roman Road course has old UGSA specifications which means we don't just have a gravel and sand profile, there is a choker layer in-between. These greens are designed so that the rootzone will fill up with moisture and, when it reaches capacity, will then drain away which means they are managed slightly differently to our other courses. We try to maintain the Montgomerie and Roman Road with a softer surface, as players on these courses (with a handicap of 12 upwards) want the ball to stop on the green.

What are staff levels for each course?

There are thirteen full-time team members who work on both the Roman Road and Montgomerie courses alongside a head greenkeeper, and then we also employ an additional eight seasonal staff. The 2010 course has a strong team of ten full-time



It's never going to go according to plan. It's a rocky road and your direction will probably change multiple times, but stay true to yourself and your goals and you will get there





Wales currently gets less than 3% of the huge UK conference market and the new centre will encompass the largest conference room in Europe

staff, which includes the head greenkeeper, and they have an extra six team members for the summer. It's not as many as people think and, of those, only a third have previously worked on a golf course.

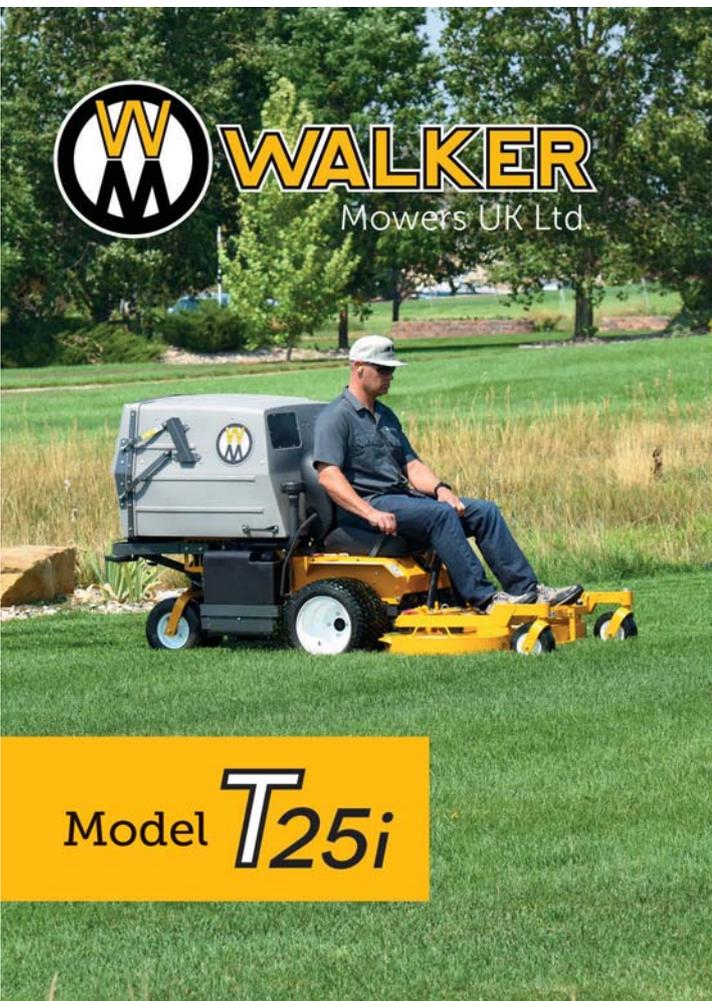
It's becoming increasingly difficult to recruit people into this industry as it's not a school leavers number one career choice, let alone trying to obtain qualified staff. That may be down to Wales being out on a limb in terms of location; however, in speaking

to other clubs such as The Belfry, everyone seems to be experiencing the same issues. I would say, 80% of our recruitment over the last couple of years has been down to keeping on seasonal staff and effectively we've 'grown our own' by them completing our own in-house training programme.

Do you think social media is affecting recruitment in a negative way?

I'm not really sure about that! I think criticism

from pundits about pitches and courses doesn't help. One of the interesting things about social media is that everyone only tends to promote things they're good at or projects that have gone well. For smaller clubs, with smaller budgets, I imagine this could be quite disheartening. Over the last few months, I've been thinking more about publicising things that we have tried that maybe haven't gone so well, which provides an opportunity for others to learn from



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It's becoming increasingly difficult to recruit people into this industry as it's not a school leavers number one career choice, let alone trying to obtain qualified staff

our mistakes. Around twenty years ago, I remember speaking at an education seminar as part of BTME and discussing all the things I had done wrong ... it was quite therapeutic to outwardly admit these things and put them behind you.

What's the one piece of advice you would give anyone joining the industry?

It would be to keep an open mind and expect the unexpected. I don't care how well you map your career out, it's never going to go according to plan. It's a rocky road and your direction will probably change multiple times, but stay true to yourself and your goals and you will get there.

Do you think the culture of communication has changed over the years?

Yes, definitely. Historically, greenkeepers would see each other at the odd golf day, or the occasional educational meeting and you didn't tend to share information. There was no social media back then, or mobile phones etc. which meant there was no way

of getting in touch with other professionals. Now, you can reach hundreds of people at the press of a button and, whilst I'm at an age where I've come to accept this type of media, for the green staff of today it's second nature. I have an eight-year-old granddaughter who can find YouTube and Netflix on the TV quicker than I can, so it's a way of life for the younger generation.

What have been the biggest machinery developments throughout your career?

The biggest thing has been the introduction of hydraulics and the ability to easily operate equipment using hydrostatic drive for example. We're 100% Toro machinery here; the ProCore is by far my favourite piece of kit and the one we use the most often. The ability to solid tine, hollow core etc. makes life so much easier.

A lot of machinery now is being released with diagnostic features and, for me, that makes things a little bit too complicated. Particularly sprayers whereby you have to pay £3000-4000 every time the diagnostic





Maybe, if Celtic Manor hadn't evolved into what it is now, I might think differently and that I should have gone abroad when I was younger

box breaks down whereas, in years gone, you could just go out and buy a Hardi sprayer. All you needed to know was your speed, pressure and the nozzle output - that was it! And now it's getting more and more complicated for someone of my age.

What's your opinion of battery powered mowers?

I think they're definitely the way forward. We're not running pure electrics yet but

we're already on hybrid fairway and green mowers. We pretty much follow the car manufacturers lead and that's obviously been driven forward over the last three to four years, however, I do feel that people will hold back a little bit until all the initial high costs and issues are ironed out. It's very rare that we go straight out and buy new technology now ... after being burnt on a new all singing piece of kit a few years ago, I will always wait a couple of years now.

Do you have developments planned for the courses?

We have a special projects team and carry out all our redevelopments in-house, from planning to the construction, and we very rarely use outside contractors. We seem to spend a lot more time reconstructing bunkers than we do on greens, and we're always building new tees and extending greens etc. across all three courses. It's getting to the stage (maybe this coming

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Of all the directors and managers within the company, I'm the only one who doesn't wear a suit!



winter) that we take a step back and say 'let's concentrate on the customer needs and catch our breath,' because we have been so busy over the last couple of years.

This has involved building new holes on the Roman Road course to facilitate the new £84.5m International Convention Centre and car parks. Wales currently gets less than 3% of the huge UK conference market and the new centre will encompass the largest conference room in Europe. It's a 50-50 venture between Celtic Manor and the Welsh Government and an opportunity to put Wales on the map. My gardens team have, so far, planted 16,500 trees around it which has been time consuming in itself.

What's been the biggest challenge/problem you have had to deal with over the years?

Currently, I would probably say the Human Resources aspect of the role. Dealing with lots of different people (from ages nineteen to sixty), all of whom have their individual

needs and issues, can be really hard. No previous role or management training prepared me for this side of things. I am faced with an extensive array of issues that people expect me to sort out for them and that's becoming 30% of the job at the moment.

Three years ago, we unfortunately had a death on site and that's by far the most difficult day I have had in my career.

Is there anything you would do differently, professionally or personally, if you had the chance?

I can now look back on a couple of opportunities (in the early days) to go abroad, which I didn't take, and I always wonder where those would have taken me. Sometimes, when guys ask me about applying for other positions, I tell them to go for it. Learn new languages, experience different cultures and encourage them to do all the things I decided not to do.

I feel very fortunate that the Resort has

developed around me into what's now known as the Celtic Manor Collection and I'm the only guy who has ever been in this post. The site has changed so much over the years ... when I first came here it was going to be an 18-hole course with an 85-bedroom hotel. By the end of next year, we'll have 800 hotel rooms on site as well as many other attributes in the portfolio (over five sites) including: 3.5 golf courses and a further one in Canada, a country pub with bedrooms, ten lodges overlooking the 2010 course, a local estate we look after, a municipal course and the Coldra Court Hotel.

How would you sum up your career?

That's difficult. Every year, we hold a long service award ceremony and, last year, we had 189 years of service and experience on a table of ten staff. There's a lot of people that have been here a long time and it's been a privilege to work alongside them. To go to exhibitions such as BTME and catch up with friends I have made over the years (some who I've worked with at Celtic Manor) is a delight.

Do you have any regrets?

There isn't anything that keeps me awake at night, so that can't be a bad thing! Maybe, if Celtic Manor hadn't evolved into what it is now, I might think differently and that I should have gone abroad when I was younger. Someone said this to me a while ago, whilst sat with Terry Matthews: 'When you think there is light at the end of tunnel, it's usually a train coming the other way.' That has always stuck with me and you just have to keep going and developing in your personal life and career.



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Plymouth Argyle FC

March of the green army

Plymouth Argyle are one of two English Football League clubs in the county of Devon in south-west England; the other being Exeter City, their nearest and closest rivals. Next season, the two clubs will renew their rivalry in League Two following Plymouth's relegation by the narrowest of margins and Exeter's failure to make the fourth tier play-offs in similarly unfortunate circumstances. The club are nicknamed 'The Pilgrims', after the historic sailing to America made by the Mayflower out of this important Royal Navy city, whilst their supporters are the 'Green Army'. Lee Williams reports



We need colleges and our governing bodies to work together to help promote what we do as a career, and one where, if you work hard, it can be very rewarding

It takes six hours to drive from my home town of Oldham to Plymouth, so I was glad to be met by Grounds Manager Chris Ralph complete with a very strong cup of coffee. That, at least, would keep me awake after the long journey!

Thirty-five year-old Chris took on the new challenge of Grounds Manager just six months ago.

Chris was formerly Head Groundsman at Torquay United FC, a former Football League club who are 'on their way back' following this season's promotion into the National League.

Chris explains how the move came about

and the challenge he was given. "I came to Plymouth in the middle of November 2018. There were a few issues with the pitch and Colin Wheatcroft, a previous head groundsman who retired eight years ago, but who is still well respected by the club, was asked to help find someone who could help improve the pitch. I kind of knew Colin. He had been over to Torquay's Plainmoor Stadium a few times and liked what he saw. So, he was asked by Michael Dunford, Plymouth's Chief Executive, to approach me about taking up the Grounds Manager position here. I jumped at the chance as it had always been an aspiration of mine to

work here as I have supported the team since I was a young local lad."

Chris is responsible for the stadium's Fibrelastic constructed pitch with a Rainbird pop-up irrigation system. A short walk from the stadium, in the park, are two clay/soil-based training pitches which, in recent years, the club has invested heavily into to provide primary and secondary drainage, along with sand banding.

"When I first came here, the stadium pitch was very thin; it had a lot of black layer in the top few inches and water was holding on the surface, even though it is a Fibrelastic pitch construction."



Typically, at this level, not much thought has gone into how the stand will affect the pitch. Over half the pitch will be in the shade from October through to March



Grounds Manager Chris Ralph

What's in the shed

Iseki TG 6375
 Charterhouse Verti-Drain 7316
 Toro Reelmaster 3100
 Infiniticut FX34 x 2
 Fleet Kombi line marker
 Honda HRD 536 x 2
 ICL fertiliser spinner
 Husqvarna strimmer
 Various hand tools

I asked Chris what he has done so far to address these issues, and has he seen any improvements with the surface? "The first thing I did was open up the pitch using a reconditioned verti-drain; we probably went a little bit too close with the centres, plus going over it twice in two weeks softened it up a bit too much. But, by putting a regular aeration programme in place, varying between depths of six to ten inches, you could immediately see the grass come alive again. It is now standing up; infiltration rates have improved and there's a much-improved root system."

"Instead of a mismatched fertiliser programme it was being given, I have put a regular, consistent programme in place based on soil results that came back indicating low calcium/potassium levels and that the CEC rating was poor, but that is to be expected on a sand-based pitch."

"With a better fertiliser programme in place through October to December, the pitch reacted well, it thickened up, and the seed drill lines disappeared. We have also used a combination of Banner Maxx and Heritage to help prevent disease. This we

already had in stock."

Chris explains his plans for the renovation of the stadium pitch and training pitches at end of the season. "Inscapes will be doing the renovation of the stadium pitch. They originally constructed it in 2010 and have carried out the work every season since. It will be koroed off, then sixty tonnes of Fibresand will be remediated back into the surface, re-levelled, overseeded using a dimple seeder, with a pre-seed fertiliser applied."

"We have already fraise mown the bottom pitch on the training ground, due to a late grow in the previous season. Last year, the manager came in for pre-season training and there was basically no grass on that pitch, it was October by the time they were able to use it. It doesn't have a pop up system, so we rely on a portable Javelin sprinkler which throws out quite a lot of water, but a portable generator also powers the system, so I am restricted to when I can turn it on. This, combined with the hot spell last summer, obviously meant it was difficult to get enough water on. Hopefully, with an early renovation, I will



Training pitch



Chris with his favourite piece of kit - an Infiniticut mower

see a good establishment of grass and be in a much better place for when the players come back.”

Chris talks me through how he got into the industry. “My old man was working for a few companies around here selling Jacobsen, Textron and other various machinery. He heard Teign Valley Golf Club was looking for an apprentice greenkeeper, so I started there on a youth training scheme where I did my NVQ Level 2 in sports turf. After two years, I moved to Hele Park Golf Club as Assistant Greenkeeper where I did my NVQ Level 3 in Sports Turf and spraying certificates in the ten years I was at the club. When the head greenkeeper left, I was helping to run the course alongside the owner, but was never officially given the ‘Head Greenkeeper’ title. I was then approached by Torquay United FC who knew about me through someone coaching in their youth department, who is the Course Manager at Dartmouth Golf Club and was lecturing part-time when I was doing my level three. I went down for a chat and ended up spending six years there as head



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Getting Personal

Chris Ralph - Disney World with Holly Willoughby (cleared by his wife)

Who are you? Chris Ralph, Head Groundsman at Plymouth Argyle FC.

Family status. Married with a son called Sebastian.

Who's your hero and why? Roy Keane. I've always admired how he could inspire and drive that famous Man Utd team.

What would you change about yourself? I would like to be a bit more organised and tidy - both professionally and at home. But, with a young child and busy work schedule it makes it difficult.

What's your guilty pleasure? Probably Man Utd at the moment.

What's been the highlight of your career so far? Groundsman of the Year for National League North/South in 2017.

What are your pet peeves? Funnily enough, I hate being untidy.

If you could go anywhere right now, where would it be? Disney World in Florida. I would like to take the boy.

What's the best part of your job? 3pm on a Saturday when all your hard work throughout the week comes together.

... and the worst? Postponed matches.

Do you have a lifetime ambition? Just to reach as far as I can in my career. I'm very proud to be at this club and they only want to push on.

Favourite record, and why? Daft Punk - One More Time. Reminds me of enjoying great times with friends, when we all had less responsibilities.

Who would you choose to spend a romantic evening with? Holly Willoughby - even the wife would know the answer to this!

If you won the lottery, what is the first thing you would do? Help family and friends out then go on a massive spending spree.

Which three people, living or dead, would you invite to a dinner party? Alex Ferguson, Sir Matt Busby and Gary Neville. It would be good to chat about Man United's current problems and what they could have done differently after Fergie's retirement.



If you could be anyone for a day, who would it be and why? Tony Sinclair - just to experience the facilities, pressure and what it is like to work at that level.

Do you have any bad habits? I might be too soft at times.

... or any good ones? My attention to detail, work ethic and trustworthiness.

Do you go to bed worrying about the next day's workload? Never worrying, but always thinking and planning for the next day ahead.

What are you reading at the moment? Pitchcare magazine and I like to go online to research new ideas and what is coming to the market.

What's the best advice you have ever been given? A former TUFC player told me I had to be more miserable and horrible. I think he was joking but I knew what he meant.

What's your favourite smell? Freshly cut grass.

What do you do in your spare time? Spending time with my little boy as time is precious in this job.

What's the daftest work related question you have ever been asked? Do we paint the grass different colours to get the stripes.

What's your favourite piece of kit? I have two; the SISIS Quadraplay and our fixed head Infinicut mowers.

What three words would you use to describe yourself? Grounded, loyal and hardworking.

What talent would you like to have? I would love to be better at golf.

What law/legislation would you like to see introduced? For it to become compulsory for football/golf clubs to have to adhere to the IOG/BIGGA suggested pay scales. I have experienced terrible rates of pay for a job that takes skill, working long hours and in all weathers.



groundsman before moving here."

Helping maintain the pitches alongside Chris is Martin Bird, 42 years old, who was the previous Head Groundsman and still holds that title. He has been at the club for two and a half years and has NVQ Levels 2 and 3 in sports turf as well as his spraying certificates; Billy White, 30 years old, Assistant Groundsman who has been at the club for nine years and did voluntary work before being full-time; and Colin Wheatcroft, 73 years old, Pitch Advisor and former Head Groundsman.

In the short time Chris has been at the club, the management has supported his request to start investing in new machinery. "We had two old Ransomes Mastiffs that weren't in good order, and the boxes weren't fit for purpose either, with grass flying everywhere. We have now replaced these with two Cub Cadet Infinicut fixed head mowers, which we are paying for over two years. They have made a massive difference to the quality of cut and presentation."

"The tractor was an old Tym which was too big for what we needed - it had narrow



Team member Billy



Left to right: Billy White, Chris Ralph and Martin Bird



With a better fertiliser programme in place through October to December, the pitch reacted well, it thickened up, and the seed drill lines disappeared

tyres and we were paying way over the odds for it. This has been replaced with an Iseki tractor with Galaxy turf tyres and a SISIS Quadraplay, which we purchased through DGM (Devon Garden Machinery). Our verti-drain is falling to bits, so we are replacing this with a reconditioned Charterhouse Verti-drain which is just being finished off. We are also looking at clean up mowers, so we have

been demoing the Dennis Pro 34R and the Allett Uplift 86. I'm still undecided on which way to go as there is not much between them, they are both outstanding; it will come down to price."

Chris will be exploring new hybrid pitch construction options in the next few months as the club looks to replace the current stadium pitch. "When the pitch was installed,

Colin was told its life span would be around seven years so, once the pitch has been Koro'd off, Mansfield Sands are going to take samples from the pitch to determine what life is left in it and offer advice. We have had SIS Pitches down to have a look, and they have given us a rough ballpark figure for their system. We are still in the early stages and have just started looking into it. We know



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Club history

Plymouth Argyle Football Club is a professional football club based in the city of Plymouth, Devon. Next season, the club will compete in League Two, the third tier of the English football league system, following relegation on goal difference. It is one of two clubs in Devon competing in the Football League, the other being Exeter City, Argyle's local rivals.

The club takes its nickname, 'The Pilgrims', from an English religious group that left Plymouth for the New World in 1620. The club crest features the Mayflower, the ship that carried the pilgrims to Massachusetts.

The club has predominantly played in green and white throughout its history, with a few exceptions in the late 1960s and early 1970s when white was the colour of choice. A darker shade of green, described as 'Argyle green', was adopted in the 2001-02 season, and has been used ever since. Their fans are known as the 'Green Army', a fact brought to the public's attention by an Aviva insurance ad featuring Paul Whitehouse.

Plymouth is the largest city in England never to have hosted top-flight football. They are the most southerly and westerly league club in England.

The original ground at Home Park was destroyed by German bombers during the Blitz on Plymouth in World War II. Having been rebuilt after the war, Home Park was largely demolished as part of an extensive process of renovation, and the first phase of a new stadium, built by Barrs plc, was completed in May 2002.

The new Devonport End was opened for the 2001 Boxing Day fixture with Torquay United. The other end, the Barn Park End, opened on the same day. The Lyndhurst stand reopened on 26 January 2002 for the game against Oxford United. This year will see the completion of a major 18-month renovation of the main Mayflower Grandstand, which will increase

the match-day capacity of Home Park to more than 18,000, and provide world class conferencing and events facilities all year round.

The ground is situated in Central Park, very near to the residential area of Peverell. Towards the end of the 2005-06 Championship season, the club agreed to buy the stadium for £2.7 million from Plymouth City Council, releasing the ground from a 125-year lease. This purchase was concluded in December 2006.

In January 2017, director Simon Hallett invested £5,000,000 into the club, along with all other directors, exchanging previous loans into equity, with the intention of using the money for renovating the Mayflower Grandstand. Hallett subsequently succeeded James Brent as the club's chairman.

Later that month, temporary seating was once again put in place on the Grandstand, this time as a one-off for an FA Cup 3rd round replay against Liverpool. The seating was kept in place for the next home match, a League 2 game against Exeter City, but tickets were not on sale to the general public. Shortly after this game, the seating was removed.



Main stand development



When I first came here, the stadium pitch was very thin; it had a lot of black layer in the top few inches and water was holding on the surface

what's available; it's just a matter of doing our homework, getting lots of quotes in and taking it from there."

The club is currently redeveloping the main stand which will help sustain the club's future income, but it will provide an issue for Chris to manage. "Typically, at this level, it seems like not much thought has gone into how the stand will affect the pitch. Over half the pitch will be in the shade from October through to March." This led me to ask if it's possible to invest in lighting rigs? "It would be advantageous. They are becoming more available to us in the lower leagues as more second-hand reconditioned units come onto the market. With this in mind, it will be something I will put forward to the club in the future."

Chris believes our industry is improving all the time and people are becoming more aware of what the job involves. "The biggest problem our industry faces at the minute is recruiting and attracting new blood, whether that be younger people leaving school or anyone who fancies a change of career. I believe a lot of it comes down to wages. I have experienced some terrible rates of pay throughout the sports turf industry, and I would love for it to become compulsory for clubs to have to adhere to the IOG/BIGGA rates of pay. We need colleges and our governing bodies to work together to help promote what we do as a career, and one where, if you work hard, it can be very rewarding."

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Battery powered equipment

The charge for new groundcare tools





One noticeable development in groundcare machinery has been the emergence of a wide range of battery powered professional tools, so we invited five leading manufacturers to supply machines for testing in the diverse environment of Shrewsbury School’s grounds, by kind permission of Grounds Manager **Andy Richards** and with the help of his team

Historically, there has been a perception that battery powered grounds maintenance machinery is more suited to domestic than professional use, but many of the machines in our test were based on their professional petrol equivalents, and testers found them to be robust and durable. We used them in highly inclement conditions to trial water resistance and even took them for a ride in the back of the UTV as part of the process, which is a good test of any machine’s strength!

When purchasing, manufacturers’ advice is to look for machines specified as professional or commercial series as these are designed to meet the same durability standards as their petrol equivalents, and also have suitable batteries to offer the run times needed for commercial work.

Battery powered equipment could offer particular benefits for sensitive environments such as schools, hospitals and hotels, due to the quiet running of electric motors.

For example, Andy Richards explains: “It’s quite difficult to schedule work close to school buildings at certain times of year,

as noise has to be avoided at any time that an exam is in progress, which can wipe out entire days. We can’t always start early either, as work is prohibited next to the dormitory blocks before 8am, so quiet running is certainly an advantage for us.”

Husqvarna suggests that battery powered implements offer a distinct benefit even with traditionally noisy activities such as using a brushcutter or blower - with noise levels of up to 18db(A) lower than their petrol equivalents.

Other benefits include reduced emissions, especially when operators are working in confined spaces, whilst fewer working parts mean less vibrations, allowing safe work over a longer period.

Battery performance is a topic of interest - whilst many operators need to be able to work for several hours away from base so need long life batteries or multiple battery packs, Andy points out: “Our operators will only perform one task for a couple of hours at a time, so batteries can easily be swapped in the workshop at the changeover, but need to charge up quickly.”

STIHL’s Reuben Wilson explains that



Shrewsbury School Grounds Manager, Andy Richards



Husqvarna T535iXP



EGO CS1400E



STIHL MSA 200



Petrol chainsaws look quite daunting so an unqualified operator is unlikely to pick one up and ‘have a go’ - these look a lot more ‘friendly’ so you’d need to secure them in the workshop

modern Lithium-Ion batteries offer petrol-like performance in terms of longevity.

“There is no tail-off in power and a flat battery will simply cut out rather than fade. They have a long lifespan and withstand multiple charges, yet if a battery is left to run down, over the winter for example, it will always retain 20% residual charge so the implement could still be used.”

Pellenc points out that its in-house designed and built batteries use high-capacity lithium-ion cells tested in severe working conditions which can withstand over 1,300 charge cycles and give a service life longer than five years (one cycle corresponding to one full charge and one full discharge).

Design and technology can help get the best out of battery life. All battery powered machines have a feature such as LED lights

to check the remaining run time and help plan charging periods.

Husqvarna also offers the Connect App which provides battery management tools including runtime statistics and charge status for its Bluetooth-connected machines. Its battery handheld products also come with a savE feature, an economy mode which can be selected to maximise operational time.

Brushless motors feature on many electric tools, designed to give high consistent torque from low revs, also saving power. With no petrol engine to fire up, starting and operation can be as simple as the click of a button.

Each manufacturer offers a range of batteries which are interchangeable between tools, so in theory one battery pack could power all the implements that



Makita DUC355Z



Top Common at Shrewsbury School



Even considering battery and charger purchase costs, savings of £4442 could be made over a five-year period

an operator would use. However, choice of battery depends on the run time required and preferred overall weight - and be recommended by the manufacturer for a particular implement - rather than an integrated battery, so it's worth considering which tools will be used now and in the future when purchasing batteries.

Even backpack batteries are relatively light, and the well-padded, adjustable harnesses were picked out for praise in the test.

STIHL also demonstrated a hip belt which can be used for smaller batteries, with a cable running to the tool, and also offers a backpack to carry two smaller batteries - it's probably a matter of trialling all the options and then making a decision!

All manufacturers offer chargers for their batteries, with various options depending on whether rapid charging is required. Consideration should be given to where batteries will be charged, and how

to cater for multiple batteries if used, without taking up too much space or having potentially dangerous trailing leads in the workshop.

Pellenc offers a smart Battery Park Management (BMS) system, which will allow users to charge up to ten batteries simultaneously.

Les Malin, Managing Director of Pellenc's UK and Ireland distributor Etesia UK explains: "The BMS centralises battery management of all Pellenc batteries allowing a maximum of ten chargers, two of which can be rapid chargers, to be housed in one secure and safe metal cabinet with only one mains plug required."

On the front of the cabinet is a touch pad that allows the operator to individually control all of the batteries' charging input and enter petrol and electricity cost data. Standard pre-programmed or maintenance charges can be selected, and the system will calculate the savings made, both in fuel and

Shrewsbury School

Set in 128 acres, Shrewsbury School is a co-educational independent school. Sports play a major part in school life with thirteen winter sports pitches; two astroturf pitches, eight hard tennis/netball courts and a grass la-crosse pitch for girls; cricket is a highly important sport and, along with the grass courts, offers an indoor cricket centre offering state of the art training facilities year-round.

In the summer, one of Andy's major challenges is the packed cricket programme; there are fifty-five grass pitches which means up to thirty can be in preparation at any one time. Andy uses a diverse range of maintenance equipment, especially hand tools and multiple machines can be in use at once, preparing for a major fixture or school event such as Speech Day. He also has one battery powered implement in his fleet already, so has some experience with these tools.

The school has around 1200 trees and large ornamental and lawned areas which are all maintained by Andy's team of ten groundsmen and gardeners.



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Makita DUR365UZ



Husqvarna 520iRX



STIHL FSA 130



EGO Power Plus STX3800

electricity, whilst also showing the amount of CO₂ that has been offset - potentially useful information for local authorities and their contractors.

Chainsaws

As the school's certificated operator was not available on the day of our test, manufacturers either demonstrated their saws or discussed them with the groundsmen.

Power and performance of the Makita, STIHL, Ego and Husqvarna models shown impressed our team - Husqvarna's 535iXP model operates at 20m/sec, comparable to a similar petrol model. The groundsmen also commented on the light weight and balanced handling of the saws.

Pellenc's Selion powered pruner also drew a lot of interest - originally designed for specialist pruning in orchards, it offers a powerful alternative to a lopper, but does not require a chainsaw certificate. Pellenc's range includes a top handled chainsaw, but as this design is aimed at professional arborists for tree climbing work rather than groundsmen, it was not presented on the day.

Andy envisaged one drawback of the compact, benign appearance of the electric chainsaw.

"Petrol chainsaws look quite daunting so an unqualified operator is unlikely to pick

one up and 'have a go' - these look a lot more 'friendly' so you'd need to secure them in the workshop or out on site so that staff or even a member of the public didn't get tempted."

Brushcutters and trimmers

Makita's split shaft DUX60Z and DUR 365UZ twin 18v brush cutters were praised for their simple design and light weight; both have an integrated battery so are easy to put on and wear. The two different handle systems - loop and cowhorn - appealed to different operators, and handling was slightly different as the twin 18v has the motor in the base. Two-button control was said to be easy to use, and the powerful operation was also singled out.

Good balance and ease of use were also picked out as features of the EGO STX 3800 and BC3800 brushcutter, the former with loop handle and the latter with cowhorn and both with backpack battery. One operator chose these as his overall favourite for its power, and the light weight was universally praised.

The complexity of the STIHL models when using them for small jobs was mentioned, but the well designed, comfortable harness made up for the extra weight. Some operators found that the blade got caught up in heavier material.

Powerful operation was one of the

CHAINSAWS

Manufacturer	Model	Weight (Kg)	Run time (mins)	Sound pressure dB(A)	Rated voltage	Bar length (cm)	Price (£)
EGO Power Plus	CS1400E	3.7	<450 cuts	86	56	35	165.83
Husqvarna	535iXP	2.6	<135	93	36	35	300
Makita	DUC355Z	4.7	<550 cuts	87.7	36	35	132.50
STIHL	MSA 200	3.3	45* 200**	84	36	35	258.33



BRUSHCUTTERS AND TRIMMERS						
Manufacturer	Model	Weight (Kg) (without battery)	Run time (mins)	Sound pressure dB(A)	Cutting tool	Price (£)
EGO Power Plus	STX3800	5.9	<300	81	line blade	274.17
	PH1400E+	2.7	<95	84		165.83+
	BCA1200	1.8				66.66
Husqvarna	520iRX	3.8	<80* <495**	76	line/blade	270.83
Makita	DUR365UZ	4.3	<490	77	line	149.17
Pellenc	Excelion	3.6	<210	84	line	1264
STIHL	FSA 130	4.5	<85	82	grass blade	360 (c/horn) 340 (loop)
	FSA 130 R	3.9	<40* <190**	83	line	340
	FS-KM	1.2	<38*	92	line/blade	145.83
	KMA 130 R powerhead	+3.2	<193**			+ 275 for powerhead

outstanding features of the Pellenc Excelion, although the 'double click' on-off was considered to be difficult for some operators. The large battery pack was supported by a generous harness and was generally considered to be very comfortable.

Husqvarna's 520iRX was universally liked especially for its light weight. Operators remarked on the easy reverse feature which can be engaged to cut in both directions with a trimmer head, meaning cuttings can

be sent in either direction - making for tidier more efficient work.

Hedgetrimmers

The quality and finish of the Husqvarna 520iHD70 and 520iHE3 long reach were picked out, along with their balance, although they were felt to be quite heavy. The battery performance was considered to be another plus.

Makita's split shaft multi-tool was also



There is no tail-off in power and a flat battery will simply cut out rather than fade

PELLENC ULIB 1500 BATTERY
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8 AWARDS

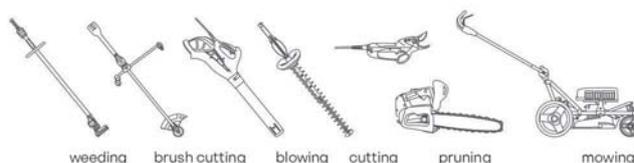
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HEDGETRIMMERS

Manufacturer	Model	Weight (Kg) (without battery)	Run time (mins)	Sound pressure dB(A)	Rated voltage	Cuting bar length (cm)	Price (£)
EGO Power Plus	HT5100E	3.6	<125	79	56	51	165.83
	HTX6500	3.9	<420	80	56	65	265.83
Husqvarna	520iHD70	3.8	<120	78	36	70	291.67
	520iHE3 long reach	4.1	<120	84	36	55	270.83
Makita	DUX60Z	4.1-8.7	<97	82	36	60	132.50 motor only
	Split shaft combi DUH601Z	3.8	<167	82	18	60	140.83
Pellenc	Helion	3.9	<360	80	43.2	63	730
	Helion Alpha	3.9	<360	80	43.2	63	520
STIHL	HSA 86	3	<180	83	36	45	195.83
	HSA 94 R	4.4	135-105*	84	36	75	410
	HL-KM 145	2.3	700-570**	92	36	50	275
	KMA 130 R powerhead						+ 275
	HLA 65	3.5	<72	85	36	50	245.83
	HLA 85	4.4	<144*	75	36	50	333.33



Husqvarna 520iHE3



STIHL HSA 94 R



Makita DUX60Z



EGO Power Plus HTX6500

trialled with its hedgecutter attachment, along with the DUH601Z hedge trimmer and again the simplicity of use and comfort was praised. The position of the split shaft was a comfort issue for one operator.

EGO showed its multi-tool plus HTX6500 and HT500 hedge trimmers, the multi tool getting particular praise for its good balance as a long reach machine.

Whilst felt to be heavy, the build quality of the Pellenc Helion HEL 20 and Alpha HEL 20 long reach machines was praised, with testers suggesting that they would stand the test of time in a commercial environment. The well-made, comfortable harness made carrying the battery easy.

STIHL offered the widest choice of machines for the test, with the HSA 86, HSA 94 R, HLA 65, HLA 85 and multitool KMA 130 R all available to try. The simple twist grip operation and light weight were picked out as their best features.

Blowers

Of all the tools tested, the low noise levels were perhaps the most noticeable with the blowers, operators commenting on how



Benefits include reduced emissions, especially when operators are working in confined spaces, whilst fewer working parts mean less vibrations



Pellenc Helion

much easier it would be to get the job done in sensitive areas.

Makita's DUB 362Z is a simple hand-held blower with integrated battery, considered to be light but with plenty of power and easy to handle.

STIHL's offering included the BGA 100, BGA 55 and the useful multi-tool KMA 130 R. A trigger switch for that power boost when blowing wet leaves or heavier debris was appreciated.

Husqvarna's 530iBX, 550iBX and back pack were considered to be good all round, easy to handle and control.

Design and appearance were picked out as good points of the EGO LB6000X and LB6000, along with their high power.

Power and performance

were also praised on the Pellenc Airion.

Batteries and cost

Cost is a moot point - whilst the implements themselves are competitive with their petrol equivalents, the battery adds another chunk to the price. For example, STIHL's MSA 200 C-B battery chainsaw comes in at £310, with its petrol equivalent the MS 211 at £370; add on £190 for the integrated battery and £120 for the AL 500 quick charger.

If the battery and charger's cost can be spread between three or four implements it starts to stack up, especially when the savings on fuel and servicing are taken into account. EGO has produced



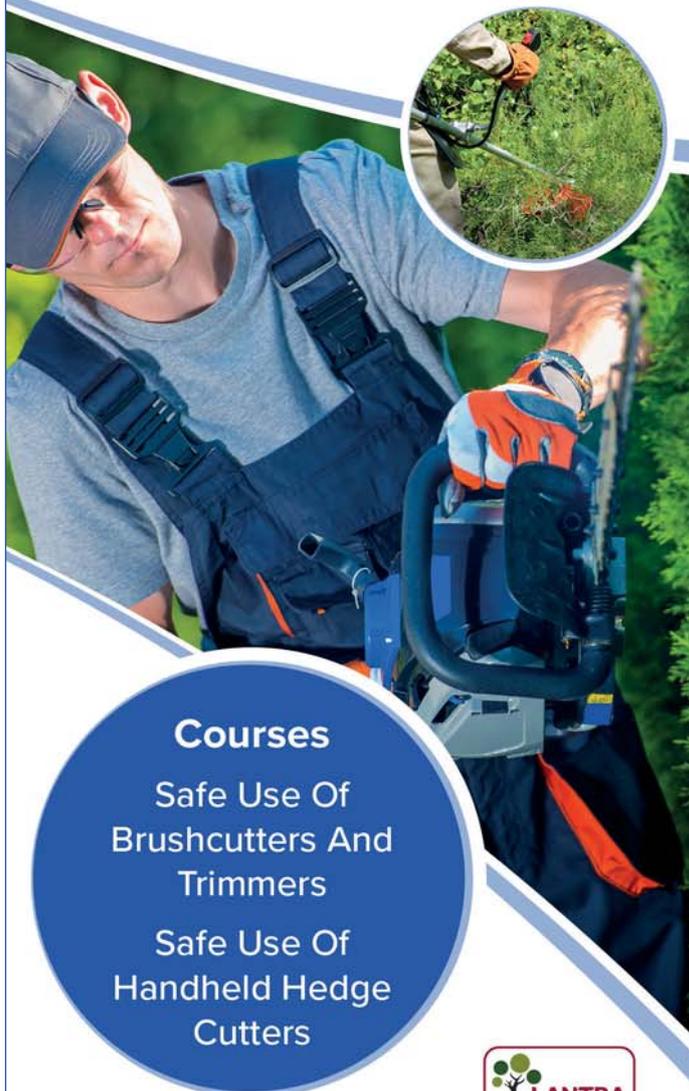
STIHL BGA 85



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BLOWERS

Manufacturer	Model	Weight (Kg) (without battery)	Run time (mins)	Sound pressure dB(A)	Air flow (m ³ /min)	Max airspeed (m/s)	Price (£)
EGO Power Plus	LB6002E	2.7	<120*	83	20	53	190.83
	LBX6000		<350**	80	16.9	59	249.17
Husqvarna	525iB	2.4	<80*	82	13.3	56	316.67
	550iBTX	6.3	<105**	76.6	15.6	67	458.53
Makita	DUB362Z	3.5	<73	79.1	13.4	54	99.17
Pellenc	Airion 3	2.55	<360	79	15.45	63	575
STIHL	BGA 85	3.2	<24* <115**	83	14	56	216.67
	BGA 100	2.5	<83* <395**	80	14	75	265
	BG-KM		<35*		n/a		170.83
	KMA 130 R powerhead		<190**	92			+275



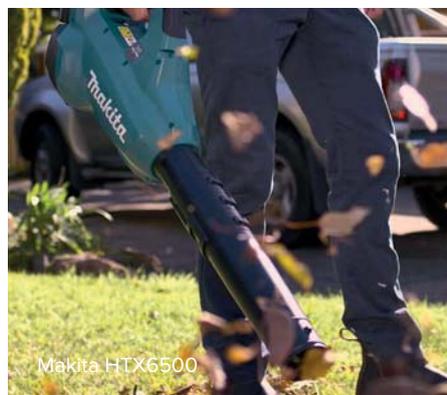
Husqvarna 550iBTX



EGO Power Plus LBX6000



Pellenc Airion



Makita HTX6500

a convincing calculation for a professional landscaper purchasing a hedge trimmer, line trimmer and blower which shows that even considering battery and charger purchase costs, savings of £4442 could be made over a five-year period compared with the equivalent petrol trio.

Another approach could be to use a multi-tool, where one shaft (and thus one battery pack) powers a range of working tools, from hedge trimmers to cultivators and even a blower in STIHL's case.

However, batteries are not interchangeable between brands, so that calculation does require brand loyalty for all of the electric kit being purchased. On the plus side, a purchaser choosing three or four machines at once should be able to secure a favourable price at the dealership!

All prices exclusive of VAT.
 Makita models are twin 18V machines therefore, require two batteries and they state all machines are without batteries/chargers
 *Interchangeable battery
 **Backpack battery
 Run time figures are for the recommended battery, and may vary according to power levels used on specific implements

BATTERIES

Manufacturer	Model	Type	Weight (Kg)	Capacity (ah)	Rated voltage	Charge time (mins)	Price (£)
EGO Power Plus	BA2800	Backpack	2.2	5	56	>40	165.83
	BAX1500		9.0	28	56	>210	832.50
Husqvarna	BLi200	Interchangeable	1.3	5.2	36	>30	175
	BLi950X	Backpack	6.9	31.1	36	>175	958.33
Makita	BL1850B	Interchangeable	0.6	5	18	>45	44
Pellenc	Alpha 520	Interchangeable	3.6	12	43.2	>150	460
	ULIB 1500	Backpack	7.5	35	43.6	>420	1925
STIHL	AP 300	Interchangeable Backpack	1.7	6	36	35 (using AL 500)	158.33
	AR 3000		8.1 (inc carrying system)	29.3	36	>160 (using AL 500)	710

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Pocklington School

Straight shooting

Pocklington School is an independent day and boarding school for boys and girls aged 3-18. Located in Pocklington, a pleasant, small market town able to boast the services of a Town Crier. David Mears visited the school recently and met **Andrew Woodhall**, Head Groundsman at this old established school situated at the foot of the Yorkshire Wolds in the East Riding of Yorkshire



Andrew Woodhall



Andrew Woodhall is a “local lad; born and bred in the area” as he says. He initially worked on an arable farm and his career has been land based since. He is proud that he was able to drive a tractor at the age of twelve! The one thing that sticks in his mind however was: “I knew how to keep lines straight!” This came from ploughing, seeding and mowing.

He has carried this with him and ensures lines are dead straight out on the sports fields and cricket field at Pocklington School. Andrew has been at Pocklington School for just over twelve years now and thoroughly enjoys his job. He told me that originally he fancied being a mechanic working with all

manner of land machinery. This is exemplified by the fact that he is an avid collector of vintage farm machinery and implements which started in his teenage years. He relished the outdoor life and being hands on.

He more or less fell into farming with help and guidance of Melbourne Smith, the family’s farming neighbour and friend. Melbourne took an interest in young Andrew and his keenness for work and the outdoors. He offered Andrew work even from the age of twelve and, when he was ready for proper work, recommended Andrew to another farmer. “So, was Melbourne the one person who inspired you?” I asked. “Thinking about it, I guess he was,” replied Andrew. “He



steered me in the right direction as I grew up and kept a watchful eye over my progression as a young teenager. He trusted my abilities and that gave me confidence.”

After fifteen years on the farm gaining vast and all-round experience, particularly with the operation and maintenance of machinery, Andrew felt a change was necessary. He joined the Royal Mail for two years, but missed the varied outdoor machinery life and wanted to return. He spotted an advert in the local press for the position of Groundsman at Pocklington School and applied. He thought himself fortunate to secure an interview and even more so to be offered the post in April 2007. “Luck was on my side!” said Andrew.

Perhaps it was more than luck? He had potential to progress and this was obviously spotted. The school backed this by funding courses at Askham Bryan College. An NVQ2 in Sports Turf Maintenance was undertaken and Andrew received his qualification. A while later he undertook an NVQ3, again at Askham Bryan. He has also attended other courses to assist in developing more knowledge and skills; these included a Land Based Team Leader course and a Cricket Pitch and Outfield course, operated and certificated by one of the nationally known member organisations, plus an Artificial Pitch Maintenance course.

Within a year of joining Pocklington School, Andrew was made Grounds Team

//

He steered me in the right direction as I grew up and kept a watchful eye over my progression as a young teenager. He trusted my abilities and that gave me confidence

Maintenance work list

At Easter, the site is turned around from the winter pitches to the summer

Pre-season rolling has taken place

Overseeding and topdressing of cricket outfield and some rugby pitches is carried out

Squares/wickets and practice nets are prepared. Athletics track/associated events, rounders, artificial tennis courts, softball, volleyball and mini-football are all marked out

Spot sprayed for weeds on the cricket squares and associated areas. However, some areas on certain pitches do need the team sprayer once/twice a year, but is kept to the minimum

Fertiliser is applied to the site three times per year using a 14:6:8, 9:4:10 and 5:3:20 K-recharge, plus a 12:3:10 on the cricket squares with rates varying from 20-35gms/m². In addition, Sherriff E² Pro liquid fertiliser is applied to the cricket squares

Main field, Big field and outfield are cut two-three times a week

Squares are cut/boxed off once a week

Wickets prepared on a daily basis

Surrounds cut once a week

Associated sports pitches are white lined every seven-ten days throughout the year

Pitches are checked for damage on a daily basis and rabbits kept behind the wire fence

Any weeding done on a weekly basis around pavilion and associated areas etc.

Astros checked for debris every day and brushed three times a month during the summer, but brushed every week through the winter

During the summer holiday, the site is turned around to the winter pitches

Rugby, mini-football, grass hockey, netball, lacrosse and artificial hockey are all marked out

Cricket squares are renovated and applications of Greenmaster Pro-Lite Invigorator 4:0:8, along with Pervade, Vitalnova AminoBoost and BioStim HFT are applied in autumn/winter

Cricket squares are solid tined each month from September-January with the Multicore

Slitting of pitches is carried out on a weekly basis

A contractor verti-drains the site with 25mm tines to a depth of 260mm during October

The collection of leaves is carried out every day

Seavolution Plus/Go Green at 20-40l/ha is applied in autumn and spring

Gritting and snow ploughing on the school campus is undertaken as required



Leader, effectively running the grounds department for the ensuing period and was provided with a house on site. In March 2014, he was officially appointed Head Groundsman, although he was responsible for budgeting and putting forward capital expenditure requests from 2009. He reports to Premises Manager Matthew Partis.

The facility and staff

Pocklington School was founded in 1514 by visionary and benefactor John Dolman, a lawyer and English clergyman who had a great understanding of the value of education. There are 771 students aged 3 - 18, with approximately 100 boarders. The school has a fifty acre campus, which includes twenty-four acres of outdoor sports facilities. These comprise twenty-one acres of sports turf (rugby, cricket, hockey, etc.) and three acres of Astro turf.

Andrew has two others on his team to

maintain the sports grounds. The team, pictured here, comprises: Andrew Woodhall, Head Groundsman - worked at Pocklington School for twelve years and 46 years old; Paul Husband, Groundsman, five years at the school and 58 years old - came from a farming background, worked for InTurf of York (contracting work) and has a wealth of grounds experience; John Noble, Groundsman, thirteen years at the school and 65 years old. Also from a farming background and with a good combination of grounds and foundry experience.

Everyday grounds maintenance work is carried out by this team of three. Additional work - overseeding, topdressing and winter verti-draining, etc. - is carried out by Aspect Horticultural Services Ltd., whilst East Riding Horticulture Ltd and Sherriff Amenity Ltd supply and advise on grounds maintenance products.



The Grounds Team at Pocklington Tr: John Noble, Paul Husband and Andrew Woodhall



Pocklington School main building

The soil profile at Pocklington School is sandy/loam and generally requires little specialist maintenance. Lighting rigs provide floodlighting over the Astro-turf pitches and traditional covers are used on the cricket square; proudly fabricated on site! The pitches are hired out, generally to outside clubs, and main hirings are for the Astro-turf pitches.

The grounds team encounter very few problems from natural occurrences, but high winds do dry out the cricket outfield and square at times. "The plants on the cricket pavilion take a battering on occasions!" says Andrew. He says that the sandy/loam soil profile prevents cracking. There are no real shading problems on the grounds but an early frost catches part of the Astro pitches

where there is some shade from trees. This is soon gone as the sun rises!

The artificial surfaces include three acres of Astro-turf and four cricket nets. The Astro-turf pitches provide two full hockey pitches, four seven-a-side pitches or eighteen tennis courts. Other sports surfaces are four tarmac netball/tennis courts.

//

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Getting Personal

Andrew Woodhall - Hizzy, Stalker, Nell and Elmer!

Who are you? Andrew Woodhall, Head Groundsman at Pocklington School.

Family status? Married with a two-year-old little girl and a little boy in the oven due in June.

Who's your hero and why? Hizzy Steve Hislop and Stalker Chris Walker for their achievements in motorcycle racing.

What would you change about yourself? Lose some weight.

What's your guilty pleasure? PS4, cuppa tea with biscuits - and can I say the wife?

What's been the highlight of your career so far? Being able to get to where I have so far.

What are your pet peeves? 1) teachers who only use the first corner of a pitch, and 2) too much negativity.

If you could go anywhere right now, where would it be? In this country, away with my wife and nearly two kids on a beach in Devon or Norfolk.

What's the best part of your job? Working outdoors, and especially during the school holidays when the site is completely empty.

... and the worst? Repeating every year in trying to get the teachers to use all of the pitch not just the nearest corner.

Do you have a lifetime ambition? When I started in this career, I wanted to get into one of the industry magazines. Also, try to do the best for my family.

Which three albums would you take to a desert island? Any of Robbie Williams, Oly Murs and Ellie Goulding.

Who would you choose to spend a romantic evening with? I was going to say Nell McAndrew, but changed it to the wife!

If you won the lottery, what is the first thing you would do? Buy a bigger house with some land, bigger car and caravan.

What would you consign to Room 101 and why? Politicians, because they could not organise the proverbial up in a brewery!

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



Which three people, living or dead, would you invite to a dinner party? Nell McAndrew, Neil Hodgson and Elmer Fudd so I could ask him about those pesky rabbits.

If you could be anyone for a day, who would it be and why? One of my heroes so I could do the fastest lap times.

Do you have any bad habits? You'd better ask the wife.

... or any good ones? Too honest for my own good.

Do you go to bed worrying about the next day's workload? Sometimes, if it is something that needs good weather to finish.

What are you reading at the moment? - Hard copy or online? Pitchcare, I don't really read a great deal of stuff.

What's the best advice you have ever been given? A friend once said to run my own department right and not to worry if others were taking the mickey.

What's your favourite smell? Seaweed.

What do you do in your spare time? Spend a lot of time with my family but, when I can, I do dance modern jive or tinker.

What's the daftest work related question you have ever been asked? "It must be great getting all of the school holidays off". I wish! "Is it possible to water the pitch this morning so it is softer for this afternoon?"

What's your favourite piece of kit? Atco pedestrian roller mower, because it cuts like a cylinder and leaves a better stripe.

What 'three' words would you use to describe yourself? Hard working, reliable, do not take praise easily.

What law/legislation would you like to see introduced? Less paperwork.



The cricket pavilion

Maintenance Regimes (see also side bar)

"We each can carry out every task, but there are favourite jobs," says Andrew. "Presentation ranks highly as appearance is vital; and lines must be straight!"

From the end of July each year, the cricket squares are renovated. Easter time sees major overseeding and topdressing. Andrew has to work within budget when carrying out renovations. Hockey Camp in August means preparations and all tennis nets removed. This is a regular event, so it can be planned well in advance. Rugby pitches need to be marked out to accommodate Rugby Camp each August too. Changing weather patterns meant delaying verti-draining last summer as it was so dry! "One thing seems to be sure," says Andrew about preparations, "it always rains when the school returns after Easter!"

The artificial pitches are brushed every week,



Presentation is important



Preparing cricket field next to the new art and design technology centre

weather and use permitting, and all are checked daily for debris and litter. Changing uses means new marking out of course. During the summer holidays each year, all artificial pitches receive a deep clean.

Projects

No major undertakings at present, but the rugby posts are to be refurbished and new fencing is to be installed around netball courts. Andrew does, however, want to

construct a high jump pad and take-off "D". A recent project has been the reconstruction of the cricket practice nets to a curtain system and now have artificial surfaces. Rabbit nets have also been installed (see pests and diseases). Most work is carried out in-house.

Training, Education and H&S

The school prides itself on ensuring that the team are all fully trained and compliant with

legislative demands. Each has spraying and chainsaw certification and necessary PPE. Ongoing training is provided. The school does not currently employ an apprentice in the Grounds Department, but this is under consideration. As would be expected, the school employs a Health and Safety Officer with schoolwide responsibility.

There are four members of staff who are first aid trained and certificated. Also, in term time, there are school nurses available too.

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What's in the shed?

- Kioti EX50 tractor
- Wessex RMX360 roller mower (summer height 30mm, winter 50mm)
- Rytec flail/scarify collector (various heights of cut/depths depending on application)
- Sisis slitter (varied depths of 125mm-280mm throughout the autumn/winter on the rugby pitches)
- Charterhouse Verti-Drain 105-145 (depths of 150mm-250mm with 12mm or 19mm tines across the whole site)
- John Deere 3045R tractor
- Trimax Snake 3.2m (summer height 15mm, winter 22mm)
- Broadwater slitter (depths to 130mm on the lacrosse/grass hockey pitches)
- Fleming fertiliser spreader
- Fleming salt spreader
- Team Sprayer 6m
- Multicore TM1500 (10mm solid/hollow tines with depths of 25mm-100mm)
- Sisis Litamina 1200
- Kubota B2261 with mid deck and loader
- Powerroll 15 cricket roller
- Kubota G21 ride-on (used on Astros)
- Sisis Flexicomb x 2 (used on Astros)
- Greensweep (used on Astros)
- Snowploughs x 2
- Blec Star Seeder
- Tipping trailers x 2
- Low loader trailer
- Allett Shaver 10-blade mowers x 2 (summer height 6mm and 12mm, winter 22mm)
- Allett C20 10-blade mower for cricket wickets (4mm) with verti-cut and scarifying units
- Atco roller cylinder mower 21" (summer 12mm, winter 22mm)
- Toro Recycler 21" rotary mower (summer 30mm, winter 40mm)
- Power brush used on the Astros and cricket wickets
- Billy Goat vacuum
- Billy Goat blower
- Linemarkers x 3
- Scotts (ICL) pedestrian fertiliser spreader



Paul Husband preparing spreader

Machinery (see side bar)

All machinery is purchased outright and, at present, with a ten year maximum replacement. Purchases usually will be through local dealers Russell's Groundcare, F G Adamson & Son or Cherry's in Frodingham. Andrew uses Market Weighton Mowers and C&W Mowers for the purchase of smaller pedestrian mowers, etc. Asked about loyalty, Andrew says: "I don't like all my eggs in one basket. We buy where we can obtain the best deal on the piece of kit we need."

The one piece of kit that has made a huge improvement has been the 4ft Powerroll 15 cricket roller. "A darn site better than the repainted Bomag road roller!" exclaims Andrew.

"It's not very often we need to hire in machinery," says Andrew. The department has the necessary kit and the team carry out basic regular maintenance, such as oil

changes. Any other work is handled by one of the dealers mentioned above.

Andrew's wish list has two items: A 4m Trimax Snake and a Toro Groundsmaster 1200.

Pests and Diseases

Very little spraying is necessary for weed control and most spraying is with liquid fertiliser. "We've had problems with rabbits," explains Andrew, "but, now that we have installed rabbit nets around the site, there are minimal problems."

Worms are an issue on the cricket square though. The team, therefore, have resorted to brushing. "I hope an alternative control method becomes available," commented Andrew.

Ecology and environment

Flora and fauna are of importance to the school and a field studies area was set up last summer to further encourage this. Pupil



John Noble going back out



Anyone for tennis?



Grounds Department Maintenance Facility

participation is high and encouraged. Bird boxes are in evidence around the site too.

The school has an environmental policy in place with recycling and waste reduction greatly encouraged.

About Our Industry

Andrew is of the opinion that, in his experience, the groundsman side seems to

lag behind that of golf, particularly in terms of awareness and pay. He also feels, as do many in the industry, that grounds maintenance workers are undervalued and so often taken for granted. That fabulous pitch did not happen by itself!

Raising the profile of the profession is important and, as Andrew says: "This is happening and being aided by magazines

such as Pitchcare and others." He sees the work that the organisations connected with the industry as important too. They visit BTME most years to stay abreast of developments within the industry and attend dealer demo days, etc.



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The Kent CCC county week was in full swing in those days - a championship match then a one-day game was the usual format - so I had the chance to see some quality players

The Mote Cricket Club

Howard's Way

Howard Waters has enjoyed the best of both worlds, playing cricket at The Mote and tending its idyllic grounds, but his journey has proved to be a challenging one, Greg Rhodes discovers



The Mote cricket ground has the stuff of legend about it. Cricketers first strode out to play within this picturesque setting 165 years ago. England stalwart Colin Cowdrey batted for Kent here and the world's fastest bowler, Shoaib Akhtar, later pounded the turf.

Standing on the outskirts of Maidstone, Kent, The Mote rose on the western fringe of Mote Park, then a 558-acre country estate. The first earl of Romney built a mansion there in the 1790s, before the second and third earls redeveloped the grounds in the mid-19th century, establishing cricket provision by 1857. That year, The Mote

played Cobham to launch the site's senior level activity.

After purchasing the estate in 1895, Marcus Samuel, 1st Viscount Bearsted, and co-founder of the Shell oil company, extensively developed the cricketing acres, levelling the ground and turning the square ninety degrees in 1907 to allow them to host county cricket regularly. The Tabernacle, his private pavilion, erected between 1909 and 1910, remains a Grade 2 listed building.

Kent outground

Selling Mote Park to Maidstone Corporation in 1927 on the death of his father, the second viscount excluded the cricket

ground from the sale, gifting it to The Mote Cricket Club. In its role as a Kent County Cricket Club outground, the venue hosted more than 200 first class matches between 1859 and 2005, the year the first eleven played their final game there.

"I loved watching Kent 1st at The Mote," recalls current head groundsman Howard Waters, "and bowled here for Maidstone Grammar School U18s before joining the cricket club itself in 2000. Aesthetically, it's one of the most attractive grounds in the county, enjoying uninterrupted views of the North Downs."

With two squares to tend, solo grounds professional Howard is kept busy from



I enjoyed playing at The Mote and began volunteering for them the same year I joined - I passionately wanted to make the ground as good as I possibly could



William 'helping' dad



Australian batsman Andrew Simons scored 100 off 34 balls in 2004; the then fastest ton. All the more impressive given our long boundaries



County 2nd XI match in progress

March to October, preparing the strips for a crammed calendar of fixtures for the Kent League club and local school sides.

This is Howard's second season employed by the club, after seventeen years assisting as a volunteer. "I enjoyed playing at The Mote and began volunteering for them the same year I joined - I passionately wanted to make the ground as good as I possibly could," Howard explains.

"The Kent CCC county week was in full swing in those days - a championship match then a one-day game was the usual format - so I had the chance to see some quality players."

End of an era

Four seasons ago, the venue hosted its final Kent second XI game, marking the end of an era. It had lost first class county cricket here in 2005, following an umpire's unfavourable report about the condition of the pitches.

"The Mote invested £12,000 for county standard wickets," Howard explains "but they were relaid to no avail. In any case, the main pavilion is in a state of disrepair and would cost around £1m for a replacement of

a similar size."

The Mote's glory days - when cricket legend Cowdray notched up his 100th century in its 1973 cricket week, or when son Graham and Sri Lankan Aravinda de Silva recorded Kent's highest-ever partnership, 368, in 1995 - may be behind it, but Howard is as keen as ever to maintain quality, whatever the sporting standard he witnesses.

"I was working as a gardener when I started volunteering - my first sector role. The then groundsman, Tony Saunders, tasked me with cutting the outfield using the ride-ons, watering and rolling. I remember we had to crank the old Autoroller into life with a handle."

The advent of the Twenty20 game in 2003 heralded yet another record at The Mote. "Australian batsman Andrew Simons scored 100 off 34 balls in 2004; the then fastest ton," recalls Howard. "All the more impressive given our long boundaries."

Howard himself played for The Mote against Lashings in 2003, when Pakistani bowler Shoaib Akhtar, the world's fastest, now retired, was in his prime.



A Scag 48 zero turn is used for bank and rough work



Portfolio career

In what has proved to be a portfolio career, Howard worked first for Maidstone council, gardening and mowing, before studying in garden design at Hadlow College.

While studying and volunteering at The Mote, he spotted a job advertised for Torry Hill Estate, near Sittingbourne, home of former Bank of England's Robin Leigh-Pemberton, Baron Kingsdown, and wife Lady Kingsdown, Kent CCC's former president.

"That was in 2007 and my first experience of being in charge of a cricket square," he explains. "It's been in play since the mid-19th century.

One of many private cricket grounds dotted around Kent, Torry Hill is one of the highest points in the county and boasts some spectacular views and exceptional parkland and well maintained gardens. "The Band of Brothers usually host around thirteen games a season at Torry Hill, the Cowdrays played there, as did former Surrey captain Rory Hamilton-Browne more recently," he says.

"I was working at Torry Hill full time, looking after the cricket ground a day a week, but mainly employed in the gardens until starting my own horticultural-related business in 2011. Howard still put in stints at The Mote meanwhile, especially during county week. When recruited full-time last year, he retained his commitment to Torry Hill and remains looking after the cricket ground.

"I aim to complete one and a half days a week through the cricket season, but sheep graze the outfield the rest of the year, and the square is fenced off."

After his years of volunteering at The Mote, Howard applied for the job of groundsman on a contract basis. At over fifteen acres, The Mote is one of the largest grounds in Kent and Howard is contracted for a 60-hour week between March and October. That commitment drops to a day a week in winter.

As a bustling cricket destination, The Mote has much to celebrate. "Colts U9-U11 and U16s cricket is really picking up. On Sundays, as many as eighty turn up for training," Newly relegated from Kent League's Division 1, The Mote rolls out four teams on Saturdays, plus mid-week and Sunday sides. Although struggling with "a lean patch", it has just recruited a professional coach to oversee seniors training on Wednesday. "He was a Mote first XI player, so knows the club inside out," adds Howard.

The strength of community sport here has attracted ECB funding and council grants for machinery, he adds. "Maidstone Primary Schools run their Quick Cricket tournament in June, whilst Maidstone Special Needs School stages a year 6 softball tournament that month too."

"Add to those the Kent schools U19s second X1s, Kent over-60s and the Australians over-60s events, all in June and you can appreciate how

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Malcolm worked here for forty years and is a groundsman of some repute, winning County Outground of the Year for The Mote many times. He works at Hollingbourne CC ground now, aged 84 and stays active



Malcolm Bristow

busy we are keeping the grounds in prime condition. Last year, we had 133 pitch hirings, including local corporate cricket and Muslim community fun days."

The main square holds twenty-four wickets, rivalling many test ground tallies - the bottom square nine, and two synthetic practice strips. "The top square takes far more time to maintain," Howard says. "A bit of a baptism of fire when I first took charge. Last year's hot period was a real challenge as we only have irrigation taps in the outfield. Greywater recycling is being considered as one way to cut costs of mains supply."

"I aim to do the basics, bringing in contractors for the autumn renovations in early September as this is a huge job for a solo groundsman. They hard scarify, overseed and topdress both squares - it's a three-day operation for five or six people."

Tasks like machinery grinding Howard also contracts out, but he tackles as much maintenance of the ageing machinery fleet as he can. "Both Tony and his predecessor Malcolm Bristow struggled to win funding for equipment."

"Malcolm worked here for forty years and is a groundsman of some repute, winning County Outground of the Year for The Mote many times. He works at Hollingbourne CC ground now, aged 84 and stays active, playing off an 11 handicap in golf. Malcolm and Tony are still on hand if I ever need help and advice."

Cricket takes a break later in July when the popular Ramblin' Man Fair touring rock festival comes to Mote Park, next door to the grounds. "The whole of the bottom square and one of the rugby pitches are occupied with up to 1,000 camping visitors and car parking," says Howard.

"The Mote provides food and bar services and extra toilet facilities are shipped in. We water surfaces well before the organisers turn up and all traces of the event have gone just a week afterwards."

"The first year here, bad weather caused major disruption and damage to the pitches, but a change in parking arrangements and better roadways have minimised that. The club receives a cut of bar and food receipts - we serve plenty of breakfast to hungover rockers."



Partner Elina - in more ways than one



My partner Elina started working with me last year, marking out wickets by hand painting them, putting out boundary ropes, rolling and mowing. This season, she has got her first wickets out from start to finish



Young William with Bob Taylor at Torry Hill



All the way from Memphis - Mott The Hoople on stage at last year's Ramblin' Man Fair

Held over several days, the Fair features headliners The Darkness and Foreigner this year. Jethro Tull, Mott The Hoople, ZZ Top and Scorpion have all played the gig in past years.

It's a Family Affair

Still officially self-employed, Howard admits it's "a tough balance" to manage his other business commitments as The Mote alone is "a full-time job" with three squares to look after. Enter the family as willing assistants. "My partner Elina started working with me

last year, marking out wickets by hand painting them, putting out boundary ropes, rolling and mowing. This season, she has got her first wickets out from start to finish and recently produced a fine wicket for the first XI. Five-year old William rakes and clears up while his mum's on the tractor."

"Living onsite is the key to me being flexible. I can use the sprinklers later at night at the coolest time of the day, for example, to most benefit the grass, then come out of the house to turn them off - and I can begin rolling as early as I like."



Held over several days, the Fair features headliners The Darkness and Foreigner this year. Jethro Tull, Mott The Hoople, ZZ Top and Scorpion have all played the gig in past years

Even with that key advantage, Howard turns to other volunteers when needed to keep everything functioning. "Angus Fordham saved my bacon last year by keeping the cricket squares irrigated in the hot spell day after day."

In fact, volunteers are a vital element of the maintenance mix. "We have plenty of strimming to do and spend a day a week tackling the surrounds, with help from Bob Purfitt, a retired policeman and rugby club member".

In his seventies, fellow volunteer Bob

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William is clearly a groundsman of the future

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- Scag 48" zero turn walkbehind petrol mower (surrounds and steep banking)
- Stihl knapsack sprayers

Taylor has helped Howard rolling the wickets and maintaining outfield for several seasons, dedicating four mornings a week to the task when able to.

"Even without the hours the volunteers put in, we spent 80-plus hours a week maintaining The Mote in the playing season. Maidstone Rugby club, who are also onsite, maintain their own pitches and surrounds."

"The challenge is keeping everything ticking over to the same standard, that of a 2nd XI county cricket venue, but I would like to prepare wickets for first class cricket if the opportunity arose."

The grounds have changed from days passed though, when the lower square sloped down to the river Medway. "The first terrace was created around 1900," Howard relates. "The Army levelled the second ground and rugby pitches in the 1950s."

"During the season, I strive to make the surrounds as attractive as I can. The site

includes many stately oak trees, some 250 years old, populated by a variety of wildlife, including bats and owls."

"Ducks, swans, partridges and pheasants have been visitors to the ground, whilst our many resident crows peck at the hosepipes in dry weather to reach water."

Qualified arborists come in to prune the trees when needed; Howard chipping in with stump grinding and hedge work.

Under the spring maintenance, Howard applies ferrous sulphate to treat moss and green up the squares. "I don't fertilise the outfield, just weed-spray," adding that he has gained his knapsack and boom spray certificates. "I didn't spray at all last year because of the swelteringly hot weather."

Monthly applications of spring/summer fertiliser follow until July, with verticutting and mowing the squares and outfield to 13mm height of cut

Autumn/winter fertiliser is applied once,

after spiking in early December. Blowers are busy at this time as the leaf fall takes hold.

His life devoted to cricket, Howard can claim the best of both worlds, having played the game at such an attractive setting, whilst keeping his favourite ground to the quality required of a venue attracting so many fixtures.

But dramatic change has come to the game of his youth, he reflects: "One of the sad aspects of cricket in schools is that there seems to be little enthusiasm for it now in the state sector or in grammar schools. It has become a private school pursuit, far more than it was even twenty years ago."

One reason why community engagement is critical in cricket's survival at grassroots level.



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The Saffrons Sports Club

South coast's spice of life

This delightful multi sports venue on the south coast was, and still is, part of the Duke of Devonshire's estate, where in Victorian times the most expensive spice in the world was harvested. **Neville Johnson** visited the eponymous Saffrons to find out more about it, with a surprising discovery



Compton Croquet Club greenkeeper, John Crisford, diagonally cutting lawn five, which was drill re-seeded a couple of autumns ago



The new Saffrons square, two days before its big debut game

It's one of those days in early May when summer sport beckons and winter games wave farewell. Summer, and cricket in particular, seem to be winning as I enter the Saffrons. It's a hive of activity. Mowers are whirring and there are rows and rows of gleaming white seats freshly positioned for an expected bumper cricket crowd. It turns out the ground is just a couple of days away from hosting a Royal London Cup clash between Sussex and Gloucestershire.

The pavilion is no less busy. I'm introduced to two members of the Saffrons Sports Club management committee, David Lockyer and Roger Myall, both also key figures in the running of Eastbourne Cricket Club, whose history runs alongside that of the Saffrons itself.

The Saffrons Club was founded in 1886 on land within the Compton Estate, owned by the Duke of Devonshire. The growing of the saffron crocus, from which the culinary and medicinally famed spice is derived, had taken up some of it. Potatoes, rather less glamorously, took up the rest. It has been a

notable and very pleasing home to year round outdoor sport ever since.

"The Saffrons management committee is responsible for looking after the club, including its grounds and the surrounds, and meets every couple of months," said Roger Myall.

"The Club pays an annual rent to the Devonshire estate for use of the 11-acre grounds."

He goes on to explain that, when the Club had faced difficulties back in 2000, what is known as the 100 Club was set up by local residents to help contribute to the rental cost, alongside the clubs that use the site, principally Eastbourne Town Football Club, Eastbourne Cricket Club and Eastbourne Hockey Club.

"The Saffrons Club is an 'umbrella' for these main clubs," said David Lockyer.

"Cricket, football and hockey exist and thrive here mutually, yet separately. Their individual wellbeing is important to them collectively. There's never any falling out. It has worked well year after year."

Outside the main club umbrella, but still



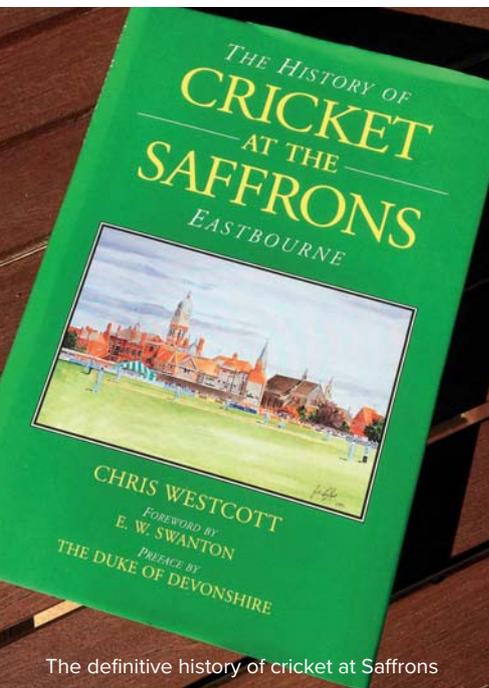
Left to right: David Lockyer, Roger Myall and Eastbourne Cricket Club Chairman Ian Fletcher-Price



Cricket, football and hockey exist and thrive here mutually, yet separately. Their individual wellbeing is important to them collectively



Rolling a practice strip for the Sussex one-day cup game



The definitive history of cricket at Saffrons

part of the Saffrons site, and with leases for their respective playing areas are Eastbourne Bowls Club and the Compton Croquet Club - more of which shortly.

Eastbourne Town FC is apparently the oldest senior football club in Sussex pre-dating the Saffrons, but it took up residence here in 1886. It plays in the Southern Combination Premier Division and its ground has a 3,000 maximum capacity. Also within Saffrons is the home of Eastbourne Hockey Club, with senior and junior teams enjoying a new sand-based, floodlit pitch.

It is cricket, however, for which Saffrons is best known, and this is perfectly chronicled in the book *Cricket at the Saffrons* by local Chris Westcott, which details its history as a club and county ground admired countrywide for over a century.

In the book's foreword, cricket writer and broadcaster E W (Jim) Swanton opens by saying: "The Saffrons ground at Eastbourne has a fragrant place in the history of English cricket consistent with its name." The author also declares that John Arlott once

described Saffrons as bearing comparison with Cape Town's Newlands and Worcester's New Road in terms of beauty. Praise indeed from two of the game's legendary observers and not given to easy compliments.

Everything this day at The Saffrons was focused on cricket and the Eastbourne Cricket Club's high spot of the season, the staging of a key one-day game for Sussex CCC.

Sussex head groundsman Andy McKay was overseeing preparation for the game, but it was The Saffrons' own team, headed by Jamie Ramsden, that was handling the actual work.

"Eastbourne Cricket Club funded the relaying of part of the square last autumn at considerable cost," said Roger.

"Andy has done 'Clegg testing' of the strip to be used and he reckoned the surface had distinctly more bounce than last year, so we're looking forward to a summer of great cricket here."

The match against Gloucestershire was to be the new surface's first outing since this



It looks immaculate, but then so do the other four lawns, thanks to John's hard work and dedication



The Saffrons grounds team



Aerial view of Saffrons

refurbishment. Sussex support staff were much in evidence forty-eight hours ahead of the game. It was big for the county club, and very big for the Saffrons. Weather permitting, the club was expecting and ready for a 4,000 crowd that coming Sunday. Forty volunteers were lined up to help on the day of the game, too.

There was a nervous all round excitement about the new square and its match baptism.

Contractors Kestrel had been appointed

by Eastbourne CC to do the resurfacing of the 17-pitch square on the recommendation of Sussex CCC. Work was started in the first week in September last year and took under six days to complete.

There is apparently a six-foot fall from one side of the ground to the other. The main object of the relaying was to offset this across the 'business area'.

The brief had been to Koro and clean up pitches 1-6, and for the remainder, to Koro them off and power harrow to a depth of

50mm, then apply 55 tonnes of Binders Super Surrey Loam and laser level. The fresh surface was then sowed with Barenbrug Bar Extreme.

The square had its first cut just seventeen days after sowing. Germination sheets had been used on the top six pitches, but conditions at the time were dry and favourable. Since then, there has been no need for any over seeding at all.

It was pitch number five that was being prepared for the Sussex/Gloucestershire

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Creating fine turf has been my life. I used to construct golf courses, and worked as a greenkeeper for thirty years, latterly at the Royal Eastbourne until I retired



David Wiese at the crease for Sussex. It was a great day's cricket and Saffrons new pitch performed well, but the home side fell well short of the Gloucestershire total



Croquet greenkeeper John Crisford

one-day clash. It was then still being cut to 10mm, but this would be reduced to 6mm immediately ahead of match day.

Andy McKay would be there for the match because of his expertise and experience in dealing with ECB pitch advisers and the like. Otherwise, it was going to be very much a Saffrons' team day.

There are to be other Saffrons' days this summer, not with such crowd appeal, but with a standing of a global rather than county level. The game is croquet, or more specifically golf croquet: the event, the World Croquet Federation Championships.

There are 220 croquet clubs in the UK and the Compton Club in Eastbourne's Saffrons is one of three staging matches in a tournament that will attract some of the best players in the world. It is a feather in the club's cap and richly deserved.

The five lawns at Compton make it one of the biggest croquet venues in the south-east and there are regular regional and inter-county championships held here.

The Compton Club's greenkeeper, John Crisford, is the man who will ensure that this year's number one event is played on a

perfect surface. I talked to him in a break in lawn cutting.

How did he get to be a croquet greenkeeper?

"Creating fine turf has been my life. I used to construct golf courses, and worked as a greenkeeper for thirty years, latterly at the Royal Eastbourne until I retired," said John.

"I came to the Compton eight years ago because they wanted someone with know-how to improve the playing surface. Until then, it had got by with the efforts of well-meaning volunteers."

Presentation, aeration and scarification are very much the same as they are for a golf green, according to John. Coming out of winter he cuts to 8mm, and it was down to 7mm this particular day, but for top competition he brings it down to 4mm.

An inter-counties tournament was due there over the spring bank holiday weekend at the end of May and it would be at its minimum height in time for this. For club play he lets it grow back to 6mm 'to give it a bit of a rest' as he put it.

John uses a John Deere 220SL greens mower which grooms as it cuts to produce



Croquet is a game of strategy, angles and tactics - a bit like snooker on grass - all you need are six hoops, two mallets and four balls



Serene and ready for international battle, Compton Croquet Club



Eastbourne Town FC versus Herne Bay. The building in the background is the town hall © Nick Macneill



I came to the Compton eight years ago because they wanted someone with know-how to improve the playing surface. Until then, it had got by with the efforts of well-meaning volunteers

an even cut. Mowing all five lawns takes four hours, and John reckons he walks between seven and eight miles doing it. Width of cut is 22 inches and each lawn is cut on the diagonal, as they are for bowls, to create an even run of balls over the whole area.

He uses granular fertiliser in spring, then from May to September carries out monthly application of liquid feed containing potash, nitrogen and phosphates.

Irrigation is simple and basic and he uses an inch and half hose, and that too takes him about four hours to do all of the greens. In

the summer months he usually starts this at 6.00am and does the job solo, which at least means he knows it's been done evenly.

Unlike golf green holes, the hoops are static for general club play, but positioning is changed for major tournaments. Long-time club member Roger Wood has that task.

In the words of the Croquet Association here in the UK, croquet is a game of strategy, angles and tactics - a bit like snooker on grass. All you need are six hoops, two mallets, four balls - blue, black, red and yellow, and a patch of grass. The

rules of Association Croquet are quite detailed, but Golf Croquet has simpler rules yet requires the same skills. It is this latter version that is centre stage at the Compton later this summer. The WCF, which organises the World Championships, is the international body for the sport of croquet

For the record, there are at least nine versions of the sport in all, including Garden Croquet, Ancient Croquet and, would you believe, Extreme Croquet. It has been re-invented many times since its 18th century origins.

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Lawn number three at the Compton Club is always ‘centre court’ for big matches, bang in front of the pavilion and the one that runs the truest

The standard size of a croquet lawn is 35 yards long and 28 yards wide, a perfect 5:4 ratio. Hoops are set seven yards apart.

This April, as every year, John topdressed the lawns by spreading and dragmatting a rootzone mixture of 60% sand and 40% soil. He says 14 tonnes were used to cover all five of the club’s lawns.

John is very much a fine turf professional and proud that he has raised the level of the playing surfaces to meet international standards. He’s grown to like the game too and is now in his fourth season as a player.

The Compton Club last had the privilege of hosting World Tournament matches back in 2004. The Southwick Club to the west of Brighton is the main venue for this year’s. Other matches are being played in Tunbridge Wells.

Croquet has always been part of



The Compton Club is one of three hosting the World Cup

Eastbourne, since the 1880s, and part of Saffrons since it moved here from Devonshire Park in 1906. Today’s lawns are the same ones that were created then. The club continues to flourish with currently about 70 full-time members.

Lawn number three at the Compton Club is always ‘centre court’ for big matches, bang in front of the pavilion. John says it is the one that runs the truest and, as much as possible, he tries to keep players off it for practising.

It looks immaculate, but then so do the other four lawns, thanks to John’s hard work and dedication.

Croquet has an image as a game for seniors. This is quite wrong. It attracts people of all ages, many in their twenties, especially at international level.

Significant event that it is, this summer’s

World Cup will not catch public attention. It is not a sport with a non-playing fan base. The Saffrons is not expecting crowd control issues. There will, however, be players from all around the globe competing fiercely here come late July. Hushed but intense, that’s the way John likes it, and so does the world of croquet. It signifies the perpetual quality of this south coast sports haven.

As I leave, to my right is the serenity of John’s croquet lawns awaiting serious international battle: to my left, Eastbourne Cricket Club’s historic ground transformed into a 4,000-seat arena. Sport is the spice of life here at the Saffrons.



Significant event that it is, this summer’s World Cup will not catch public attention. It is not a sport with a non-playing fan base. The Saffrons is not expecting crowd control issues



Snooker on grass!



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Elvaston Castle Country Park

Public patronage a challenge for historic estate



Balancing the need to preserve the unique features of a historic estate with the demands of free public access to a council-owned country park is a challenge that many grounds managers would find daunting. But for the happy team at Elvaston Castle Country Park in Derbyshire, it is all in a day's work. **Jane Carley** reports

At the heart of the 130ha estate lies the castle itself, a gothic revival building designed by James Wyatt in the early 1800s for the third Earl of Harrington, and based on the original house which dated back to 1633.

The estate was sold to a quarrying company in 1968, before being purchased by the Derby Corporation the following year, and in 1970 was opened as one of the first country parks in England.

Costs for the upkeep of the elaborately designed house and equally ornate outbuildings - such as a Moorish temple, pump house and kennels (sixteen buildings are Grade II listed), plus the formal gardens

and parkland - steadily increased for the local authority, and the property fell into decline.

It is now owned and managed by Derbyshire County Council who, in 2000, announced plans to sell the estate to a hotel company and turn the park into a golf course, which brought vociferous objections from local residents.

Despite the efforts of the parks and ranger team, the decline continued and, in 2009, a study put the total repair bill at £6.4m. From 2013 to 2015, the National Trust was commissioned to develop a plan for the estate in partnership with Derbyshire County Council. A partnership was also established between the council and the newly-formed



Whilst the masterplan considers the whole estate, its main focus - and priority for funding - is the buildings, so a separate maintenance and management plan has been drawn up for the grounds



Park manager Gill Forrester (left) and head gardener Anna Morrison discuss plans for the walled garden within a sensory garden area developed in partnership with the Elvaston Parish Plan Group



The high water table makes flooding an ongoing issue

Elvaston Castle Gardens Trust to manage the gardens and park and, in 2018, a detailed masterplan for renovations and improvements was published.

“The Elvaston Castle Gardens Trust can access additional sources of funding and, although the council will retain ownership, the long term aim is for the Trust to take the lead on renovations and improvements to the park and gardens,” explains Park Manager Gill Forrester.

“Whilst the masterplan considers the whole estate, its main focus - and priority for funding - is the buildings, so a separate maintenance and management plan has been drawn up for the grounds. It has been a lengthy process because there are so many stakeholders, from our existing public, private and voluntary sector partners to visitors who have grown up coming to Elvaston and are passionate about its future.”

A significant practical improvement has been to bring the rangers, wardens and gardeners together as one department under Gill.

“This means that we can share resources and work closely together to tackle the workload,” she explains.

And it is some workload. The outer reaches of the estate include a local nature reserve and tenanted pasture land. Elvaston Cricket Club also enjoys a bucolic setting in the park, and two large open spaces are used for events and shows.

Approaches to the castle itself are via long, tree-lined grassy avenues, including the historic East Avenue leading to the castle steps, and it is here that one of the major management issues is visible.

“We are situated on a flood plain and Capability Brown declared that ‘the place was so flat, and there was such a want of ‘capability’ in it, that he would not meddle with it’ when approached to design the gardens,” explains Gill.

“When William Barron created his design, it included a series of underground drains, pipes and sluice gates. Many have collapsed over time, but we have no drawings to show exactly where they were, so it’s difficult to replace them, although we have recently



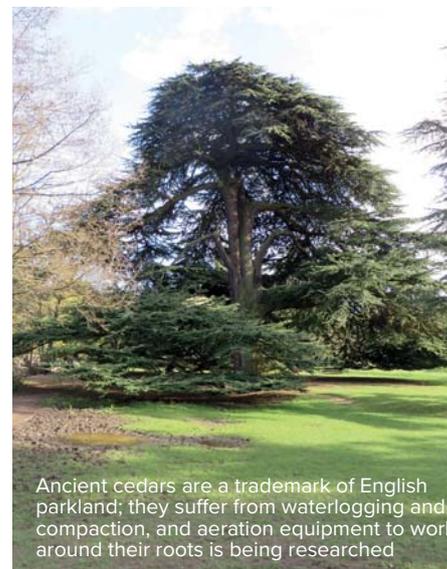
Staff recently attended a yew symposium to learn about ways to restore and rejuvenate the trees, as they were badly affected by the hard winter and hot summer in 2018



Elaborate tufa rock grottoes are enjoyed by visitors, but are vulnerable to damage



At the heart of the Derbyshire County Council-owned Elvaston Castle Country Park lies the gothic revival Elvaston Castle and its William Barron-designed winter garden



Ancient cedars are a trademark of English parkland; they suffer from waterlogging and compaction, and aeration equipment to work around their roots is being researched

restored a penstock on the river to control water flow.”

The high water table has a significant impact on the trees and lawns, which can be under 30cm of water in winter; the ornamental lake is also earmarked for action.

“It needs dredging as it is fed from the River Derwent and silt has accumulated, with investigations needed on how it is lined. The estate is hugely popular with dog walkers and they love to see their dogs go into the lake, but unfortunately it contributes

to the erosion of the bank.”

The lake was originally edged with distinctive and now rare tufa rock, but some modern repairs have been made with hard-wearing York stone to help minimise inevitable wear and tear.

Tufa rock is still a major feature of the park, in grottoes, rock arches and the islands on the lake, but protecting them from damage, while allowing unfettered public access, is a fine balance.

“People like to sit or climb on them, and we have to gently explain how fragile they

are,” comments Gill.

Managing and protecting the topiaries is an important focus.

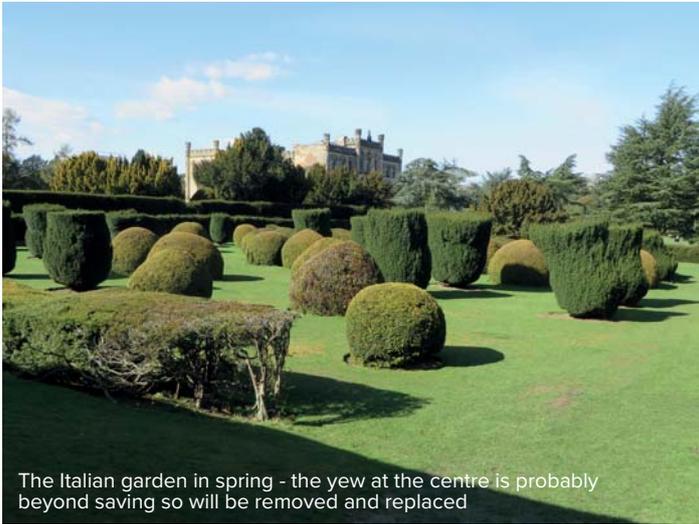
“Designed as a winter garden, most of the formal areas are evergreen, and largely ancient yew - there is even an Elvastonensis cultivar,” she explains. “Staff recently attended a yew symposium to learn about ways to restore and rejuvenate the trees, as they were badly affected by the hard winter and hot summer in 2018.”

Remedial action includes letting spring growth persist rather than cutting back into



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The Italian garden in spring - the yew at the centre is probably beyond saving so will be removed and replaced



Brambles have encroached where Rhododendrons were removed to cut Phytophthora risks



Given that, in the early days, there were around eighty gardeners and now we have six - and, just as an example - there are fourteen miles of hedge on the estate - the scale of the work becomes clear!

shape and allowing some clippings to remain on the ground and return valuable nutrients to the soil.

“We’ve had to learn that not everything needs to be pristine but, as we are so public-facing, we use information boards so that visitors can understand the reasons behind our actions.”

Formal gardens are compartmentalised into Italian, Alhambra and Parterre (Mon Plaisir) sections, although in the latter topiaries creating seating areas in a decorative star shape were removed and replaced with box in the 1960s.

“We’re looking at ways to make the topiary more resilient; clipping into domed rather than flat topped shapes, for example, to stop snow collecting on them and breaking branches.”

With the country park attracting 360,000 visitors a year, to landscapes which were only designed to withstand the footfall of the Earl and his family, it’s a constant task to maintain, repair and renovate grassed areas

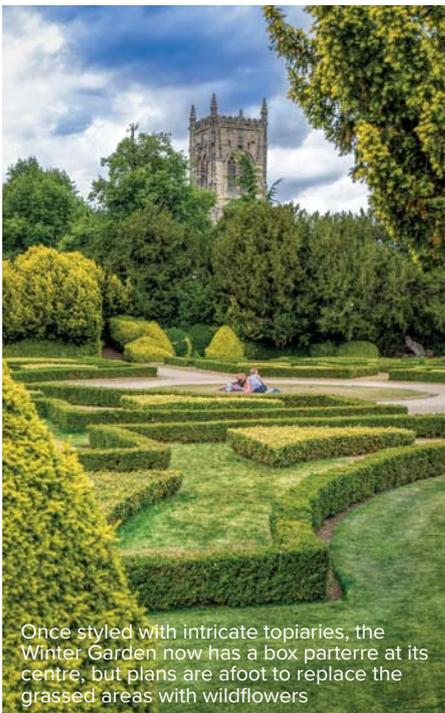
and walkways.

“Given that, in the early days, there were around eighty gardeners and now we have six - and, just as an example - there are fourteen miles of hedge on the estate - the scale of the work becomes clear!” says Gill.

Tree work is a huge job - William Barron was the inventor of a horse drawn tree transplanter and brought many mature trees to Elvaston when planning the garden, which features many ancient cedars, noble fir, veteran oak and monkey puzzle. After an outbreak of Phytophthora at nearby Kedleston Hall in 2008, a programme of select Rhododendron removal was carried out to protect the trees.

“But where you take out Rhododendrons, they are often replaced with brambles, so we will need cut them back with our tractor mounted flail,” she explains.

Self-set silver birch has been tackled in earnest this winter, using a hired-in chipper. Logs are processed with a wood splitter by volunteers, and sold as firewood each year.



Once styled with intricate topiaries, the Winter Garden now has a box parterre at its centre, but plans are afoot to replace the grassed areas with wildflowers



Allowing spring growth to persist rather than clipping back is part of a remedial programme for the topiaries which have suffered from the extreme conditions of 2018



Self set silver birch has been tackled over the winter; recent investment in machinery means the logs can be collected and processed



Yew has been trimmed back and trees felled around the bushes to give more light to the grass walkways

“We’ve felled around the yew and trimmed it back to open up the avenues where vegetation has encroached. Shade-tolerant grass will then be seeded to green up the walkways.”

Protecting newly seeded areas is difficult - the layout of the park and gardens was designed to encourage wandering - and rope cordons have proved ineffective.

Some areas lend themselves to being resurfaced with woodchip or limestone dust - old drawings revealed a pathway on the popular walking circuit around the lake, so a new hard surface has been laid.

“We have to bear in mind that we are managing the park for a much bigger footfall than originally envisaged, so may have to use different methods,” comments Gill.

Walled gardens were originally established to grow fruit and vegetables, with the Earl’s pineapples regular prize winners, but the glasshouses which warmed plants on the tall brick walls fell into disrepair and, in the 1970s, the council established an Old English Garden inside the walls, which was a major success. The walls had deteriorated and are gradually being painstakingly repaired.

As repairs are completed, the gardens come back to life - part of the plant nursery has been turfed and fenced off for a wedding reception venue, alongside vegetable beds, tended by voluntary groups, and the gardeners’ polytunnels, where young plants are propagated.

Herbaceous borders which were taken out during the wall renovations are to be restored to a new design by head gardener Anna Morrison and, in the coming weeks, it will be sanded, dug, laid out and planted with a flowing scheme.

A central lawned and landscaped section of the walled garden is utilised

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Modern touches include choosing plants and schemes that will cope with the unpredictable seasons that we experience now, and I'm considering whether wildflowers would work better than the grass



Originally designed to grow exotic produce, the walled gardens were restyled by the council as Old English Gardens



Frames for exotic fruit such as pineapples can still be seen in the nursery garden

for civil ceremonies, and pathways and flowerbeds are gradually being reinstated alongside one wall which is a major restoration project, originally being double layer with heating pipes installed to protect tender plants.

"We're leaving the lawns a little longer so that they can withstand the extra footfall from wedding guests and, in the parkland areas, I'm also planning to move from overall close mowing to cutting pathways through longer grass," says Anna.

"We're constantly looking at methods that will also save labour and allow us to focus on restoration work," she explains. "Modern touches include choosing plants and schemes that will cope with the unpredictable seasons that we experience now - the border will feature drought resistant plants, and I'm considering whether wildflowers would work better than the grass that currently separates the box on the parterre."

"It's so much easier now the teams have merged so we can work on projects together," she explained. "We're all chainsaw trained now, for example, so we've been able to get through more tree work this winter."

Anna has seen considerable interest in the ongoing work from regular visitors to the estate, and believes that will lead to increased respect and appreciation for the landscape.

"People can see that we are replacing and repairing important features, but we do have an important job to do in educating them."

With a background in fundraising and community engagement, Gill is keen to get local groups on board, and a partnership with the Elvaston Parish Plan Group has led to the development of a sensory garden within the walls.

"We replaced some of the slippery York stone with gravel paths and ensured it was accessible, and the group raised funds and



People can see that we are replacing and repairing important features, but we do have an important job to do in educating them



Newly renovated wall in the Old English Garden - head gardener Anna Morrison has designed a new herbaceous border to replace plantings taken out during its repair



Utility vehicles are a vital part of the armoury in the gardens and grounds

help with ongoing maintenance. Several community and rehabilitation groups get involved in the work on the estate, from growing vegetables to maintaining the nature reserve," she explains.

Recent investment in machinery should ease the workload, with pedestrian rotaries replacing cylinders for smaller lawned areas and a triple for the park areas, backed up by tractor-drawn gangs on the showground and games field.

"We've been without a tractor for a while, so having the new utility tractor is a relief," says Anna. "Although accessing a low gate into the nursery garden made the specification tricky! We'll be able to use it with our pto powered leaf collector, and for trailer work such as collecting up the timber from felling."

A new compact will work in tighter areas and could have a deck fitted to increase mowing capacity, whilst the nature reserve

has access to an articulated tractor.

"Even simple additions like four-in-one buckets will make us more efficient," she says.

A pair of utility vehicles are described as 'invaluable' for moving materials around the site.

Moving to electric power has also proved a bit of a revelation - battery-powered hedge trimmers are quieter to use in busy park areas and more pleasant for the

//
Several community and rehabilitation groups get involved in the work on the estate, from growing vegetables to maintaining the nature reserve



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As a country park, visitors have free access to the grounds and gardens, which can take its toll on grassed areas.



Woodchip or limestone dust may be used where high footfall damages grass walkways

operators, Anna points out.

“They’ve been so good we’re getting some electric chainsaws which will be convenient for small logging tasks.”

Spraying is carried out early in the morning when few visitors are about; herbicides are kept to a minimum and a weed burner is used near the castle, whilst a weed brush for the surfaced paths is on Anna’s wish list.

Aeration is another topic receiving consideration.

“The heavy footfall means that compaction is a serious issue, but while we could use a contractor’s machine on the larger areas, we also need to treat around the roots of yews and other trees, and need to avoid services and even the drains which could be damaged by a big machine,” says Gill.

Every improvement requires investment and, with council funding squeezed, Gill and the Elvaston Castle Gardens Trust are constantly considering revenue streams.

“Our main income is from the car park, as the park is free at the point of entry on foot. We have concessions such as the ice cream seller and we’ve made the shop more attractive to our family audience.”

“We’re creative about income generation and can offer our visitors products ranging from firewood off the estate to herbaceous plants, split and propagated, plus vegetables grown by our volunteers.”

“Visitors tell us that they’d like to support us and I’m looking at ways that can be achieved, but in the meantime with our newly united and enthusiastic team, we’ll continue looking to make Elvaston Castle work for them while preserving its heritage.”



As well as patrolling the 360 acre estate, the park rangers now work closely with the gardening team, giving more manpower for demanding tasks



Many of the outbuildings were also designed in gothic style and are now listed, requiring specialist renovation at a considerable investment



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Pontefract Racecourse

Follows the leader at Pontefract

Lee Williams headed over the Pennines to meet Pontefract Racecourse's Head Groundsman **Martin Follows**; a man whose career began as a car mechanic and tyre fitter before going 'flat out' into the equestrian world

Racing is recorded as having taken place in Pontefract as early as 1648, when the forces of Oliver Cromwell were besieging the castle. Races were held in the meadows near the town, but these were discontinued by 1769. The townsfolk restarted the sport in 1801, and it has continued ever since. In 1827, the races were held in September and reported as being very fashionably attended.

In 1802, Pontefract pioneered the sale of what, more or less, amounted to a lifetime membership to the course with admission to all races to members in possession of a '20-year badge'. This scheme funded the racecourse's first grandstand.

All races at Pontefract used to start at 2.45pm, so that miners at the adjacent

collieries could finish the morning shift in time to go racing. This remained the case until the collieries started to close, but is a good indicator of the social attitude Pontefract Racecourse displays towards its patrons.

Whilst it cannot claim to be one of Yorkshire's principal courses, it was used for some major races during World War II when other courses were out of action; these included the war substitute Lincoln and November Handicaps.

Pontefract installed a photo finish in 1952 and was also the first English course to have a dope testing facility.

Pontefract is the longest continuous horse racing circuit in Europe at 2 miles 136 yards (3,333 m; 16.57 furlongs) and is situated just off the M62 next to the historic market town







of Pontefract in West Yorkshire. On a warm, sunny day in May, Lee Williams met up with long-serving staff member and Head Groundsman Martin Follows.

Martin first tells me how he ended up working at Pontefract Racecourse. "Funnily enough, I started as a car mechanic when I left school in 1986. I did that for twelve months before going into tyre fitting. I first started at the racecourse on the 21st May 1990; I got the job through working for a contracting firm putting up the plastic rail around the track one winter. Whilst carrying out this work, I asked if there were any positions available and, fortunately for me, there was a young junior groundsman position available. So, from asking the question on a Friday, I started the new post on the following Monday!"

Over time, Martin has worked his way up through the ranks to become Head Groundsman. "In

2015, I took over the role from Richard Pemberton who retired after ten years in charge and, before him, it was Ronnie Senior who served the racecourse for fifty-eight years."

Martin's education over the years includes a Foundation course he took at York Racecourse in 1997, then in 2002 he did his NVQ Level 2 sports turf at Newmarket and, three years ago, completed his NVQ Level 3 in sports turf management, again in York.

I asked Martin if there was any one person who had inspired him along the way. "Ronnie Senior, my former boss," he says, without hesitation. "What that man didn't know about this place wasn't worth knowing. Many a time he would tell me to dig an area where he believed there was a drain, and I would think, no there isn't. But then I'd have to eat my words as there it was."





Martin has five members of staff who help him not only to maintain the track, lawns, fences and gardens, but also the maintenance of the buildings inside and out. Rob Pemberton, twenty-five years' service; Craig Townend, twelve years; Andrew Van der Wal, eight years; and Derek Townend, who is, unfortunately, on long term sick leave, so they took on Mick Appleyard last year.

Martin uses agronomist Lawrence Hayes for testing on the track. "He puts the reports together and sends them to myself and my gaffer Mr. Gundill and, from there, we work out what fertilisers and sand needs to go on, which helps us to determine the budgets for

the coming season."

Martin does not use any outside contractors to renovate the track as what they require is very limited, so this is all done in-house, which mainly involves deep aeration using their own verti-drain and SISIS spiker. Contractor Peter Linley does all of their spraying for them on the track and around the course.

Martin explains that the track's soil profile is varied. "Where to start with this track? It's clay in parts, sandy soil in others and limestone down the mile straight, with about nine inches of soil on top. It can be challenging at times when it's raining; it's a funny old track is this. We have put umpteen

sand slits and French drains in the past, alongside some polypipe ones, but mainly we like to use French drains as we find them more effective on this site. Over the last few years, we have taken the tops off and redressed them with sand to keep everything nice and clean."

Martin talks me through the issues he has had with the irrigation system. "We have an Upton boom system irrigator that's not a bad piece of kit. It used to be motorised and run off a computer but, like much hi-tech stuff, it didn't last very long, so we had it all taken away. It was sensor driven and used to be in charge of you anyway! We've now had a drawbar put on, so we just tow it around



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with the tractor. We have just a pump house, with nine hydrants about two furlongs apart around the course, and we take our water from part groundwater and part borehole."

When maintaining the racecourse, Martin and his staff have got to be aware of their surroundings as the course is open to the public during non-race days. "We have dogs chasing us whilst we are on the tractors but, other than that, the public are generally not too bad, especially if we ask them not to walk on the track. It's just a matter of being polite, being aware of our surroundings and working with them, not against them."

Maintenance procedures on the course vary significantly from the winter months to the summer months. "Mr Gundill and I will put a list together before the start of the year and, between us, work out what needs to be done and, from there, prioritise each job with a number."

"In the last few winters, it has been quite mad as we have altered all of the parade ring. We have dropped it at the far end by 1.5m - it used to be more on a slope, and the contractors built the new wall up

surrounding it. We have renewed the horse walk and put all new safety barriers up. All the rings have been altered. We used to have the Premier Club, Silver Stand and Picnic Ring, but we have done away with the Silver Stand, whilst the Premier has been made bigger by twenty yards, and we now have upper and lower tatts for the paddock and Picnic Ring."

"Through winter, we will decorate and help with any maintenance around the buildings, and I will help with the organisation of any contractors. In summer, it's seven months of a regime in a sense. Race days will come up, so we have to start getting the track ready and get it cut with the Pegasus S3 rotary mower (at a height of five inches) and cut the lawns and parade ring with a Ransomes cylinder mower which stripes them up nicely."

"We make sure all the stables are cleaned out and fogged. On race day, everybody makes a mess so, the day after, we have a group of lads come in to help us clean up the litter and stables etc. Once that's done, we will get the track put back together,





In the last two years, we have bought two new larger tractors as the ones we used to have were too small and getting past their sell-by date, bless them

treading it in, then go around with a sand/seed mix and fill any large divots. After that, it's getting ready again for the next fixture."

Martin likes to carry out a regular aeration programme throughout the year. "We aerate with the SISIS spiker a few times a month, depending on the weather. I like to verti-drain in May because we have a dolly rail, which we put up for two and half months. I generally I like to get that dollied off and verti-drained, but with the weather being like it has, it's not been ideal for that, so we just spiked it this time. Come the end of the year, it will get verti-drained all the way around at depths varying from six to eight inches."

The racecourse likes to purchase their machinery outright and, in recent years, Martin has been able to add some new pieces of kit to the old. "In the last two years, we have bought two new larger tractors as the ones we used to have were too small and getting past their sell-by date, bless them. Only recently, I asked for a 6ft topper rotary mower for areas of the track that are a bit too wide for the mower."

Martin hasn't been given any special projects yet for this winter, but he does have one of his own. "I'm in the dark about what we are going to be doing this winter, but I have my own little project in mind - I would like to refurbish the stable yard. When we altered the parade ring, we took out a lot of rubber blocks and I want to use them to make an entrance way into the stables because, at present, it is just limestone. So, if I can get that done, it will look a lot better, plus it will make it a bit quieter for the horses walking in."

With the course being next to woodland and a vast expanse of playing fields in the middle of the racecourse, Martin suffers damage from moles and squirrels. "We have problems with them at the minute, so we have a chap who comes in and traps the moles for us in and around the track, but the squirrel culling is down to the local council."



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Hayter and The Toro Company profile

The quintessential British mower

Very few lawnmower brands can claim to have as vast and rich a heritage as British lawn mower manufacturer **Hayter**. They have designed and manufactured quality lawn mowers at their headquarters in Hertfordshire since 1946 and are proud to hold the Royal Warrant for supply of horticultural equipment to Her Majesty the Queen. Part of the **Toro** company since 2005, Hayter and Toro have together been able to redefine modern lawncare

The story of Hayter lawnmowers is one born from humble beginnings and a huge passion for engineering, driven by its founder Douglas Hayter. Born in Bishop's Stortford on the borders of Essex and Hertfordshire in 1914, Douglas Hayter started his working career as part of a touring air circus, where he found his passion for engineering through servicing aeroplane engines. He also spent part of his early career in the building trade, where he started his own business in 1938, erecting workshops and sawmills as well as manufacturing cattle yard equipment.

The venture into lawnmowers began in 1946, when Douglas Hayter borrowed a cutter bar mower from a friend to clear some space for a new office building. The progress of clearing the ground was slow and frustrating, and soon he had imagined a more efficient and time-saving design. Douglas combined the functionality of the historical horse-drawn rotary mower - an invention from a hundred years prior, with

a second hand two-stroke engine. The first ever Hayter rotary lawnmower, complete with a dustbin lid over the rotor was born, and so was the story of the quintessential British lawnmower.

The lawnmower Douglas had designed for himself worked wonders and, before long, he started getting requests for more machines from admiring neighbours and friends.

Later that year, Hayter became incorporated as a limited company and the new Motor Scythe Douglas had created went into full production the following year. It was a hand-propelled motor mower with a 24" cut. Further work was done on product developments, such as a safety stone guard which was fitted to the mower deck. When supplies became more readily available towards the end of the 1940s, a four-stroke Villiers horizontal crankshaft engine was used for the already popular Motor Scythe.

Customer requirements and demand saw the development of professional mowers, such as a 5' and 6' cut rotary orchard



Douglas Hayter



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lawnmowers, a 6'6" cut tractor mounted highway mower, as well as the first self-propelled 25" cut Hayter Scythe.

In 1957, the domestic market saw the introduction of the iconic red and silver Hayterette, a hand-propelled 18" cut mower with a 98cc Villiers engine. This model quickly became an iconic offering in the Hayter product family and was awarded the BAGMA award for 'Best Horticulture Machine of the Year' in its 10th year of production. It quickly became a popular and iconic part of the Hayter product line-up and remained so until the last ever Hayterette was sold in early 2019. The 1950s also saw Hayter Ltd. develop the self-propelled roller drive Hayter mower range, which creates the perfect, picture-book striped lawn, now synonymous with the Hayter brand.

In 1960, Hayter's company received one of the country's finest business accolades, being granted the Royal Warrant for the supply of machinery to HM Queen Elizabeth II - an honour retained to this day. The 1960s also saw continued expansion of the Hayter

business with the acquisition of Loddon Engineering, a manufacturer in cattle yard equipment in Norfolk. The company took on the production of several other successful machines, such as the 'Mighty Midget', a piece of portable welding equipment, and the Hayter Boot Groom, an electronic sports boots cleaning device. A new 25,000 sq ft warehouse in Spellbrook was another key part of the extensive expansion taking place. By the end of the decade, the company had managed to establish a wide network of international distributors, selling its products to over 110 countries worldwide.

Hayter was able to invest further to see the launch of many innovative mowing products for both homeowners and commercial users. These included the Hawk and Hawk Major, which were especially designed to mow grass around tight stoned areas, and the Harrier rear-roller rotary lawnmower. The Harrier would go on to win the same prestigious BAGMA award received by the Hayterette decades before and was awarded the title 'Product of the Decade' in 1998, following a UK-wide dealer vote.

Many of the company's other products from this era were designed to help streamline the production process to make it easier and faster to manufacture and deliver high-quality products. One of these machines was the Hayter Container Lift, designed to lift off lorry containers to allow products and spare parts to be loaded whilst vehicles were on the road to improve their efficiency.

The 1970s also saw the introduction of the first-ever Hayter ride-on mower - the Bank Rider. It was one of the first rotary mowers with a hydraulic motor drive to the cutting deck and an offset operator's seat, which could be swivelled so that it remained level when driving across a sloping terrain. It set a new trend with more ride-on versions being introduced, some based on popular pedestrian controlled versions, such as the Hayter Frigate and the Hayter Eagle.

Other products launching in the 1970s were the Hayter Senator 26" and 30"



London showroom



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hydrostatic drive cylinder mowers, and 20" cut Ambassador 3 with five- and ten-blade cylinders with the new Briggs & Stratton Quantum engine.

The 1980s began with the introduction of the Hayter Hobby, a mower complete with plastic grass box designed for small and medium sized lawns. The Hobby was also introduced as self-propelled and mains-electric versions in the years that followed.

In 1985, the company saw a large re-

brand with a change of the logo and colour scheme to today's iconic dark green and black colours. The same year, Douglas Hayter sold the business to financial holding company F. H. Tompkins. They went on to acquire Beaver Equipment Limited, a manufacturer of commercial grounds care equipment based in West Sussex, as well as Murray Ohio Manufacturing Co., which was the world's largest mower manufacturer at the time. These acquisitions saw new

knowledge and expertise feed into the Hayter brand and its products. In the years that followed, the business also saw significant investment in its manufacturing facilities, which were completely re-designed and brought up to date to allow for new products and models to be manufactured. This investment also made it possible to expand the commercial grounds care business to which the company introduced a significant range of ride-on cylinder mowers



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and tractor pulled machines.

In 2005, Hayter was acquired by the American-owned Toro Company. The Toro Company boasts an equally rich history of offering innovative turf maintenance equipment and irrigation around the world. Toro supplies their specialist turf management products to international sites and events such as, Real Madrid Club de Fútbol in Spain, Walt Disney World® Resort and the Wimbledon Championships, among

many others.

The two companies have their individual merits and specialisms when developing new products, but have in the years since the acquisition very much looked to work more closely together. The companies have been able to establish a rich exchange of expertise and technology, and the result of this was revealed in November of 2018, when Toro showcased the new ProStripe® 560 mower for the first

time at the NEC.

The ProStripe is aimed at premier sports venues, municipalities, resorts and golf clubs, and combines the benefits of a precise cut and striped finish seen in larger professional mowers, with the simplicity of a walk power mower.

The Toro ProStripe combines its all American roots in premier turf management, with the British understanding of high precision cutting technology, very much synonymous with Hayter. The model is the next step in Toro's mission to design and produce more equipment locally in the UK, to further build the international strength and significance of the UK mower and garden equipment industry.

Anthony Nadalin, Senior Marketing Manager for Toro Europe said: "We understand how important it is for turf professionals to have the right product for the surface they are working with."

"Innovation has always been at the heart of both Hayter and The Toro Company and we were excited to see how our different backgrounds and areas of expertise could work together to develop new and exciting products. It is through this desire for sharing and building on our different strengths that we have created the Toro ProStripe. It has been a very collaborative project between our two companies and the result is a Toro mower designed and manufactured in the UK particularly for the UK sports market."

"We are excited to continue to apply this collaborative approach to our future projects and deliver more innovative, high quality products from Hayter and The Toro Company. Just like Douglas Hayter's first-ever mower, we strive to break new ground across the lawncare industry and offer the best equipment, whether you're a keen home gardener or a professional groundskeeper."

For more information on Hayter, The Toro Company and their products be sure to visit: www.hayter.co.uk www.toro.com/en-gb



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TORO®

Planting an orchard

An apple a day?

With the move towards sustainability, wildlife encouragement and protection and membership enhancement, how many have considered planting an orchard? As Peter Britton discovers, there are many benefits from doing so

As the move towards environmental sustainable course management continues apace, many golf courses will have, in recent years, undertaken tree planting, the creation of wildlife areas and wildflower meadows et al. But have you ever considered creating an orchard?

The thought of an orchard may fill you with dread, but I am not talking about those vast commercial types that can be found in Somerset (where the cider comes up from), the Vale of Evesham or Kent - other areas are available - but small pockets of fruit bearing trees in and around your land.

To qualify as 'an orchard' requires a minimum of five trees; there is, obviously, no set maximum.

Orchards are in decline across the UK, with the subsequent loss in native species of fruit falling foul to pristine foreign varieties imported by supermarkets.

Except perhaps in the most rural of greengrocers where produce is collected locally, spots and blemishes on apples are now a thing of the past, as is, generally, any semblance of taste. "Bland is best" appears to be the new trading 'standard'.

An orchard can provide so many benefits in and around a golf course, school playing field, training ground or any area that is simply lying dormant.

The orchard 'habitat' is unusual, in that it is actually an assortment of several habitats all on the same unit of land. Firstly, there is the tree habitat, which provides the blossom and fruit for food. They also offer the

cracks and crevices where bats and birds live, and the wood which specialist invertebrates feed on. Mistletoe, fungi and lichens all grow in trees, but the interesting thing about an orchard is the trees are spaced so widely there is enough sunlight to allow a grassland habitat to develop as well. This enables all those grassland specialists to live in an orchard too - wildflowers, insects, small rodents and fungi. Add to this the other habitats usually present in and around an orchard - such as hedgerows, ponds and scrub - and you have a habitat of great complexity which will increase the biodiversity found at your facility. Beehives will also add to the diversity in and around an orchard.

For a golf club, an orchard will provide additional interest and education for members, a possible income stream once established, along with produce for the clubhouse menu. Consider local cider makers, bakers, greengrocers and such like. Whilst requiring careful nurturing in the early stages, and ongoing maintenance once mature, there are plenty of benefits to be had from an orchard.

Similar applies to schools and colleges, where an orchard will also offer additional and considerable educational opportunities from day one of the planting scheme.

Whilst many people will immediately think of apples, an orchard is, in fact, any planted area of fruit and nut trees - varieties of pear, plum, cherry, walnuts and almonds being the most popular.

Planting an orchard is the first step to ensuring the safety of the orchard habitat. Anyone can plant an orchard, or keep fruit trees, it



Image © U. Leone, Pixabay

A brief guide to orchard creation

Ashridge Nurseries, one of the UK's premium suppliers of fruit trees, offers the following advice:

Planting an Orchard - Selecting the site orchard

This is a brief (non-exhaustive) guide to choosing a good position for your fruit orchard. You can find the best fruit trees for sale at the cheapest prices and buy them all but, if you don't plant them in the right place, it will all prove to have been a waste of time.

Put your orchard on a slope

The single biggest enemy of fruit production is frost. Fruit trees flower relatively early and a late frost can wipe out your crop. Cold air is heavy and slides downhill so keep your orchard out of dips, valleys, hollows and sheltered flat ground. Because it is heavy, it displaces warmer air so the warmest spots at night tend to be 100-300 feet above sea level on a slope away from the prevailing wind.

Keep fruit trees out of the wind

Paradoxically, that warm, sunny southwest facing slope will get the prevailing wind (and gales) if it is not sheltered. Pollinating insects hate the wind. A sheltered north-east facing slope is better than a wind blasted south-western one.

Don't plant too high

Slopes are great, but above 300 feet over sea level temperatures drop by 1 degree Fahrenheit for every 300 feet increase in altitude. Up to 600 feet on a sheltered slope is fine and there are successful orchards at 800 feet, but don't go any higher than that.

Remember, if you are planting high that wind shelter is essential, and you may need to plant a windbreak to protect your trees and ensure pollination.

Get the soil right

The soil does not need to be especially rich (although good soil helps). The number one soil requirement is that there is a combination of adequate drainage and sufficient moisture. The worst soil is potter's clay which, although rich, is under water all winter and brick hard all summer. Fruit tree roots need to breathe and, at the same time, they need access to water to help swell their fruit. Good soil texture helps moisture retention and prevents fruit splitting, which is a classic sign of an uneven water supply.

www.ashridgetrees.co.uk



Painted Lady on blossom ©Wachman, Pixabay

really does not matter how much space you have!

So, with thanks to the Wildlife Trust, here are some pointers to creating your orchard.

Planting a traditional orchard

This is the ideal scenario; planting five or more widely spaced fruit trees on vigorous rootstocks. Five trees as a minimum means the orchard would 'qualify' as an orchard under the current habitat definition. Vigorous rootstocks lead to the largest trees, sometimes 30ft high, meaning lots of fruit (with plenty of access for wildlife) and lots of deadwood and cavities which are good for several animals. Wide spacing allows lots of light into the grassland beneath the trees to allow a high diversity of ground flora.

However, not everyone has the space for this kind of orchard, but this is the wonderful thing about fruit trees - their versatility!

If you are limited on space, try growing dwarf trees in pots on the patio, or train an espalier up a south facing wall. You could even try creating 'step over' apples (a low-growing, horizontally-trained tree that can literally be 'stepped over'). There's always space for some kind of fruit tree.

Site selection

It is worth spending some time planning where you want to plant your orchard, as this could save you trouble later on. Some things worth considering when selection your site include:

Grassland biodiversity

Sometimes, the grassland where you want to plant your trees might be of very high wildlife value. This will be particularly evident in grasslands where a hay cut is regularly taken, or where there are ant hills present (indicating the ground has not been ploughed for a long time). If the grassland has a high diversity of flowers in it, consider planting your orchard on another site. Flower rich meadows are becoming very rare and many important plant species such as orchids are found in them. Your local

Wildlife Trust can advise on the value of grasslands at your site, so let them know and they will arrange a survey, along with offering plenty of other useful advice.

Aspect

Ideally, an orchard should be planted on a south or south-west facing slope. This aspect ensures the trees will get plenty of sunlight throughout the year and that there will be adequate drainage. Other aspects may be considered however if a south or south-west slope is not available. Depending on other factors, such as exposure and shading (see below), more hardy fruit varieties should be chosen to cope with the slightly cooler conditions on these slopes.

Exposure

Fruit tree blossom is extremely susceptible to wind blow, particularly the earlier blossoming varieties. In exposed places, a windbreak, such as a hedgerow, can help protect the fruit trees from harsh winds, so you could try planting one before your fruit trees go in (or at the same time). Another danger to fruit tree blossom is frost. A late frost can completely destroy all of the blossom in an orchard; again, early blossomers are particularly at risk. To avoid the risk of frost as much as possible, plant later blossoming varieties. If you have your heart set on early varieties, plant these at the top of the slope. Trees at the top of the slope will receive most sunshine for the longest part of the day; therefore, frost will melt quickly from them.

Drainage

Fruit trees generally hate having wet feet, so the ideal location for them would be on a freely draining soil. This is partly why slopes are good for fruit trees. A good test to find out how well your ground drains is to dig a hole in the ground, around a foot deep, and leave it for a week. If you can see water pooling in the hole after this time, the location is probably too wet for healthy fruit trees and it may be worth considering somewhere else.



A mature orchard in full blossom



Fruit trees need a lot of sunlight and will not do well if planted very closely to other tall trees (such as a hedge boundary or neighbouring woodland) because they will be over shaded

If your drainage is okay, but your soil still has a very high clay content, it may be worth digging in some well-rotted manure at each location where you will plant the trees. This will help improve the localised soil structure for the tree while it establishes. Do the same if your soil is extremely sandy.

Boundaries

It is also worth thinking about the types of boundary you have around your orchard site. Fruit trees need a lot of sunlight and will not do well if planted very closely to other tall trees (such as a hedge boundary or neighbouring woodland) because they will be over shaded. Trees grown in shade will have crooked growth (as they reach for sunlight) and may be more susceptible to some diseases (particularly fungal diseases) as the microclimate around them will be cooler and wetter.

Tree selection

As much as it is worth considering your location, it is equally as important to choose your trees wisely. The following hints should help you make the correct decision. Remember to talk to your tree supplier to confirm your choices, they are there to help.

Rootstock

Fruit trees are supplied on different rootstocks. Rootstocks give a predictable growth rate and structure and mean that fruit trees can be planted in most situations if the appropriate rootstock is selected.

Rootstocks vary from extremely dwarfing to extremely vigorous, and so the resulting mature tree will be a predicted height; very small ranging to very large. There are advantages and disadvantages of the uses of different rootstocks. Dwarfing ones are easy to prune and harvest from, but have a

poor root system meaning they require staking all of the time. Vigorous rootstocks can lead to large unwieldy trees which are difficult to harvest from and prune, however they will develop strong roots and will be more hardy to adverse weather conditions.

The rootstock chosen will obviously influence how widely the trees need to be planted apart as a reflection of how large the trees will eventually become. The table below gives examples of different rootstocks, however many more are available. It is worth consulting with your supplier.

Varieties

Which varieties you go for entirely depend on what you want to get out of your orchard - whether it is for cider or for kitchen use, for example. The only constricting factor with varieties is whether you need to choose

A selection of rootstocks and their characteristics

Fruit type	Rootstock name	Final tree height	Spacing	Time until good crop produced	Notes
Apple	M25 (extremely vigorous)	6m+	10m	5 - 7 years	Favoured in traditional orchards to produce large standard trees. Staking required only in the first few years
Apple	MM106 (semi-dwarfing)	4m	4m	3 - 4 years	Good all rounder, favoured for the garden or small orchard. Staking required only in the first few years, but permanently if on poorer soil
Apple	M27 (extremely dwarfing)	2m	1.5m	2 years	A dwarf tree suitable for small spaces and containers. Will need permanent staking
Pear	Quince A (semi vigorous)	5m	5m	4 years	Suitable for most soils. Will need permanent staking
Plum	Pixy (semi dwarfing)	4m	4m	3 years	A dwarf tree suitable for small spaces. Will need permanent staking
Cherry	Colt (semi-vigorous)	6m	6m	3 years	Suitable for most garden soils. Will need permanent staking

More information on rootstocks can be found on the RHS website - www.rhs.org.uk

Pruning - formative and maintenance



Cherry tree blossom ©Manfred Richter, Pixabay

Formative Pruning

Formative pruning is required by all young fruit trees to ensure they develop a balanced shape. It is important to bear in mind stone fruit trees like plums and cherries do not need as much formative pruning as apples and pears.

The process of formative pruning depends largely on the rootstocks used. For example, in a traditional orchard (with trees on very vigorous rootstocks), trees will be pruned to ensure the first branches emerge from the trunk above grazing height (around 2m above the ground). On dwarfing rootstocks in a garden, the first branches will obviously need to emerge much lower down as the tree itself might not reach 2m in height (for the very dwarf rootstocks).

Generally, formative pruning involves developing a strong central leader, which will form the trunk of the tree. All 'competing' stems and branches should be removed with the leader left untouched until the desired height is achieved. At the same time, new branches lower down the trunk are shortened to 2 or 3 buds in length. As the years progress, the lowest branches are completely removed, retaining only those branches which are at and above the desired height. From now on, the branches are further developed to produce good strong laterals which will result in a tree with a balanced branch structure that will be easy to harvest from in future years.

A very good step by step guide to formative pruning is available for download from Natural England in PDF format. Please note these guidelines refer to vigorous trees, and so the suggested heights of branch formation, etc, should be altered according to the rootstock you have.

Maintenance Pruning

Maintenance pruning 'takes over' from formative pruning once the need to shape the growth of the tree is outweighed by the need to promote fruit production.

The main aims of maintenance pruning are:

- to create a balance of fruit wood and vegetative growth
- to control tree size
- to prevent branch cross overs and rubbing
- to allow light and air into and around the tree
- to stimulate fruit production and the growth of new healthy wood

There are a few rules of thumb when it comes to pruning:

- Always use clean sharp tools (such as secateurs, loppers, pruning saws)
- Remove the three Ds first (dead, diseased and damaged wood). Remember to leave some non-diseased dead wood, when possible, for wildlife
- Only remove a maximum of 25% of branches each year. Over pruning can shock the tree and cause it to produce many 'water shoots' which are non-fruiting stems, characteristically growing very straight vertically.



© pixel2013, Pixabay



Orchards can be planted anywhere ©pixel2013, Pixabay

later blossoming ones if your site is very exposed (see above). Whenever possible, plant at least some traditional, local varieties to your area. Traditional varieties are in danger of being lost as more modern ones are chosen in preference. Your local supplier will be able to advise you.

Pollination

Many fruit trees are 'self-sterile'; that is they require another variety to be present for pollination to occur, so fruit is produced. The other option is 'self-fertile' trees, i.e. those trees which produce fruit with or without any pollination from another tree. Even self-fertile trees benefit from some pollination as this can improve yields.

Fruit trees are categorised into 'pollination groups' based on when they come into flower. Fruit trees can only be pollinated by varieties in the same group as them, or the next one up or down. In other words, group 2 trees can be pollinated by groups 1, 2 and 3 but not 4.

Most self-sterile trees are 'diploid'; that is, they only require one other variety for pollination. Some, however, are trickier and are called 'triploid'. Triploid trees require at least two other varieties in the same pollination group to ensure a crop of fruit.

The pollination requirements of a fruit tree should be on the tree label. If it is not, ask your supplier to tell you.

Planting

After making all of your important decisions on where to plant your trees and which ones to plant, there is then the task of actually planting them.

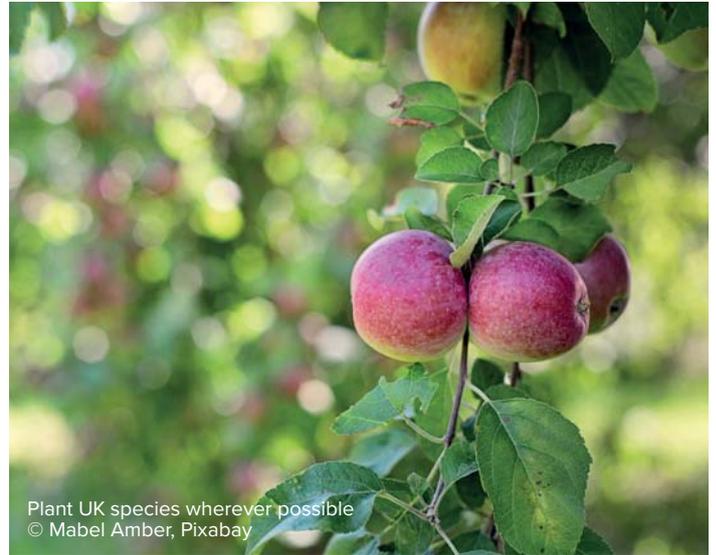
Time of year and tree storage

Fruit trees come in one of two ways: bare rooted or containerised. Bare rooted trees are available in the winter, when the trees are dormant. These trees must be planted in the winter months between November and March, ideally December. They come with their roots wrapped up in plastic or something similar, but cannot be stored like this for any length of time.

To store bare rooted trees it is necessary to 'heel' them in to a trench in the ground.



Windfalls provide a good food source for a variety of wildlife © Mabel Amber, Pixabay



Plant UK species wherever possible © Mabel Amber, Pixabay

This involves burying the roots with soil.

Containerised trees are available all year round and come in a pot with compost or soil protecting the roots. Because the roots are well protected, they can be stored like this in a sheltered position until ready for planting, which can be at any time of year.

There are disadvantages and advantages to bare rooted or containerised trees. While containerised have the flexibility of being able to be planted at any time of year, they are twice as expensive as bare rooted alternatives. Trees in pots may also be root bound, making it more difficult for them to establish when planted. They also require more watering than bare rooted trees, especially if planted during the spring and summer.

Stakes and guards

All fruit trees will require staking for some amount of time after planting. The type of stake required, and also the guards you use to protect the tree, will depend upon what else you will use the orchard space for. If you intend to graze the orchard, heavy duty stakes and guards will have to be used as most grazing animals (including deer) will destroy an orchard of young fruit trees within minutes if the trees are not protected. If no grazing is expected, a rabbit guard and small stake will be sufficient whilst the tree establishes itself.

Planting the trees

The tree should not have its roots exposed (either from the plastic wrapping or planting

pot) until the very last minute before they go into the hole. Tree roots are damaged within seconds of being exposed to the air as they dry out so quickly.

A hole should be dug which is deep enough so that the soil level will be reach the same point on the tree as where it was at in the nursery (or in the pot). You will be able to see the old soil line on the tree itself and should be a few centimetres below the graft line (where the rootstock and variety have been joined).

The stake should be driven into the ground before the tree goes in so that the tree roots may be arranged around the stake, minimising damage to the roots. It should project at least 30cm out of the ground, vertically, and should sit around 15cm away from the tree trunk.

Once the tree has been placed in the hole, the soil should be carefully placed in whilst the tree is kept vertical. You can jiggle the tree slightly whilst the soil is going in to help distribute the soil around the roots.

Finally, the tree should be loosely fixed with a flexible tie to the stake, above the graft line. The tree should be able to sway slightly in the wind as this strengthens the trunk.

Aftercare

Once the trees are planted, there are a few things that need to be done to look after them.

Weeds

Newly planted fruit trees suffer if they have

to compete for water and nutrients from weeds and grasses growing around their roots. It is therefore advisable to remove all vegetation from the base of the tree and suppress further growth for the first few years after planting. This may be done by covering the area with mulch, such as grass clippings, to smother any future growth. Weed suppressing membranes and mats can also be used. Finally, a non-residual herbicide could be used. Of all the options, mulching is preferable.

Watering

Trees will need to be well watered straight after planting. A lot of water should be poured on to ensure the water reaches the trees roots. Water may be required during the summer months for a few years after planting, depending on how hot the weather gets.

Formative pruning

For information on formative pruning young trees, see side bar.

Sources of advice

Some extremely comprehensive free guides on fruit tree planting are available from Natural England www.naturalengland.org.uk

Advice and guidance is available from The Wildlife Trusts www.wildlifetrusts.org

We recommend sourcing trees from local suppliers where possible, ensuring that, to limit the risk of disease, no imported trees are used.



Not just apples, but cherries © beValorous, Pixabay



... Pears © Natasha G. Pixabay



... and plums © beValorous, Pixabay

Operation Pollinator

Scrape out a future for pollinators

Corhampton Golf Club in Hampshire won this year's prestigious Syngenta Operation Pollinator Award, presented at BTME. However, its work in pioneering restoration of natural downland habitats has also won the praises of ecology conservation bodies and the club's own members alike

Corhampton Golf Club Head Greenkeeper, Iestyn Carpenter, enthuses that, although the site is relatively small, they have still found innovative ways to integrate naturalistic conservation features. He believes it adds enormously to the playing experience, enhances the wider environment, and creates a more sustainable golfing business.

Having expanded the Hampshire course from nine holes and a double-tee eighteen in the 1970s, to a full eighteen holes in the 90s, Iestyn highlighted that it is difficult to create a true expansive downland feel on such a tight layout. However, by establishing ecological features that are characteristic of natural downland, the whole vista is being transformed.

Just a few miles away, on the same chalk scarp ridge, Magdalen Hill Down, outside Winchester is one of the UK's richest downland habitats, which draws ecologists from across the world to study the cherished flora and fauna.

Now, Iestyn and deputy greenkeeper, Duncan Brown, are recreating some of the most important elements of the downland habitat, within the constraints of the golf course design and management. Key to that are chalk scrapes that emulate the conditions to encourage native species.

The largest of the chalk scrapes will sit





Iestyn Carpenter and Duncan Brown with one of the information boards



Glenn Kirby



Corhampton chalk scrape design with humps and hollows to give shelter and warmth for plants and insects

Pioneering Pollinator

The pioneering Syngenta Operation Pollinator initiative, to promote ecological habitat creation on golf courses, has hit over 100 clubs signed-up in the UK.

Syngenta Technical Manager, Glenn Kirby, highlights that it has created a massively valuable ecological asset for bumblebees and other biodiversity, as well as adding an extremely attractive environment for players.

"Iestyn and Duncan's work at Corhampton has demonstrated how golf courses provide ideal locations for habitat creation. With the right management, these areas could provide highly beneficial habitat for bumblebees and other pollinating insects."

"Operation Pollinator also enhances the overall playing experience. The wildflower areas improve visual appearance and it creates valuable positive publicity for the club, and for the industry as a whole."

Operation Pollinator is the culmination of more than 15 years research by Syngenta into the environmental management of habitats for bumblebees, butterflies, spiders, beetles and other insects, backed by STRI trials, support of independent ecologists and research on commercial golf courses across the UK.

"We now have positive examples of every type of course getting involved, at different levels," Glenn added. "All the clubs are incredibly willing to share their experiences and advice through the Operation Pollinator network, and gain recognition from the Operation Pollinator Award, independently judged by the STRI as part of the Environment Awards."

between the 8th and 9th holes, in the centre of the course and a hub in its design. It's putting conservation and ecology at the heart of the course, and reinforcing the downland heritage.

"Once established, the flora and fauna in several chalk scrapes will be in the eyesight of players throughout their rounds, and ensure that the course fits perfectly into the landscape, both visually and ecologically," Iestyn enthused.

Creating scrapes, by removing virtually all the top soil to reveal the chalk beneath, sounds simple, but the complex ecosystem of downland flora that has evolved over millions of years, requires a myriad of hollows and undulations that create marginal microclimates in which the natural species can gain a precious foothold.

Iestyn admits that the idea for chalk scrapes was born largely by accident, when clearing the base of a copse and scraping back to the bare earth. However, working with the local branch of Butterfly Conservation, the team has learned and refined the techniques to recreate the natural features.

Clive Wood of Butterfly Conservation has worked closely with Duncan and believes Corhampton has the potential to host breeding populations of many butterfly, moth and other pollinator species.

He highlights the good potential for colonisation for three 'high priority' classified species: the small blue and white admiral butterflies and the striped lychnis moth.

"However, the value of the work at Corhampton also offers huge benefits for so-called common species, where over two thirds of all UK butterflies are in long-term decline."

Clive points out that, from Butterfly Conservation's perspective, typically just 20-35% of a golf course is intensively managed, involving close mowing and the application of fertilisers and weed management practices. "That leaves large areas potentially available for wildlife conservation and proactive ecology."

He emphasised that none of the ecology work is intended to interfere with the enjoyment of the course by its members, or with its efficient management by the professional greenkeeping team. "It's hoped that the new habitat will build upon the excellent work of Iestyn and Duncan, and further enhance the enjoyment of members by encouraging more butterflies and greater biodiversity to visit and inhabit the course," he added.

Where Corhampton is set, high on the Hampshire Downs, within an intensively farmed landscape, the golf course can provide essential safe havens and habitat services for wildlife.

The conservation work is providing essential breeding and foraging habitat for many wildlife species, notably small mammals, bats, birds, butterflies, moths, reptiles and many insects.

"That creates essential source populations of species, which are able to colonise surrounding habitat where opportunities arise. Furthermore, it's a 'stepping stone' between other habitats, which facilitates the movement of species through a landscape."

"This latter service makes populations more robust and able to resist chance events and threats, such as fire, disease and gradual habitat degradation, for example."

Along with the innovative chalk scrapes, other conservation work by Duncan and the team at Corhampton include the rich and diverse flora in the out of play rough, including orchid species and parasitic plants, encouraged by the 'cut and collect' grassland management.

Small areas of lightly managed or unmanaged ground, often between a green and tee, have generated conditions suitable for wild plants such as cuckoo flower (*Cardamine pratensis*) and garlic mustard (*Alliaria petiolate*), the main larval food plants of the orange tip butterfly.

Duncan has strategically left piles of dead and dying wood at several sites around the course, in both sunny and shaded areas. It's a technique the Game & Wildlife



Duncan Brown with wildlife log pile



Soil consolidation to retain moisture aids seed germination

Conservation Trust has highlighted can support up to 5,000 native species, including 750 species of beetle, and provide a valuable food source for bats and birds.

Good hedgerow management has resulted in healthy, species-rich native hedgerows which are thick and attractive to small mammals and breeding birds. Duncan has also provided barn owl boxes across the site, where they can actively make best use of the meadow habitats created.

Iestyn views a significant part of his role is to generate the club engagement and support for the ecology initiatives, within the overall context of the course management. "We have to acknowledge that none of the conservation work can be undertaken without the backing and support of the club



and the members."

"For almost all members, the golf course and its playability remains the main priority. The ecology and environment can add to their experience and enjoyment, but we need to continue to improve the course condition and day-in-day-out playability."

In some instances, he points out that it can go hand in hand, such as thinning rough that encourages fescues and wildflowers, but also improves playability. Clearing large areas of scrub has opened up air flow and allowed in light.

Other projects, such as large scale invasive tree removal, have been potentially more controversial with members, but they are now seeing the benefits in both course design and playability, as well as improved turf health. "It's given people far greater confidence and trust in what we are planning to do, and has been instrumental in giving us the support to undertake new projects.

"But they also know that - in terms of greenkeeping priority, time and budget - the needs of the course will always come before the conservation initiatives," he added.

Iestyn believes that the acclaim and recognition for the team's successes with its

conservation work, including the Syngenta Operation Pollinator Award and other local press and publicity, has helped to secure other investment in the course and its maintenance.

"We are constantly striving for ways to improve," he said. "The focus is on drainage and nutrition, for example. Some greens that can stay wet for too long have become poa dominant, so the club is investing in the drainage that can help us to increase the bentgrass content, which will, in turn, give the chance to improve surface quality with better targeted inputs."



Corhampton Golf Club chalk scrape plant species recommendations	
For chalk scrapes:	For surrounding grassed areas:
Kidney vetch (<i>Anthyllis vulneraria</i>)	Knapweed (<i>Centaurea nigra</i>)
Common Bird's-foot trefoil (<i>Lotus corniculatus</i>)	Marjoram (<i>Origanum majorana</i>)
Wild thyme (<i>Thymus polytrichus</i>)	Dark Mullein (<i>Verbascum nigrum</i>)
Scabious spp.	
Horseshoe vetch (<i>Hippocrepis comosa</i>)	
Guidelines: Sow 80% grass/20% wild flower mix, at a rate of four grams per m ² , increasing to five g/m ² if planted in the spring	
Source: Butterfly Conservation	

Butterfly and moth species identified to potentially benefit from chalk scrape creation at Corhampton Golf Club:	
Key target species:	Other species:
Common blue	Meadow brown
Small blue	Red admiral
Adonis blue	Brimstone
Dingy skipper	Small white
Grizzled skipper	Large white
Chalk carpet moth	Ringlet
Striped lychnis moth	Marbled white
	Comma
	Small heath
Source: Butterfly Conservation	

Berkhamsted Golf Club

Major irrigation project

Berkhamsted Golf Club has installed a comprehensive new irrigation system which will see a seven-fold increase in sprinklers and better playing conditions at the 129-year old golf club. **Andy Hiseman** gives us a review of the project



The famous bunker-free course at Berkhamsted is regularly included in lists of England's Top 100 golf courses, and is a well-known connoisseur's choice for fans of golf architects such as James Braid, Harry Colt and Willie Park Junior, each of whom had a hand in its design.

Largely unchanged for the last one-hundred years, and set in a beautiful 560-acre area of natural Hertfordshire heathland, each year the club hosts the prestigious 72-hole Berkhamsted Trophy, which kick-starts the Men's elite amateur golf season in the UK.

Previous Berkhamsted Trophy winners include former world #1 Luke Donald, and Masters champion Sandy Lyle, plus a host of European Tour stars and amateur giants such as Peter McEvoy and Gary Wolstenholme.

Berkhamsted's winter 2018-19 irrigation project was a team effort which saw decades of experience brought to bear on the project from the club's own in-house team, plus external irrigation consultants Irritech and sports turf contractors Agripower.

Twenty-seven-year irrigation industry veteran Roger Davey runs Irritech, and

Berkhamsted contacted them in early 2018, when the club was reviewing its irrigation. After meeting the greens committee and Berkhamsted's new Club Manager, Howard Craft, Irritech was selected to appraise the club's existing system. "Berkhamsted needed advice as to what they already had, and what they needed their irrigation system to be capable of, going forwards" said Davey.

"I often ask golf course managers to name their largest piece of machinery" he said. "Most of the time, their answer is some sort of mower or tractor - but I remind them that their irrigation system is actually the biggest



and probably the most expensive piece of kit that they have.”

“If you think of your irrigation system as a single, large, complex machine which spreads over 100 acres, you can begin to understand how important it is.”

Davey conducted an initial appraisal as part of a due diligence process. This highlighted several deficiencies at the club, and Davey was subsequently asked to design and specify a new irrigation system, and to manage the process of putting it out to tender.

By late summer 2018, five firms had tendered. Sportsturf contractors Agripower,

based locally but highly-rated nationally for their drainage, earth moving and pitch construction expertise, submitted the winning tender, and started work at Berkhamsted in November 2018, with Irritech installed as project managers.

Needing approximately 18km of water pipe and around 23km of signal cabling to control the sprinklers, the Berkhamsted project was a typical size for an 18-hole golf course. However, like every site, it also offered unique obstacles for the team to surmount.

As he prepared his team in autumn 2018 to start the job, Agripower director



Overall, our members should see a great improvement in course conditions over the next few seasons



We will certainly save a lot of time in keeping dry areas alive, and there will be less need to hand-weed some parts of the estate owing to better moisture-control

Gary Plummer knew that bunkerless Berkhamsted's unique layout would create its own challenges.

"Berkhamsted is one of the only completely bunker-free golf courses in the UK," he said, "but despite the lack of man-made hazards it is still a very tough test of golf. This is partly due to the high number of mounds to be found on every hole, particularly around the greens. I could see that the abruptness of the slopes would make it difficult, in some cases, to position our machinery where it needed to be."

"There are also a few road crossings to be planned for, when getting from A to B, and

with the top surface prone to breaking up with very dry conditions underneath, after the hot summer, we knew we had to be at the top of our game."

The hot summer last year had left the soil very hard, as at most UK golf clubs. Also, as the club had never had sprinklers on its approaches before, a whole new system had to be designed. The project also hit delays in late January 2019, when severe frosts and snow halted work for ten days. "When there's snow on the ground, you can't see the tees and greens properly to mark out exact sprinkler positions" said Davey. "Plus, moling in the snow and frost is more or less a non-starter."

With visits to the Berkhamsted site approximately every ten days to check on progress, Davey played a hands-on role in assisting the Agripower and Berkhamsted teams. "Although they are not best-known for irrigation work, I found Agripower to be an extremely competent contractor, with everything on hand and very quick to react when the project threw up the occasional unpredictable situation!" he said.





With almost six-hundred sprinkler heads to maintain, rather than the seventy-six we had previously, our workload will be similar to before, albeit with a different emphasis

New irrigation was needed in all parts of the golf course - greens, tees and, starting approximately 15m from the putting surfaces, approaches too.

With just under six-hundred new sprinklers going in, the course was set to see a seven-fold increase on its previous sprinkler count.

"The old system was proving difficult for the club to upkeep," said Plummer. "They weren't covering the approaches, and the

tees weren't irrigated either so it was a very comprehensive renewal."

Set just below turf level for easy mowing, the new Berkhamsted sprinkler system consists of computer-controlled Rainbird 751s and Rainbird 950 Eagles on the greens and approaches, with Rainbird 5004, 8005 and 550 series sprinklers around the tees.

Back-to-back sprinklers were paired with a 200mm gap in between, for the greens and approaches, with tails also watering a

little behind the sprinkler in many cases.

Roger Davey specified where each sprinkler should be placed, and what the bar pressure settings should be.

Additional quick valve coupling brass connections were also supplied at every green, so that club staff can provide additional irrigation or sprayer fill for any emerging hot spots.

The main line pipe installed was Polypipe 90mm HPPE SDR17 10 bar, with a DitchWitch

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RT120 Quad Trak vibrating mole plough doing the main mileage around the course for the pipe to be laid. All other pipe laid was Polypipe 90mm HPPE SDR11 12.5 bar.

For the more detailed work around greens and tees, a Ditch Witch 5700 vibrating mole plough was used.

Kubota mini-diggers (U17/3 1.7tonne and KX71/3 3 tonne) were used for earth moving, and a 3-tonne Terex dumper running on turf tyres was the main workhorse for ferrying duties.

2.5mm Rainbird cabling was used for the electronics to control the sprinklers and the solenoid valves around the tees.

Each sprinkler and solenoid is barcoded, enabling Course Manager Gerald Bruce to identify every individual sprinkler and setting on his golf course.

"The new irrigation system is linked to a weather station," said Bruce, who has been at the golf club for thirty-four years. "It's an intelligent system, so if we have set it to irrigate 4mm of water overnight, and we get 2mm of rainfall, the system only supplies the extra 2mm needed."

"It is a huge upgrade for the club. Having a

computer-controlled water input system, with each component in the system controlled independently, will give us far better moisture control on our greens, which will lead to more consistent putting surfaces. This will help us with our plan to move towards more desirable bent-grass-dominant surfaces over the coming seasons."

"Now that we have extended our irrigation to include the approaches, we are far better-equipped to defend those areas from unwanted dryness, and of course we can also now manage our tees more easily - which makes me confident that they will also look much better as a result of the new irrigation system."

"Golfers should notice a better blend from fairway to approach to putting surface, once the new irrigation system has begun to have an effect."

Back in his office, Bruce can now control the entire irrigation system via two computer screens, and he also has full control via a phone app. "If needs be, I can now independently irrigate any particular dry spots on the golf course from my phone, right down to an individual sprinkler," he

said. "This will save an enormous amount of time, and means that I can also look after the golf course remotely, or even from home."

"The weather station monitors things like temperature, rainfall and evapo-transpiration, which is the rate at which moisture is being removed from the surface. All parts of the system are designed to 'talk' to each other, and my team and I are thoroughly looking forward to having the new system in our armoury this season!"

On the time-saving aspects of the club's new water-management system, Bruce said: "We will certainly save a lot of time in keeping dry areas alive, and there will be less need to hand-weed some parts of the estate owing to better moisture-control, but correspondingly we also expect to be doing more cutting on a regular basis as our grass will be growing better and more consistently."

"Plus, with almost six-hundred sprinkler heads to maintain, rather than the seventy-six we had previously, our workload will be similar to before, albeit with a different emphasis."

"For example, our sixth hole has five



The old system was proving difficult for the club to upkeep. They weren't covering the approaches, and the tees weren't irrigated either so it was a very comprehensive renewal



60th Berkhamsted Trophy underway

All images © Andy Hiseman



Course Manager, Gerald Bruce (left) with Gary Plummer, Director of Agripower



If you think of your irrigation system as a single, large, complex machine which spreads over 100 acres, you can begin to understand how important it is

different tees, each now with six sprinkler heads, so there are thirty sprinklers around that tee alone.”

“Our famous mounds will also receive more moisture via drift, so we expect those to look aesthetically better too!”

“Overall, our members and the many golfers who regularly make the pilgrimage to one of England’s most notable inland golf courses should see a great improvement in course conditions over the next few seasons,

as my team and I harness the full power of our new irrigation system.”

“Our beloved golf course up here on Berkhamsted Common may be entirely natural, and free from man-made hazards, but underneath the soil there is now some extremely powerful 21st-century technology.”

As for working with Agripower and Irritech on the project, Bruce has no doubt that the club picked the right team. “It has been a very good experience, and the quality of the

work has certainly met our expectations” he said. “The attention to detail shown by Gary, Roger and their staff has been excellent throughout, just as you would want it to be.”

“The Berkhamsted team have been amazing throughout this project” said Plummer. “We have all worked well together through the unpredictable winter weather and on a demanding deadline, given the timing of the Berkhamsted Trophy in early April.”



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Lake and pond dynamics

Management techniques for longevity

Successful pond and lake management, especially for recycled waters, begins with a basic understanding of how the three mechanisms that operate in a pond or lake affect its overall condition says **Reg Varney**, international region manager for water quality management specialist, Otterbine



We don't need to remind ourselves of the challenges we face in terms of the volumes and quality of water used, even in areas that we believed were immune from shortages. This means, more often, people are turning towards unconventional resources such as recycled water

Ponds and lakes, whether man made or not, have a natural life cycle. Before people began to impact the environment, this progression took hundreds, even thousands of years. Ponds and lakes now can be created, live, and die within decades. Much of the reason for this lies in the fact that water is one of our most abused and least understood natural resource. We allow our ponds and lakes to be unmanaged and, therefore, they become unmanageable.

We don't need to remind ourselves of the challenges we face in terms of the volumes and quality of water used, even in areas that we believed were immune from shortages. This means, more often, people are turning towards unconventional resources such as recycled water.

Recycled water has the advantage of being located close to the places of use, being available in large quantities throughout the year and rich in useful nutrients. In the case of recycled water, there are large quantities that can be utilised to water plants and crops, such as irrigated agriculture or green spaces, instead of releasing the water back into the environment.

Recycled water is now becoming an essential part of the pond and lake landscape, due to the very nature of the water chemistry, being that it's recycled. Any pond or lake used as a reservoir for this type of water will almost inevitably deteriorate into a eutrophic* condition in a short space of time if not properly and proactively managed.

Successful pond and lake management, especially for recycled waters, begins with a basic understanding of how the three mechanisms that operate in a pond or lake, affect its overall condition.

1. Thermal stratification

Temperature layering, or thermal stratification, occurs when the sun warms the pond surface water causing it to become less dense. As the warming process progresses, the water becomes separated, or stratified into layers. Densities, created by the varying water temperatures, cause this layering to occur. Colder water settles on the pond bottom and the water gradually gets warmer in layers as you get closer to the surface. Because the surface layer remains warm, algae growth thrives and oxygen is not retained as well as in cooler water temperatures.

***Definition of eutrophic**

Eutrophication is when a body of water becomes overly enriched with minerals and nutrients which induce excessive growth of algae and may result in oxygen depletion of the water body



These before and after shots show how canals, ponds and lakes can be transformed with Otterbine aerators.



Organic nutrients containing phosphorous and nitrogen are essential to pond plant life, but you must keep the nutrient level in an ideal balance to avoid severe weed and plant growth

2. Nutrients

Like any living body, ponds accumulate and digest organic matter. Organic nutrients containing phosphorous and nitrogen are essential to pond plant life, but you must keep the nutrient level in an ideal balance to avoid severe weed and plant growth. A pond may become eutrophic, which is too rich in dissolved nutrient, due to run off from nearby turf areas, leeching fertilisers, or from domestic septic systems, leaves, grass clippings or other organic waste blown or dumped into the pond. In addition, the algae and aquatic weeds living in the pond will eventually die and contribute to the nutrient level. As the nutrient levels rise, the rate of plant growth will also increase, initiating the gradual consumption of the pond by organic sludge.



Oxygen is used by the pond to clean itself of excess nutrients through the action of aerobic bacteria. In oxygen depleted ponds, some metals - and the nutrients phosphorous and ammonium (a nitrogen compound) - become increasingly soluble and are released from the pond sediments to recycle through the water

3. Oxygen

The third and final mechanism is oxygen. Oxygen is used by the pond to clean itself of excess nutrients through the action of aerobic bacteria. In oxygen depleted ponds, some metals - and the nutrients phosphorous and ammonium (a nitrogen compound) - become increasingly soluble and are released from the pond sediments to recycle through the water. Mixing events, such as cold fronts with winds and cold rains, can transport some of these released nutrients to the lake surface where they can stimulate increased algae production.

As a pond ages and the nutrient level rises, the amount of algae and aquatic plant life increases. Naturally, these plants will die and sink to the bottom of the pond and begin to decompose. This is referred to as a biomass problem. However, due to thermal stratification, the upper and lower layers of the pond do not mix and therefore the oxygen needed to support pond life does not reach the bottom of the pond. An oxygen depletion problem in the lower layers of the pond is now created and may result in aquatic life problems such as fish kills, leading to foul odours and stagnant water.

Pond problem solving

There are several methods available to help solve some of the problems ponds and lakes are subject to:

Mechanical control can be used to remove algae, aquatic plants and their root systems. This solution is best facilitated in medium to large ponds and would be achieved by dredging, weed harvesting, roto-tilling or



Clean, clear, healthy water gets the wildlife's seal of approval

raking. However, this method is a temporary solution because it treats the symptoms rather than the cause. Also, it is relatively expensive, labour intensive and will need to be repeated as the plants regenerate.

Chemical control is the most common method of pond and lake management. Herbicides are applied to the pond to kill the algae and plants. This method is quick and effective but may, in the process, produce other problems such as fish kills and odours. In addition, chemical control, like mechanical control, treats only the symptoms of the problem, is expensive, often requires permits and may damage surrounding turf and plants if the treated water is used to irrigate other areas.

Biological control is a third method of pond management. One application is the introduction of weed eating fish like koi or grass carp. These fish can be quite effective in keeping excessive weed growth under control. They are inexpensive over the long term and require no labour or upkeep once they are in the water. They are hearty feeders; though, they will consume algae only if their preferred aquatic plants are not available. Plants utilise photosynthesis in the pond to create dissolved oxygen so, if all the aquatic plant growth in the pond and a major source of oxygen is removed, this can result in odour and water quality problems.

A second **biological control** method is the introduction of wetlands at the areas where water or runoff flows into the pond. The wetland area can perform two functions. First, it will slow the progress of water into the pond, reducing erosion and flooding problems. Secondly, the intensive plant

growth in a wetland area acts as a nutrient sink for the high nutrient water flowing into the pond. The plants in the wetland will actually absorb nutrients before they can enter the pond. This can result in a higher water quality due to lower organic nutrient levels, if a balance can be found.

Lake dye can also be effective in improving the appearance of a pond or lake. They work to block penetration of sunlight into the pond, subsequently slowing the growth of aquatic plants and creating a dark blue hue.

Finally, **aeration** is the most effective, long-term pond and lake management tool and should be used in conjunction with any of the aforementioned treatments. If natural aeration isn't working, then mechanical aeration is the option. Aeration, by definition, is the mechanical addition of oxygen to the water. By depositing large amounts of oxygen into the water, aeration encourages strong aerobic bacteria to clean the pond of organic nutrients and waste. High oxygen levels also prevent anaerobic digestion that leads to nutrient cycling and foul odours.

The circulation rate produced by aeration breaks through the thermal stratification and distributes oxygen to all parts of the pond. By pulling cooler water to the surface of the pond, algae growth is slowed and the water's pH level is balanced. This process reduces odours. Aeration is economical, supports the natural ecosystem and, most importantly, attacks the source of the problem continuously. In addition, spray type aerators are aesthetically pleasing to any landscape.

By taking a proactive approach to water quality management, you can help ensure that your water features are clean, functional and aesthetically appealing for many years to come.



Reg Varney, Otterbine international region manager



For more detailed pond and lake management information, contact Otterbine's UK distributor Reesink Turfcare on 01480 226800 or email info@reesinkturfcare.co.uk or visit reesinkturfcare.co.uk

Diamonds in the rough

Grounds for greatness

One of the most recurring topics in our industry is how to attract youngsters into this compelling career. Over in the USA, one golf club has come up with an ingenious idea that may be worthy of consideration here in the UK. **Bryan Bergner**, Superintendent at Westmoor Country Club, explains how he is making a difference in the community



Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. once said, "Life's most persistent and urgent question is, 'What are you doing for others?'" I came across this quotation a few years ago, and it made me ask myself what I was doing for others - in particular, what I was doing for people in my own community in need of a helping hand in life.

The answer, sadly, was not much. So I decided I had to do something to change that. But what?

Months passed, and I struggled to find a cause or an organisation that really moved me to action. I also had a lot of excuses. Then, one night, as I was sitting at the dining room table working on my hiring plan for the

2013 season, my wife (knowing that I sometimes recruit high school students) asked me whether I had ever tried to recruit grounds crew applicants from the city of Milwaukee schools. I had not, for no reason other than it hadn't been done before.

My wife pressed me on that, and she urged me to think more critically about not only my hiring plan but about my role as a superintendent within the larger community. You see, my wife is a lawyer, so her "encouragement" is more like an interrogation, which meant I wasn't able to get up from that table until I had good answers to her questions.

But, sometimes, that's what it takes and, thanks to her "encouragement", the

"Diamonds in the Rough" internship programme at Westmoor Country Club was born.

Connecting with a cause

The concept was simple: Commit several summer positions to high school students who come from disadvantaged circumstances, but who demonstrate an interest in achieving success despite those setbacks. Finding those "diamonds in the rough" was not so simple, however. After developing the idea for the internship programme, I spent weeks (unsuccessfully) canvassing guidance counsellors, writing letters, and trying to make connections that could help me find my first "diamonds in the





Golf course superintendent Bryan Bergner on GCSAA TV discussing how he created and maintains a honey bee habitat on the course

rough.” By this time, it was the end of February, so I was not only discouraged by the lack of progress, but also anxious because I had to finalise my crew.

Just as I was about to give up, I connected with the Operation Dream organisation in Milwaukee. Operation Dream is a non-profit organisation that serves young males ages four to seventeen whose environments put them at particular risk, and for whom similar organisations are out of reach because of poverty and a lack of access to transportation.

Like other mentoring organisations, Operation Dream provides programming designed to build academic, social and leadership skills. Unique to Operation Dream, though, is an initiative called Operation Work, which is a hands-on, incentive-based programme for young men ages eleven to seventeen, in which they learn the basics of work, employment and self-sufficiency. The fact is, many of these young men have never known a man who

works, so the programme helps them develop the “soft skills” so many of us learned simply by growing up around good male role models. High school students in Operation Work are then encouraged to go out and find employment. This, of course, is where the Operation Work programme dovetailed perfectly with my Diamonds in the Rough internship.

The Operation Dream staff prepared the candidates well for their first job interviews. They came ready to impress, with positive attitudes and well-thought-out questions. From those interviews, we hired two young men from the Operation Work programme to join our summer crew - Antwan and Demetrius Powell. The boys started out with little knowledge of the game of golf, let alone what goes into maintaining a high-quality golf course. Although Westmoor CC is only fourteen miles west of downtown Milwaukee, from the perspective of these kids, it may as well have been a different planet.

Part of the team

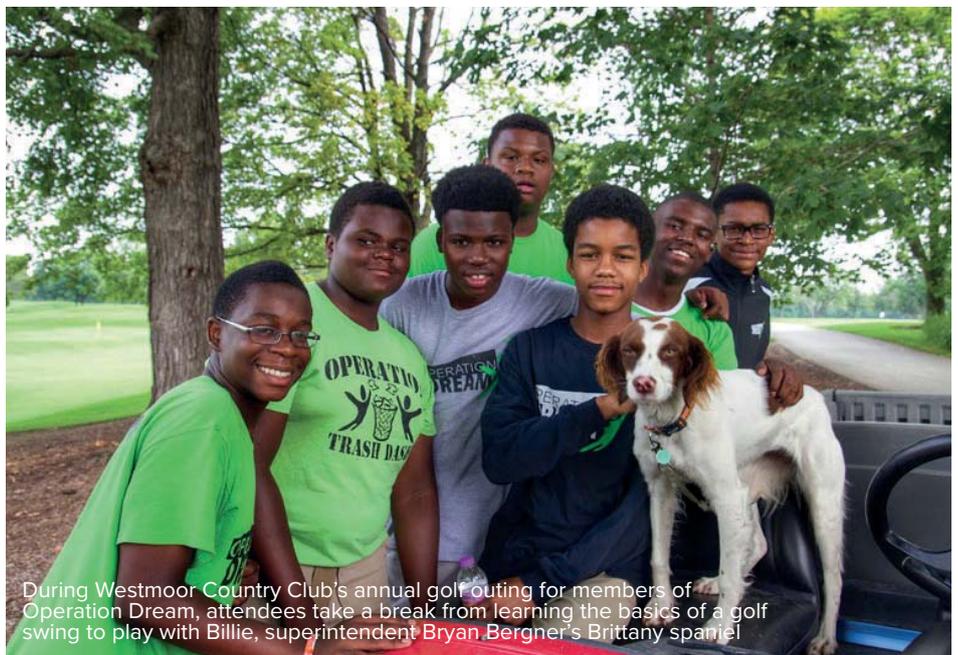
Antwan and Demetrius came eager to learn. They learned how to mow greens and fairways and how to rake bunkers. We also worked on interpersonal skills, such as the importance of a firm handshake and looking people in the eye when talking to them. The boys quickly became integral members of our crew, and that allowed them to develop a sense of importance and responsibility they hadn’t been familiar with.

As the summer progressed, I watched as Antwan and Demetrius grew into confident young men capable of holding their own with the more experienced crew members. I found it particularly refreshing that the boys did not arrive with a sense of entitlement, which is something I have encountered so often over the years with high school and college students. Overall, the internship was an overwhelming success for the boys and for our crew.

Toward the end of the summer, as a way



I found it particularly refreshing that the boys did not arrive with a sense of entitlement, which is something I have encountered so often over the years with high school and college students



During Westmoor Country Club’s annual golf outing for members of Operation Dream, attendees take a break from learning the basics of a golf swing to play with Billie, superintendent Bryan Bergner’s Brittany spaniel



Denzel Segura handles a honeycomb from Westmoor's on-site apiary. Denzel worked at Westmoor CC as part of the Diamonds in the Rough internship programme during the summer of 2014



I understand now that my skills as a golf course superintendent don't just allow me to grow grass and improve the golf course. I can use those same skills, as we all can, to grow better people and improve the community around me

to celebrate the successful season, we hosted a golf outing for twenty of the Operation Dream boys on our five-hole Little Links Course. With my guidance, Antwan and Demetrius prepared a keynote presentation about their summer job experience at Westmoor, which they presented to the Operation Dream boys at the outing. Watching Antwan and Demetrius confidently explain the intricacies of mowing a green and how great it feels to be responsible for an exceptional work product was one of the most gratifying moments of my career.

We have now completed three seasons of our Diamonds in the Rough internship here at Westmoor. Each year brings its own rewards and challenges, along with many opportunities to make a lasting impact in the lives of the boys we employ.

In 2014, we expanded the programme to include involvement in the operation of our honey bee sanctuary. The interns are now

directly engaged with our beekeeping operations, including the maintenance of three beehives on the golf course. We've used beekeeping as a means of building trust and teaching the boys about the importance of honey bees in our ecosystem. It has turned out to be a terrific way to connect the boys, not only with work but also with the environment. We've also introduced the beehives to the other Operation Dream boys who attend our now-annual golf outing. I find it rewarding and fun to watch the boys' eyes light up at this completely new experience as we pass around a honeycomb covered with thousands of buzzing bees.

Six young men have taken part in the Diamonds in the Rough internship programme at Westmoor since 2013. Most made it successfully through the entire programme; a couple of them did not. Regardless of whether they completed the programme, my hope is that all the boys

learned meaningful life lessons that will stay with them. After all, some lessons are harder learned than others but are nevertheless important.

Time to shine

So, where are Antwan and Demetrius now? They both completed high school, after which Antwan joined the U.S. Marine Corps and Demetrius entered a management-training programme at a local car dealership. They have told me that the hard work they invested during their summer at Westmoor helped prepare them for these career opportunities. Both are established role models and mentors for the younger generation at Operation Dream, and I could not be more proud of them. On a side note, Antwan was featured in the "It's Aaron" video series with Green Bay Packers great Aaron Rodgers. I encourage you to watch the video in the Season 2 collection at www.itsaaron.com to check out what Rodgers has to say about Antwan and Operation Dream.

Our interns learn a lot every summer but, in all honesty, I learn more. The boys remind me of the many things I've taken for granted in my own life - things that enabled me to get where I am today. I understand now that my skills as a golf course superintendent don't just allow me to grow grass and improve the golf course. I can use those same skills, as we all can, to grow better people and improve the community around me.

Bryan Bergner is the GCSAA Class A superintendent at Westmoor Country Club in Brookfield, Wis., where he has worked since 2005. He is a 12-year member of GCSAA and lives in Milwaukee with his wife, Danielle, and 6-year-old son, Miles.



Superintendent Bryan Bergner (right) and Diamonds in the Rough alumnus Antwan Powell at the 2014 Operation Dream holiday party

Maintaining sportsturf surfaces

What is your intention?

Maxwell Amenity Senior Technical Manager **James Grundy** encourages the examination of one's own thoughts and perceptions with respect to some fundamental, site specific turf management questions. The answers to which collectively define your decisions and actions when maintaining sports turf surfaces over the year ahead. At its core, this article is about you and how you go about your work in the sports turf sector, regardless of the facility you maintain

At a time of constant change, pressure drivers come to the fore; these are the factors which are driving change in management practices. From engaging with people across the industry, it is clear to see that sports turf management in the 21st Century is not getting any easier for professionals or volunteers facilitating a surface for play. It would surely be hard to disagree that the main pressure drivers are:

Climate Challenge

As a result of measurable, year on year rises in global mean surface temperature, resulting in more unpredictable and

extreme weather conditions, making the management of consistent surfaces difficult. This within a context where there is often an increased need for 'little-and-often' maintenance and increasing play intensity.

Legislative Challenge

Society, and therefore the industry, now operates within an agreed framework for sustainable use of pesticides, as outlined within The Plant Protection Products (Sustainable Use) Regulations 2012 and the UK National Action Plan for the Sustainable Use of Pesticides (Plant Protection Products) 2013. These documents represent an agreed will which requires us to reduce

the risks and impacts of pesticide use on human health and the environment via food and water, and promotes the use of Integrated Pest Management and alternative treatments. Consequently, a suite of the most harmful pesticides available to end users to target weeds, pests and diseases is being withdrawn from use, requiring us to consciously think about and trial alternatives in an attempt to meet existing standards.

Technological Challenge

Advancements in autonomous technology, agronomic instruments, data gathering and interpretation technology over the coming 5-10 years will place increased pressure





It is clear to see that sports turf management in the 21st Century is not getting any easier for professionals or amateurs facilitating a surface for play

Preface

This article is designed to contain exercises which are engaging and challenging. They are not inherently difficult but, as we will see, your personal perceptions and your mindset as you read this introduction and process these words will directly impact on whether you stop reading now, read and then ignore, or read and engage. The first question is:

During a challenging time of change, can you afford to sit still or would you be wise to embrace an open perspective and a positive attitude?

The second question to ask yourself and then honestly contemplate, regardless of your answer to question one is; **why?**

If, even this preface seems too arduous, too time consuming, not relevant, too challenging, then once more the question to ask yourself is; **why?**

Whatever your answers to questions one, two and three, you may choose to disengage at this point, and for excellent reasons. Reasons which may be quantifiably valid: you may be retiring in one weeks' time; you may have the finest sports turf surface conceivable, with no day-to-day challenges to overcome; or you may simply have other priorities which mean the increasing challenges of sports turf management are not at the forefront of your attention.

Whatever your thought process (and there are no right or wrong answers) as you decide what to do now, just be confident that, in your mind, you are precisely 100% comfortable with your decision. ▶

on job roles, and lead to a transition of knowledge and skills required by the people operating in the sector: from skilled manual labour with an emphasis on the practical, to skilled manual labour with an emphasis on agronomic and scientific understanding.

Economic Challenge

Across all sports turf maintenance disciplines, economic challenge comes about as a result of tightening margins, either from reduced income as a result of falling participation or increased expenditure as a result of increasing costs placed on manufacturers and distributors. In either

instance, the effect of contracting margins can be attributed to one of, or a combination of, climate, legislative and technological challenge.

Within the golf greenkeeping sector, the Golf Course 2030 initiative launched by the R&A, in collaboration with many of the key industry bodies involved in greenkeeping, such as BIGGA and golfers in the form of the PGA, is one sport which recognises that looking ahead and being prepared to maintain participation, and therefore economic sustainability in a changing world, is a challenge which would otherwise negatively impact on the ability of sports turf professionals to facilitate a surface for play.

Plotting a Course Forward

Each year, anyone involved in the maintenance and management of a sports turf surface is afforded the opportunity to contemplate and plan how they are going to maintain their surfaces during the growing season ahead.

Table 1: This contemplation is likely to result in one of three main outcomes;

<p>Continuation:</p> <p>Defined as the continuation of an habitual or time proven approach.</p>	<p>Alteration:</p> <p>Defined as the refinement of established practices or the addition of new process into an established system; perhaps to avoid a potential problem later in the year as the result of an Active Substance withdrawal or a drought.</p>	<p>Revolution:</p> <p>Defined as a thorough and distinct change in direction and approach if conditions or results are deemed to be significantly unsustainable.</p>
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As a species, change can often make us uncomfortable, we enjoy the comfort of certainty and routine

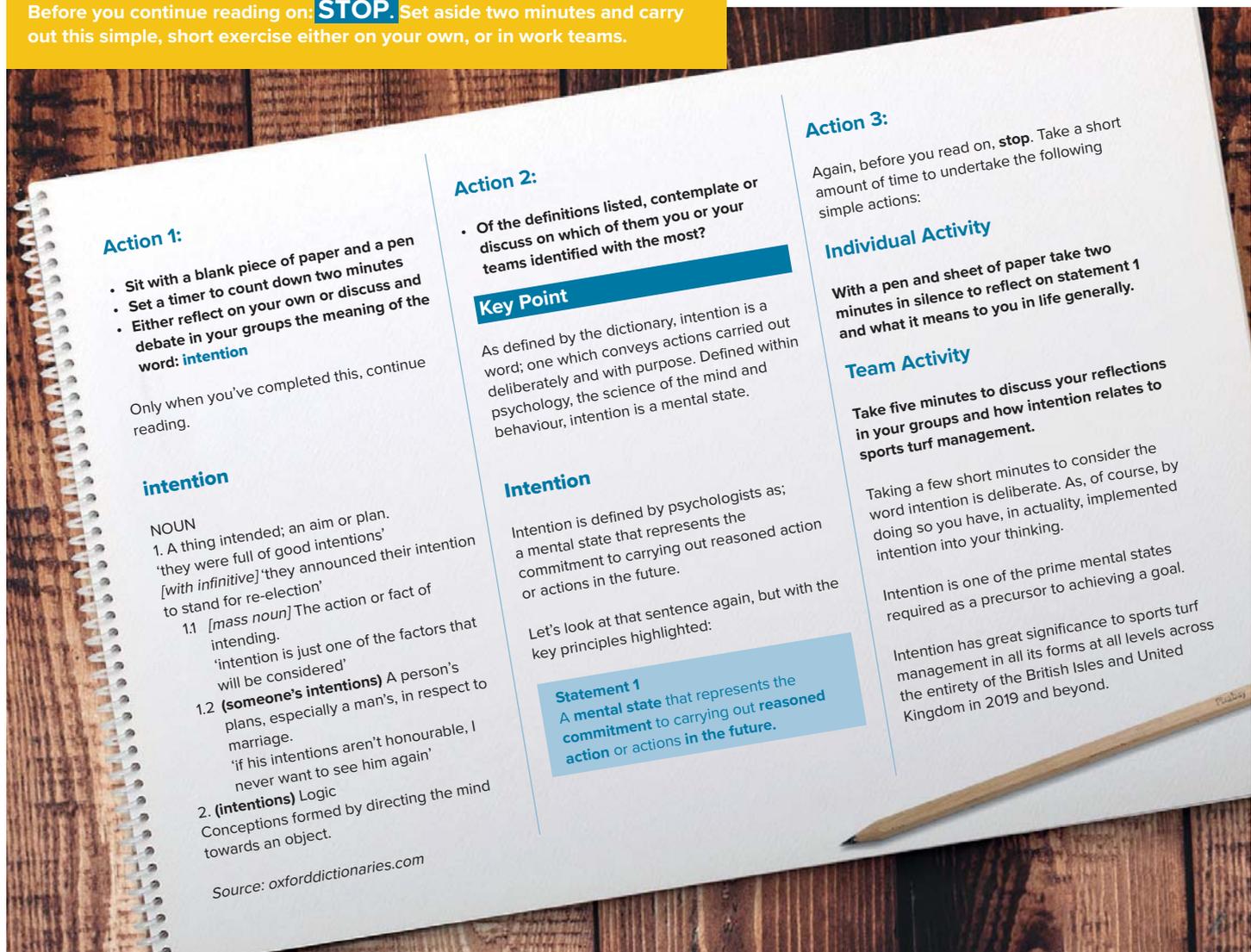
All of the above are equally valid depending on your circumstance and, to some degree, turf managers will be preparing to embark upon various iterations of each of these outcomes to a greater or lesser extent.

There are no correct, across-the-board answers in respect to how, or why, these outcomes are chosen to be implemented, as each facility, and each category of maintenance requirement, has its own

set of distinct circumstances. Circumstances such as climate, soil type, construction type, previous maintenance, financial resources, labour resources, sport type and fixture pressure.

There is one word which should accompany these pre-growing season contemplations, a word which underpins the essence of every well thought out action. That word is intention.

Before you continue reading on: **STOP.** Set aside two minutes and carry out this simple, short exercise either on your own, or in work teams.



Action 1:

- Sit with a blank piece of paper and a pen
- Set a timer to count down two minutes
- Either reflect on your own or discuss and debate in your groups the meaning of the word: **intention**

Only when you've completed this, continue reading.

intention

NOUN

1. A thing intended; an aim or plan. 'they were full of good intentions' [with infinitive] 'they announced their intention to stand for re-election'

1.1 [mass noun] The action or fact of intending.

'intention is just one of the factors that will be considered'

1.2 (someone's intentions) A person's plans, especially a man's, in respect to marriage. 'if his intentions aren't honourable, I never want to see him again'

2. (intentions) Logic
Conceptions formed by directing the mind towards an object.

Source: oxforddictionaries.com

Action 2:

- Of the definitions listed, contemplate or discuss on which of them you or your teams identified with the most?

Key Point

As defined by the dictionary, intention is a word; one which conveys actions carried out deliberately and with purpose. Defined within psychology, the science of the mind and behaviour, intention is a mental state.

Intention

Intention is defined by psychologists as; a mental state that represents the commitment to carrying out reasoned action or actions in the future.

Let's look at that sentence again, but with the key principles highlighted:

Statement 1
A mental state that represents the commitment to carrying out reasoned action or actions in the future.

Action 3:

Again, before you read on, **stop.** Take a short amount of time to undertake the following simple actions:

Individual Activity

With a pen and sheet of paper take two minutes in silence to reflect on statement 1 and what it means to you in life generally.

Team Activity

Take five minutes to discuss your reflections in your groups and how intention relates to sports turf management.

Taking a few short minutes to consider the word intention is deliberate. As, of course, by doing so you have, in actuality, implemented intention into your thinking.

Intention is one of the prime mental states required as a precursor to achieving a goal.

Intention has great significance to sports turf management in all its forms at all levels across the entirety of the British Isles and United Kingdom in 2019 and beyond.

A Turf Management Goal Necessitating

Reasoned action

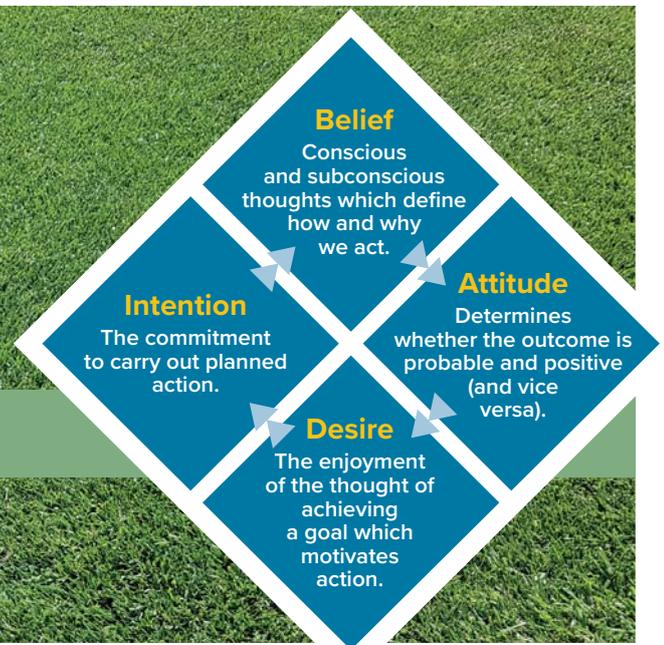


Figure 1

Reasoned action

The Theory of Reasoned Action is a psychological theory (TRA) which sets out to describe how an individual's behaviour is determined by their underlying basic motivation to perform an action (Fishbein & Ajzen 1969).

Within the Theory of Reasoned Action, intention is the mindset required in advance of undertaking a task. Intention itself comes from a belief that performing an action will lead to a specific outcome.

When physically manifested by our actions, the intention to perform a task from a point of belief is categorised as behavioural intention, and behavioural intention is determined by a number of factors. Primarily, those factors include an individual's attitude to a behaviour and their subjective norms.

Subjective norms can be summed up as; an individual's perception of other people's attitudes and behaviours which then impact how they implement reasoned action. For example, everyone around me thinks 'activity x' is acceptable, so I'll participate; everyone around me thinks 'activity x' is not acceptable, so I will not participate.

The key word when considering the meaning of subjective norms is **perception**. As individuals, we like to tell ourselves we act with **free will** as we go about our daily lives, however, as a species, the truth is subtly different: **we often perceive the world around us, not from the point of reality but from the point of how our brains interpret and then process external stimuli.**

The paragraph above perhaps bears reading a couple of times over. It should become clear how a combination of belief and perception feeding back on itself has the potential to reinforce the conviction of one's reasoned action.

As a consequence, the way in which we combine our perception of things around us (subjective norms), with our beliefs, is the driving force determining the specific course of our reasoned action to any given goal.

The final core ingredient which determines the success rate for an individual's intention to perform a reasoned action is attitude. Attitudes to an action or behaviour takes one of three forms;

- ▶ Positive
- ▶ Negative
- ▶ Neutral

It should come as little surprise to anyone that there exists a direct correlation between attitude and outcomes.

- If an individual's belief informs them there is **positive effect** to be gained from a behaviour, the intention and reasoned action is more likely to be implemented and achieved
- If an individual's belief informs them there is **negative effect** to be gained from a behaviour, the intention and reasoned action is less likely to be implemented and achieved.

This link between attitude and belief stands to reason. If you believe something is to your advantage, you will be openly motivated to give it a try. If you believe something is to your detriment, you are more inclined to close off and avoid it.



The theory of reasoned action is a deep and rich topic which this article will not attempt to explain fully. However, the core principle is as stated

A word on cognition

A reasoned action and the mental state of intention is a precursor to cognitive behaviour.

Cognitive behaviour or cognition is the actualisation of the practical components arising from the mental state of intention and motivation. Put simply, you may decide to do something, and you may have the motivation; but do you have the cognitive ability to comprehend, to judge, to evaluate, to plan, to implement what it is you are motivated to achieve? If the answer is no, then what is the solution?

The solution or responsibility is to actively engage in acquiring the knowledge and understanding required.

Relating to sportsturf management

As discussed, when undertaking the pursuit of a goal, e.g. maintaining a sports turf surface, purchasing a piece of machinery or combatting a fungal pathogen, the interrelationship between the mental states of intention, desire and belief combine to determine a) how you go about it, or b) your chance of success as illustrated in the graphic above.

Put simply, **reasoned action is required to accomplish the achievement of a goal.** The manner in which one goes about achieving that goal and the **chances of success** are determined by a combination of the mindsets of **belief, attitude, desire and intention.** The obvious next step which follows from that understanding is an answer to the question:

"once I have identified what it is I need to achieve (e.g. reduced reliance on fungicides, control of an insect pest), what are the practical steps required to undertake and implement that action?" ▶

Activity:

Consider which of the listed activities arising from the headings (Action, Time, Context, Target) you may employ, and then take a moment to **stop**.

- Take 5 minutes, either on your own or in groups, to think if there are other areas of turf management not listed, where you could apply a similar process.

Action

I need to maintain a sports turf surface to facilitate play.

(Cricket ground, golf course, rugby pitch, bowls green, racecourse, football pitch, etc.)

Time

When?

- a. By the time an Active Substance is withdrawn
- b. To maintain plant health and presentation after a renovation
- c. Create an Integrated Pest Management Plan in time for the growing season which has to be reviewed at the end of the year

Practical steps leading to Reasoned Action

Target

What is my objective or intended outcome?

- a. Control disease
- b. Feed the plant
- c. Undertake IPM

Context

By doing what?

- a. Reducing chemicals
- b. Providing adequate nutrition
- c. Create an Integrated Pest Management plan to communicate and follow

Figure 2

The key questions

These preceding exercises are designed to prepare you for the key questions. These are the questions which are at the very heart of an individual, a team or an organisation, with the intention of taking

reasoned action to meet new challenges and attain high quality professional standards.

Table 2: Process and intention of the key questions

Process	Intention	
	Step	Question
A. Contemplation	1	What goal am I intending to achieve?
	2	Why am I intending to achieve it?
	3	How am I intending to achieve it?
B. Understanding	1	What specific factor or mechanism is achieving my aim?
	2	How is it achieving it?
C. Evaluation	1	How do I measure the results?
	2	How do I evaluate and improve?

If, once the processes and questions in Table 2 have been answered satisfactorily, for any given situation, whether that situation be philosophical: "why do I come to work?" or the practical "how can I reduce my fertiliser inputs?", they can be transferred into reasoned action with the confidence that you are taking a clearly defined course towards achieving your goals.

One final thought to reflect upon, when assessing the value of the key questions and the importance of undertaking reasoned action, is this:

Don't do anything unless you can answer the key questions because, if you can't answer confidently, how do you not know you are doing harm?

FANTASTIC 4

Four Key Principles

The preceding two thousand words may well be a little impractical to recall on a day-to-day basis, so here are four key principles that might stand you in good stead:

1

Never be afraid to let it be known you do not know something, whilst in the process of actively pursuing and identifying what the goals actually are.

2

Ask open-minded questions of yourself and others, in a bid to seek answers from sources you have rigorously determined to be credible.

3

Formulate and record a plan then implement reasoned action with clear considered intent, before evaluating the outcomes.

4

Relentlessly and habitually repeat 1 through 3

Adhere to the above in enough areas, such as fertiliser programmes, wetting agent programmes, renovation programmes, pest and disease management programmes

and ecology programmes. Then integrate them into one document where they each inform one another's content and you will be left with? ...

... a best practice, **INTEGRATED MANAGEMENT PLAN**

Closing Thoughts

If all of the above you have just read seems broadly reasonable and agreeable, whilst simultaneously confusing, confounding, or even overwhelming. The truth of how to go about actually achieving it all, is an answer so staggeringly simple we often allow our brain to talk ourselves out of it. So with our thoughts towards the Four Key Principles...

Just make a start. Be consistent and the rest will happen almost by accident.

As a species, change can often make us uncomfortable, we enjoy the comfort of certainty and routine. Change, particularly change which feels fast paced, can be paralysing. We second guess outcomes; how do we know which direction to move in? Will it be the correct decision? Will something else then change? However, we forget that, both from a philosophical and practical point of view, if there was one fundamental truth or law of existence, it is this.

Change is inevitable, universal and necessary for every facet of our existence. Taken back to the ultimate extreme; without those first infinitesimally minute changes, in the nanoseconds after the big bang, which created this universe, there is nothing. Nature is change.

Of course, that fact does not necessarily make the experience of change feel any more comfortable in practice as we go about experiencing it in our lives. How we experience change is of course like anything, a matter of perception. Which leads to this thought;

When we feel change as challenge and discomfort it reminds us we are in that moment presented with an opportunity to grow and improve; at life. Surely that is the purpose of a skilful existence?

Embracing that fact and engaging with that challenge requires us to slow down, slowing down to take time.

Doing so is not failure, it is a necessary truth.

Slowing down does not mean stopping, we can still maintain momentum, it is just that deliberately slowing down and taking time to think, to plan, to learn, to engage with the unknown, are all cognitive processes required when faced with a challenge or a bend in the road. It simply means evaluating a necessary change in direction, to give ourselves opportunity to avoid the hedgerow. ■



Frank Newberry

Grounds Training Tutor **Frank Newberry** reports on the shift away from training seminars for individuals - to 'triple C' workshops - where the aim is to cultivate a commitment to continuous improvement - in the whole team or the entire department

The Triple C

Time was when most of my days were spent running seminars on specific subjects, like 'Negotiating Skills', 'Presenting to Committees', even 'Report Writing'. The employer was essentially paying for individual employees to be skilled up. There was a hope that, after the training, individuals would remain loyal and the employer would reap the benefits of their training investment for years to come.

There was also a healthy demand for career-related topics like 'Perfecting Your CV', 'Doing Well at Interviews' and 'Networking to get a Better Job'. These seminars are still being supplied every year by membership associations. This training will, of course, give trainees the confidence to get a job elsewhere, i.e. be disloyal!

Whilst the demand for all these topics still exists in the turfcare sector, the bigger training providers (certainly the membership organisations) now want the training to be offered in much smaller packages.

Providers are under pressure to put more 'bums on seats' and so a number of previously two-day events have been shortened to one-day events. One day events have become two hour events, and some two hour events are down to thirty minutes. Of course, not a lot of skills can be developed in two hours!

Enlightened employers are investing in training whole teams

By contrast, enlightened employers these days are investing in training whole teams or entire departments in order to improve work performance. Thankfully, they are happy to hire someone like me to work on their premises for a day at a time focusing on topics like 'excellence at work'.

The training needs that employers want people like me to address include:

- morale problems
- high staff turnover
- communication problems
- underperforming work teams

These training needs seem to become more critical when:

- a new manager or owner has taken over
- the work team has been rationalised
- the work team has been re-organised
- there is unresolved conflict within or between work teams

Members of the workforce have stunned their employers

In my experience, it has always been possible to 'triple C' work teams, i.e. 'cultivate a commitment to continuously' improve performance and morale.

In my opinion, this is mainly achieved by involving individuals and teams as much as possible in the diagnosis and treatment of the problems that beset the work team, and perhaps the whole organisation.

I have found that, time and time again, members of the workforce have stunned their employers with their loyalty and desire to do a good job. Most team members want to go home having done a good day's work in a positive workplace atmosphere.

Sadly, many employers do not see these qualities in their employees or believe that the qualities they value are only possessed by a minority of their employees.

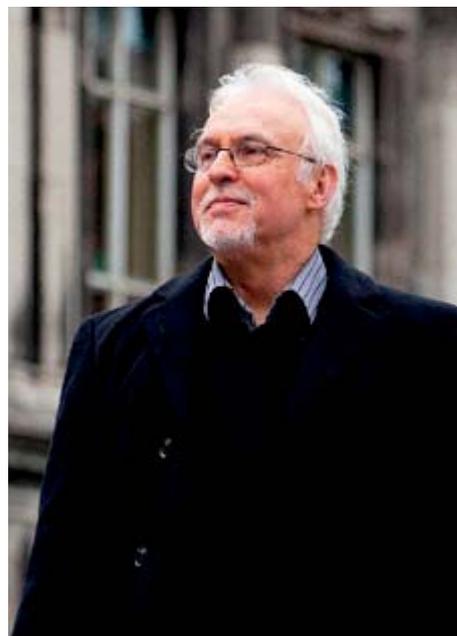
People want to do work that is meaningful to them

In reality, I have found it is the vast majority of staff who want to be a part of an organisation whose values they share and who want to do better in their job. I have tested and seen the results myself - people want to do work that is meaningful to them.

Research has shown 'meaningful work' to be one of the most powerful intrinsic motivators in the workplace.

Learning to be better at a job, or to be asked to adopt 'best practice' at work (as long as it is achievable), is another powerful incentive for the individual.

Whether we ask people to come up with their own ideas for improvements, or whether we just instruct people to do things differently the key is employee involvement.



Without involvement, there is no commitment

Dr Stephen R Covey, author of the book 'The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People' (25 million copies sold), famously said: "Without involvement, there is no commitment. Mark it down, asterisk it, circle it, underline it. No involvement, no commitment".

If people feel involved, they will take ownership and responsibility for solving problems or improving performance. If they are just told what to do, we risk them thinking that improving things is not part of their job or their personal responsibility. We send the message to employees that we are not interested in their ideas or their solutions.

As a consequence, their commitment and desire to see things through could be diminished.

So, good luck in your search for best practice and may you soon achieve excellence at your workplace!

If you would like to know more about how to arrange an 'Excellence at Work' event at your place of work, just get in touch by visiting: www.franknewberry.com

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HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Why we should listen to trees

When life gets too much, most of us try to get away from it all. Some might head to the pub, play football or knit a jumper. But if you really want to take a break and restore, a dose of nature might be the best tonic - spending time in natural environments has been shown to boost physical and mental health

Even just listening to the sounds of nature could help us to relax, an idea being explored in a new experiment launched by Radio 4 as a study accompanying a new nine-part futuristic eco-drama called Forest 404.

Alex Smalley, a PhD researcher working on the Forest 404 experiment, gives his top tips on how to make the most of the stress-busting benefits of nature, no matter how much time you do, or think you don't have...

1. Dive in

If you're lucky enough to live near the countryside or coast, there's nothing like getting out for a walk, cycle, run or swim. These kinds of natural environments can promote physical activity; so-called 'green exercise' has been shown to improve people's self-esteem and mood. But, contact with nature can happen in many other ways too, and spending time in your garden or local park can be just as good. These natural spaces can reduce stress and anxiety, help us sleep better, and boost pro-social behaviours.

2. Go green

In Japan, the practice of shinrin yoku - literally, 'forest bathing' - makes a good case for taking a walk through your local woodland. Researchers



there have found that, spending time just taking in the forest atmosphere can lower the stress hormone cortisol, decrease blood pressure and calm pulse rates. In the UK, studies have shown that urban parks and gardens can provide long-lasting impacts on mental health; and that larger areas of green space could act as a buffer against stressful events.

3. Is blue best?

Medics were prescribing convalescence by the sea as far back as the 18th century. But, it's only been in the last decade that evidence for a 'blue health' effect has emerged, with studies showing that people who live close to the coast tend to have better health and higher life satisfaction than those who reside inland. Data suggests that people in the UK tend to be happiest when they are by the coast, and research has directly pitted green spaces (like the countryside) against rivers, lakes and the ocean.

4. Bring the outside in

Many of us don't have access to a natural environment, or might have difficulty getting outside for other reasons. Fortunately, quite a bit of evidence suggests that simply having a view of nature, whether real or digital, can deliver similar benefits. One seminal study from the 1980s found that patients could recover from surgery more quickly if their window provided views of nature, and researchers have used pictures and videos of natural settings to

demonstrate a range of other positive effects, from improved mood to an enhanced ability to complete complex tasks.

Getting out to your local aquarium has also been shown to boost wellbeing, and watching nature programmes such as Planet Earth can elicit feelings of joy while reducing negative feelings like tiredness. So if you can't get out, bring the outside in!

5. Listen up!

Much of the research into the effects of the natural environment on health and wellbeing has focused on vision. Yet interactions with nature are multi-sensory, with sound, smell and touch playing a vital role in our experience, particularly for people with visual impairments. Listening to birds singing, rivers flowing, or waves lapping can help people relax and restore, and the myriad videos of these soundscapes on YouTube demonstrate their potential power.

6. Awesome experiences

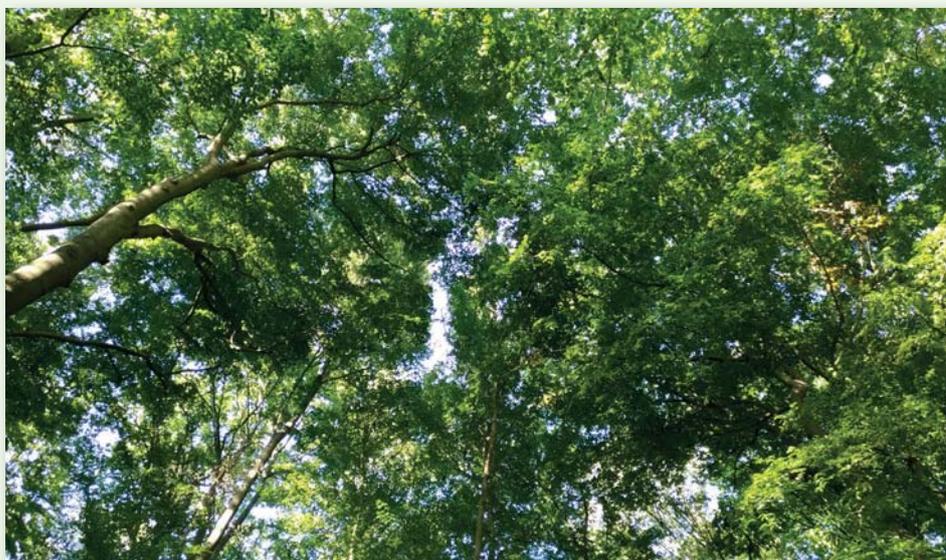
A new area of research has started to suggest that awe-inspiring experiences can improve mood and, excitingly, make us less selfish. Nature is great at producing awe; watching a pod of orcas breaching; standing beneath a canopy of giant trees; or observing the view from a mountain top can all create a sense of wonder and amazement. By making us feel small and part of something greater than ourselves, these awesome experiences might just make us more altruistic and willing to help others.

7. The new cigarette break?

Cigarette smoking used to be a common reason for regular breaks away from work or social situations, with people often heading outside. As smoking continues its decline (currently down to 15% of adults in the UK), these breaks could be replaced with short doses of nature. Making time for regular pauses by taking a walk outside, watching a quick nature video, or listening to a two-minute soundscape, could help us to manage the strains of a busy work life. Meditation is also becoming a popular technique for dealing with stress, and newly-released research suggests that combining mindfulness with nature encounters could deliver even greater benefits.

There's still a lot we don't know about how nature could benefit health and wellbeing, and we need to remember that spending time in natural environments can also present risks. Nonetheless, the next time you're frustrated, stressed or anxious, try taking a dose of nature - it might just help you feel better.

Article by bbc.co.uk



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WHAT MATTERS MOST?

The Value of Sharing Information

Andy Brown of The Toro Company explores how teamwork and communication within your core management team can improve the player experience and course operations. This article is the first in a series provided by The Toro Company on “What Matters Most” for golf courses and the success of their day-to-day operations



Image by rawpixel from Pixabay

It's sometimes easy to forget, but a golf course is a business - and, like any business, its success depends on customers who keep coming back. Proactive communication with members on what's happening on the course is key in keeping them happy.

To achieve such a level of proactive communication requires effective teamwork and, as a management team, that's exactly what the course greenkeeper, general manager and director of golf/PGA professional must do. Together, you form a “triangle” of communication, with each member playing a critical role in the overall success of the operation.

Why Communication Matters

First and foremost, you need to present a united message to your players and members when course conditions or maintenance may potentially affect their experience. It's important to explain clearly what's happening, and why, before they experience it for themselves. This will help you manage their expectations, reduce complaints and, ultimately, maintain their satisfaction.

In addition, by educating on what is happening and why on your course, each member of the management team will build a stronger knowledge base. The more you know, the more empowered you will be to take on new responsibilities and take part in course management decisions if your role changes in the future.

Keys to Staying Informed

As a management team, you're all working toward the same goal: the ongoing success of the course. It only makes sense to work together, and here are a few tips to do that effectively:

- Practice active listening. Ask open-ended questions (who, what, why, when, where and how) and summarise the information back to make sure you've understood correctly
- Keep communication open. Each member of the team should feel free to ask questions, share ideas and discuss the options without fear of criticism
- Have a sense of humour. Being able to keep things in perspective can help you stay

positive in the face of changes and challenges

- Meet regularly. Set aside time to get together and keep each other up to date

Making Your Case

When it comes to player satisfaction, what you say and how you say it makes a big difference. Be proactive, anticipate player questions, and prepare with your team in advance. You need to be able to explain what is happening on the course, why/where/when it's happening, and what that means for players.

- Think benefits: How will it make the experience better for members and players, both in the short and long term?
- Quantify Actions: Beyond listing benefits, explain how it addresses players' concerns. If you can quantify it or give examples, even better
- Practice: Run through your message a few times as a team. Make sure you agree on key points and feel confident about it

More to Explore

Communication and teamwork are certainly key to day-to-day operations, but there's a lot more to explore. Watch future issues for more coverage on “What Matters Most” to golf courses, including topics such as:

- The importance of aeration for turf health and playability
- Fleet management - what to consider in your equipment investment
- Course setup - balancing presentation and playability with budget
- How an efficient and well-managed irrigation system can improve course condition and playability.

Andy Brown is Senior Sales Manager, Commercial Equipment, Golf Irrigation and Corporate Accounts, EMEA, at The Toro Company. Special thanks to Keith Jaynes for information about communication and teamwork.

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When it comes to player satisfaction, what you say and how you say it makes a big difference. Be proactive, anticipate player questions, and prepare with your team in advance. You need to be able to explain what is happening on the course, why/where/when it's happening, and what that means for players



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CLIMATE CHANGE

Tackling the big climate change challenge

Climate change is proving a challenge for David Liddiard, Head Groundsman at Marlborough College, but new machinery is helping his team keep on top of presentation at this famous educational establishment

The past year has been one of the most challenging David Liddiard can remember in his twenty-five years in managing sports fields. In a matter of weeks, he went from trying to prepare cricket pitches in the teeth of the 'beast from the east' to worrying that rock-hard rugby pitches would inflict broken collar bones.

When visited at his domain at Marlborough College this January, he and his team of six were all busy trying to clear snow and ice from a hockey pitch ahead of a crucial fixture.

Situated on the edge of the elegant Wiltshire town, Marlborough College is one of Britain's most famous independent boarding and day schools. Established in 1943 and fully co-educational since 1989, it has counted Catherine, Duchess of Cambridge amongst its former pupils. Others have included singer and songwriter Chris de Burgh, First World War poet Siegfried Sassoon, actor Wilfrid Hyde-White, sailor extraordinaire Sir Francis Chichester and Poet Laureate Sir John Betjeman.

David Liddiard came to the college ten years ago as a cricket pitch specialist, moving into the lead role when former Head Groundsman Chris Clarke eased towards his well-earned retirement. David had worked previously for Somerset County Cricket Club along with other cricket and football clubs. The opportunity to work in a school with a great pedigree and in a town ideal to bring up his young family was a strong draw.

The site is a big one that straddles the A4. The 20-hectares looked after by the grounds team accommodates twelve rugby pitches that convert through the year to football, lacrosse and cricket outfield. There are also five cricket squares, twelve artificial cricket wickets, two artificial hockey pitches, an artificial running track and eleven hard-surfaced tennis courts. On top of that, there is picturesque parkland surrounds that include woodland, River Kennet frontage and two fishing lakes.

It adds up to a fascinating mixed bag for David, deputy Luke Flippance and their team. But, for all the beauty of the place, David recognises that there is also a growing challenge from the weather. "In my working career, I have seen the weather patterns change considerably," he says. "What we have now are much slower cycles that last maybe eight weeks at a time. Last year, we had two long hits - a very wet spring and then a long hot summer."

"That has made the job much more difficult because you are continually trying to second-guess the weather, which is often at extremes.



David Liddiard

Surfaces were affected by snow and heavy rain in the spring and then we had a lot of damage to our cricket outfield from the intense heat and dryness."

He adds: "Going forward, I think how we handle climate change will dominate the profession. We have to improve turf and make it more hardy and better able to survive hot, dry conditions in summer and cold, wet conditions in winter. We also have to look at how we best use the playing fields, tempering our use when conditions are bad and introducing more artificial surfaces where we can. We also have to cope with reduced water and chemicals."

David has been working on a sustainability plan to put all that into practice. In the meantime, he recognises the value from making the right decisions about grounds maintenance machinery.

On a big site with sometimes mountainous terrain and rough tracks, one of the fundamentals is to move people, tools and materials quickly. The college has, in recent months, replaced most of its fleet of Kubota RTVs and now has four two-seaters, of which three are diesel-powered and the other petrol.

"We have used the Kubota RTVs before," says David. "We looked at all the competition once again, and decided the Kubotas were still the best in the field. We took advice from other people and looked at reviews, and pretty much everyone seemed to agree. It's down to the size, the reliability and the functionality - we can attach anything from salt spreaders through to sprayers."

"We had an off-road training course a few weeks ago and the instructor (who has been doing it for many years) was blown away by what our RTVs can do. They are the backbone of both the grounds and garden departments here."

On the grass cutting front, David recognised the need not just to replace their old three-unit machine but to upgrade its capabilities. "We were struggling to keep up with grass cutting in spring and autumn," he says. "We had several demonstrated, and the Baroness LM2700 was the stand-out. We got it at the back end of the summer and it was fantastic - the operator wouldn't get off it!"

"We like the fact that it's user-friendly, easy to maintain and rugged, but with a fantastic finish. The cylinders are undoubtedly the best on the market - I know people who have had them three years and never needed a re-grind because the metal is so hard. That is important on a busy site because, if a machine is down, it creates quite a pressure."

He adds: "It has been a real game-changer because the speed at which it works and the width of the cut means that the work is probably done in around 40% less time, which gives us more man hours for other work."

David is also enthusiastic about the support he receives from Lister Wilder, describing Area Sales Manager Toby Bennett as an "incredibly helpful source of invaluable and honest advice" and backed by a service and parts team which "I can't fault".



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Machinery and Supplies

Product Update

A round-up of the latest product news announced in recent weeks



The EVO 165 combines a wealth of new features, together with some of GreenMech's proven innovations which have seen their chippers become the preferred choice with many industry professionals.

Its wide infeed chute, together with twin horizontal rollers and 'No-Stress' control system mean the Evo 165 efficiently grips timber and brush and controls its lateral movement to provide maximum bite and unparalleled processing power via its new, heavy-duty flywheel and re-flowed exit chute.

Optimised outputs from a diesel or petrol engine option provide usable power that matches budget with operational needs, alongside maximum fuel efficiency and compliance with Stage V Emission requirements. The EVO is the quietest machine GreenMech have produced to date, beneficial for both operators and neighbours alike.

Together with improved performance, the aspects of safety, durability and ease of maintenance have also come under the spotlight. GreenMech have fitted the Evo with a new safety bar system to minimise nuisance tripping, whilst offering a better inflow of material. The Evo's durability has been increased with the adoption of a one-piece fabricated chassis that provides greater strength in even the most demanding of operational conditions. Meanwhile, GreenMech's patented Disc Blade system continues to provide in excess of 900 chipping hours before replacement.

www.greenmech.co.uk



The new Turf Pest Tracker will follow the timing and movement of the adult life cycle stages of key turf pests this summer, to get a better picture of when and where the pests are flying.

The GreenCast website enables all turf managers and agronomists to report activity of the main chafer species and crane fly, using their phone, tablet or computer. Sightings are instantly recorded on maps, giving the chance to visually check out the level of pest presence reported in any local area.

Turf Pest Tracker is supported by an on-line pest identification and lifecycle guide, along with information to tailor an effective Integrated Pest Management programme.

Chafer grubs and leatherjacket soil pests can result in severe damage to turf roots and surface quality, along with extensive damage from their predators uprooting turf.

Live tracking of adult pest activity will give a valuable early warning of potential soil pest activity and where problems may strike.

Turf Pest Tracker is available to report and view insect activity on the GreenCast website. Updates and information will be regularly shared on Twitter: @syngentaturfuk #PestTracker

www.greencast.co.uk

Corvus is a new name in 4x4 off-road utility vehicles and one to look out for when its UTVs arrive on our shores. Europe's first manufacturer of 4x4 Side by Side vehicles has the strongest pedigree and states an aim to offer technologically superior and highly capable, pioneering vehicles.

A new British company, BOSS ORV, has been formed to introduce, distribute and support the Corvus brand in the UK. BOSS will officially launch three models at the outset: TerrainDX4 EPS, TerrainDX4 PRO EPS and TerrainDX4 CAB EPS.

The Corvus main construction facility is in Murcia, Spain with an area of 25,000m² dedicated to manufacturing and assembling, using their own parts and components: gearbox, transmission, chassis and technology systems.

The company is part of the Tuxton/Yanmar group, so it's a natural fit to marry up the normally aspirated, inline 3-cylinder 993cc Yanmar diesel engine which gives excellent fuel efficiency and range. The engine is Euro 6 compliant, which puts it right at the forefront of the market, leading the Corvus programme of designing systems for reducing emission levels.

All the above mentioned Terrain models are homologated to T1b tractor regulation and have a top speed of 40mph/65kph.

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Bayer has brought a new residual pre-emergence herbicide to the UK market, adding another product to the amenity contractor's armoury.

Valdor® Flex (MAPP:19033) contains a unique new formulation. The pre-emergence herbicide contains two active ingredients that prevent the emergence of a broad spectrum of weeds for up to four months, reducing the frequency of traditional herbicide applications.

The product provides excellent residual control for even the hardest to manage weeds on a wide range of surfaces, including open soil, gravel and industrial areas.

Valdor® Flex can be used as a stand-alone application on bare ground before weed emergence. But, if weeds are present, it can be mixed with glyphosate, which provides the initial knockdown, whilst Valdor® Flex will provide residual control preventing subsequent weeds emerging for up to four months

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Reesink Turfcare has secured the UK distribution rights for Core Solutions, a core collecting blade attachment from US-based Nordic Plow.

Designed for both golf courses and sports surfaces, this product fits perfectly onto all brands and models of aeration equipment and bunker rakes to deliver an efficient and cost-effective way to remove cores from the playing surface in minutes.

The blade attachment has been developed to take into account the fact that aerating with the grain of the green or side to side reduces stress to the turf and results in a flawless scrape.

Further advantages include the removable

sleeve which removes cores on severely undulated greens without the need for tools and the adjustable scraper edge which can free float or lock into position.

The brushes mean, if you topdress first, the cores can still be removed if the turf is wet and there's no issue with small tine clear up. Despite them having less structure and more sand, which normally results in a difficult and time-consuming clean-up, Core Solutions handles this with ease.

It also creates tall piles of plugs with little spillage and has the added benefit of brushing sand deeper into the holes as it goes.

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OFFSIDE

The not so serious side
of the industry

A cock and ball story

A difficult topic to report, this one, but it appears that parks in Melbourne, Australia have a very specific problem that can only be seen from space. They've all got giant (ahem) todgers drawn on them.

Three separate parks in the northeast of the city have been adorned with phallic glyphs



that can be seen on Google Maps.

Reddit user u/adrianmtb was the first to report the mysterious symbols before it was quickly picked up by local media. The giant phalli have been compared to Peru's famous Nazca Lines - ancient symbols that can only be appreciated from space. It was said that they were drawn to please the gods looking down on the Earth.

Quite what any god would make of these efforts though, I am not sure. Perhaps she would like to enlighten us?

Fricken hell!

A Florida man is facing losing his home after racking up fines of almost \$30,000 for letting his grass grow too long!

Jim Fricken has been fined \$500 a day in code violations, for nearly 60 days, by the city of Dunedin, for tall grass when his lawn grew taller than 10-inches last summer. The city is now foreclosing on his home.

The problems first began in 2015, when his mother fell ill and he began making trips to South Carolina. He enlisted the help of a local man to keep the lawn maintained during this time, but he died unexpectedly.



The city of Dunedin is now pursuing Fricken for a fine total of \$29,833 on his home, which has a market value of \$125,541.

Coming to a care home near you?

Clock Cricket has been created by Richard Hill, the England and Wales Cricket Board's (ECB) Disability Cricket Support Officer. The goal is to encourage the less able or active to take up a physical activity or try something new.



Its ingenuity lies partly in that Clock Cricket is a simple format played indoors with a foam bat and a sponge ball that has a metal rattle in so it can be tracked by those hard of hearing.

Richard said, "There is a bit of naughtiness to it. As a child, you are told not to play ball games indoors. But Clock Cricket is designed to be played inside and you get the ball being hit off the ceiling, off the walls, off the furniture and, quite often, off each other. But, because it's made of sponge, no-one gets hurt and everyone has a laugh."

The game is being trialed, to rave reviews from residents in North Herts and Yorkshire.



Divine intervention?

The Premier Soccer League (PSL) is the national sports association responsible for administering the two professional football divisions in South Africa; the South African Premier Division and National First Division.

But relegation from one to the other is a costly business. Just ask Free State Stars, who have confirmed an exodus of staff - from the head coach Nikola Kavazović to their groundsman - in an effort to make ends meet next season.

All but five players have also been given the 'boot', but even they are attracting interest from Premier Division sides.

The club play at the 35,000 capacity Charles Mopeli Stadium not far from Bethlehem. Perhaps some divine intervention is required?



Silverstone sink hole

Silverstone Golf Club's Deputy Head Greenkeeper, Lorraine Sands, had a lucky escape when a sink hole opened up whilst she was mowing on a Jacobsen 5111.

"We've been over this hundreds of times, then suddenly, down she goes," commented Course Manager Tony Hunter.

The incident, posted on Facebook, received its usual share of comments, including; "women drivers eh!" and "we had a 5111 which would have been better for all if it had sunk without trace!"

DIARY DATES

JULY

1st-14th: Tennis - Wimbledon (wimbledon.com)

3rd: Cricket - World Cup, England v New Zealand, Chester-le-Street (cricketworldcup.com)

7th: Football - Women's World Cup final, France (fifa.com/womensworldcup)

9th: Cricket - World Cup - first semi-final, Old Trafford (cricketworldcup.com)

11th: Cricket - World Cup - second semi-final, Edgbaston (cricketworldcup.com)

14th: Cricket - World Cup final, Lord's (cricketworldcup.com)

18th-21st: Cricket - England v Australia, women's Test, Taunton (somersetcountycc.co.uk)

18th-21st: Golf - The Open, Royal Portrush (portrush2019open.com)

24-28th: Cricket - England v Ireland Test, Lord's (lords.org)

25th: Horseracing - The Series starts (championshiphorseracing.com)

26th: Cricket - England v Australia, first women's Twenty20 international, Hove (ecb.co.uk/england/women)

27-28th: Rugby league - Challenge Cup semi-finals (rugby-league.com/challengecup)

27th: Horseracing - King George VI & Queen Elizabeth Stakes, Ascot (ascot.co.uk)

28th: Cricket - England v Australia, second women's Twenty20 international, Chelmsford (ecb.co.uk/england/women)

30th-3rd: Horseracing - Glorious Goodwood (goodwood.com)

31st: Cricket - England v Australia, third women's Twenty20 international, Bristol (ecb.co.uk/england/women)

AUGUST

1st-4th: Golf - Women's British Open, Woburn (aigwomensbritishopen.com)

1st-5th: Cricket - England v Australia, first Ashes Test, Edgbaston (edgbaston.com)

10th: Rugby Union - Ireland v Italy, Aviva Stadium (englandrugby.com)

11th: Rugby Union - England v Wales, Twickenham (englandrugby.com)

14th-18th: Cricket - England v Australia, second Ashes Test, Lord's (lords.org)

17th: Rugby Union - Wales v England, Principality Stadium; France v Scotland, Allianz Riviera (englandrugby.com)

22nd-26th: Cricket - England v Australia, third Ashes Test, Headingley (yorkshireccc.com)

24th: Rugby Union - England v Ireland, Twickenham; Scotland v France, Murrayfield (englandrugby.com)

24th: Rugby League - Challenge Cup final, Wembley (rugby-league.com)

30th-22nd Sept: Cricket - European Cricket League (ecl.cricket)

31st: Rugby Union - Wales v Ireland, Principality Stadium; Georgia v Scotland, Tbilisi (englandrugby.com)

SEPTEMBER

4th-7th: Cricket - T20 Blast quarter-finals (ecb.co.uk)

4th-8th: Cricket - England v Australia, fourth Ashes Test, Old Trafford (cricket.lancashirecricket.co.uk)

5th-10th: Football - Euro 2020 qualifying (uefa.com)

6th: Rugby Union - England v Italy, St James' Park; Scotland v Georgia, Edinburgh (englandrugby.com)

12th-16th: Cricket - England v Australia, fifth Ashes Test, The Oval (kiaoval.com)

13th-15th: Golf - Solheim Cup, Gleneagles (solheimcup2019)

14th: Horseracing - St Leger, Doncaster (doncaster-racecourse.co.uk)

19th-22nd: Golf - PGA Championship, Wentworth (bmw-golfsport.com)

20th-2 Nov: Rugby Union - World Cup, Japan (englandrugby.com)

21st: Cricket - T20 Blast Finals Day, Edgbaston (edgbaston.com)

22nd: Rugby Union - World Cup, Ireland v Scotland, Yokohama City; England v Tonga, Sapporo (englandrugby.com)

23rd: Rugby Union - World Cup, Wales v Georgia, Toyota (englandrugby.com)

23rd-26th: Cricket - Final round of County Championship matches (ecb.co.uk)

26th: Rugby Union - World Cup, England v USA, Kobe (englandrugby.com)

To have your event included in this magazine diary section, please email details to kerry@pitchcare.com

QUOTE ME HAPPY

"Alex has behaved like an idiot, but he's our idiot, and we want to welcome him back into our support network." **Mick Newell, Nottinghamshire CCC's director of cricket, on inviting England reject Alex Hales back into the fold.**

"That's the benefit of not playing any football on it." **One commentator's comment after Tony Sinclair and his grounds team at Man Utd picked up the 2018-19 Premier League Grounds Team of the Season award.**

"I've already said there is no amount of alcohol that could keep me on the property of Portrush that week if I'm not competing. It would be very bittersweet, shall we say." **Graeme McDowell on earning his place at this years Open.**

"We've got to play all our cards and we can't afford anymore silly mistakes at vital stages - these are the best sides in the world and they'll always punish you." **Jacques Kallis spoke after South Africa's World Cup hopes were dented by Bangladesh.**



"To say Donald Trump cheats is like saying Michael Phelps swims. He cheats at the highest level. He cheats when people are watching and he cheats when they aren't." **In a new book, Rick Reilly, a former Sports Illustrated columnist, claims the president is a serial cheater.**

"I don't really get it, seriously. I mean, what the hell? Is this a joke? I have to leave the room because she's coming." **Dominic Thiem and Serena Williams saga will rumble on after he was booted out of a press conference in order for her to get on with her media duties quickly.**

"I felt that in the first half we did alright but as soon as Chelsea scored the first goal we collapsed completely. In the second half we didn't exist." **Wenger told beIN Sports. Arsene Wenger criticised the Arsenal players for their 'collapse' in the Europa League final against Chelsea.**

"No way! You cannot do that Ben Stokes! Totally remarkable. That is one of the greatest catches of all time." **Former England captain Nasser Hussain commented after England's World Cup victory over South Africa.**

It's about obsessing over the little things, the details no one else sees. It's never tolerating anything less than the best. Perfection is a mindset. And that's worth being proud of.

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