

PITCHCARE

The turfcare magazine from pitchcare.com

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DON'T MISS

US EPA Rubber Crumb Study released
A very mixed reception to Part I of the long awaited report



VISION EXPRESSED

There cannot be many more pleasurable things to do on a warm summer's day than to visit the Isle of Wight, albeit via what is considered the most expensive ferry crossing per mile in the UK. Pitchcare meets **Andy Butler**, the head groundsman at one of England's newest cricket outgrounds

Demand rises and yield falls

The wider effects of the hot summer of 2018 are still being felt as seed crops fell victim to the unprecedented conditions. **Derek Smith**, Amenity Sales & Marketing Manager of DLF Seeds explains how climatic conditions are a major headache in the planning of seed supply, as demand spiked and stocks fell

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WELCOME TO

PITCHCARE

It's a no-brainer

With all the doom and gloom in the public media - Hong Kong, Brexit, mass shootings, British Airways etc. - I'm pleased to say that, all in all, this year has been a fantastic year for growing grass.

A nice spring and a summer that has been warm, with reasonable amounts of the wet stuff, albeit heavy at times! A far cry from 2018, the weather has allowed us all to catch up again and get our surfaces looking good.

With the warm wet weather, you would expect a high incidence of disease. I certainly would have done a few years ago as we relied almost entirely on our armoury of fungicides to keep pathogens at bay as I fed the grass to the hilt with nitrogen. How times have changed.

Instead of costly chemicals, a more balanced nutritional programme, coupled with plenty of aeration, has equipped the plant with the improved means to defend itself. A healthy plant, as indeed a healthy you or me, is less susceptible to becoming ill.

The modern turf technician must use a combination of skills to keep the grass at an optimum, but knowing your soil analysis, pH, CEC, and having a reasonable budget, allows us to magic up some quality for the players.

To supplement the required macro nutrients of NPK, we use trace elements, seaweed, sugar, humic and fulvic acids, nitrites and calcium, as well as a little iron to keep the grass healthy and resistant.

I have always advocated that the key to good grass is a healthy aerated soil/rootzone. The most important time to aerate is through the growing months, creating air space to allow the ground and roots to breathe, and for these roots to colonise the space and go down in search of water.

Creating a healthy soil with good beneficial microbial populations,

produces a strong plant with a good root system, but this is mostly achievable during the summer/autumn period, before the soil temperatures drop down and the plant slows its growth. There was a time when I was told to only spike the ground in the winter, to help remove surface water, as it was seen purely as a drainage action; how much we have learnt over the years!

Since its launch, I have also been a keen user of growth retardants - or, more specifically, late cycle gibberellic acid inhibitors - that slow upward growth and divert this energy into rooting and tillering. The cost is far from prohibitive and, if you can cost its use against the wear and tear of mowing machinery, fuel and labour, it's a no-brainer.

As we enter the autumn, I can't quite believe how quickly this year has flown by, although looking at surfaces across all the sports at the moment, our industry's future is looking pretty bright.

I wish you all the best at your venues.

**Cheers,
Dave Saltman**



SAY THAT AGAIN!

"I don't like this mentality of a two-year apprenticeship then you've got your NVQ, and off you go. If you're going to bring them in, then make a career for them"

Glen Rayfield, Felixstowe Ferry

"I don't know how we encourage more younger people into the industry, but it may be down to the colleges and our industry bodies to try and raise the profile of the job"

Matt Merchant, Emirates Old Trafford

"I had always wanted to come back. I felt it was the right time. I love the lifestyle here; I know it sounds cheesy, but it's somewhere that is close to my heart"

Dan Kendle, Newquay Golf Club

"There are not many head groundsmen you will see washing their own machines down at the end of the day, and they are spotless; it's almost like he went over them with a toothbrush"

Scott Tingley, Watford FC

"This year, yield forecasts are for some crops to be up to 50% down on average, meaning Agrostis capillaris will remain in relatively short supply"

Derek Smith, DLF Seeds

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Issue 86 August/September 2019

Andy Butler, Newclose Cricket Club

COVER STORY: Vision Expressed

There cannot be many more pleasurable things to do on a warm summer's day than to visit the Isle of Wight, albeit via what is considered the most expensive ferry crossing per mile in the UK. Pitchcare meets Andy Butler, the head groundsman at one of England's newest cricket outgrounds. **P54**

GOLF

The hills are alive ...

The Worcestershire is regarded as being one of the very best golf courses in the Midlands, nestling as it does into the stunningly beautiful backdrop of The Malvern Hills. Lee Williams speaks to Steven Lloyd, the Course Manager. **P16**

Surfs up!

Newquay Golf Club in North Cornwall was formed in 1890 with the intent of creating Cornwall's finest golf course alongside the wonderful stretch of Fistral Beach. Lee Williams met with Head Greenkeeper Dan Kendle on a very wet and windy day on the Atlantic coast. **P26**

Making his own mark

Felxtowe Ferry's Course Manager Glenn Rayfield is on something of a mission to return the only links layout in Suffolk to its traditional values with the aid of his committed team. As Blair Ferguson discovers, there's a lot going on at this 130 year old course, not least a passing interest in Love Island, apparently. **P36**

Garden of delights

If you've tended the golfing turf at Gleneagles, you expect to work to exacting standards of greenkeeping. Peter Pattenden is privileged to have done just that, and has been applying his experience and team management skills learnt there at an equally expansive golfing destination nestling between the open landscapes of the Cheshire plain and the rugged Welsh hills. **P44**

Matt Merchant, Head Groundsman,
Emirates Old Trafford Cricket Ground

SUMMER SPORTS

The Merchant of Old Trafford

Old Trafford, known for sponsorship reasons as Emirates Old Trafford, opened in 1857 as the home of Manchester Cricket Club and, since 1864, has been the home of Lancashire County Cricket Club. This is where Lee Williams met with Matt Merchant, the 45-year-old Head Groundsman who has been at the club for twenty-nine years. **P62**

Norfolk's finest

Every year the Lawn Tennis Association and STRI visit lawn tennis clubs all over the country to assess their courts. In April 2019, they went to a Norfolk coastal town and two months later announced that Cromer Lawn Tennis and Squash Club had some of the best courts in England. Blair Ferguson reports. **P72**



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SCHOOLS & COLLEGES

Project One

Warwick Independent Schools Foundation has embarked on extensive improvements and modernisation known as its Project One Campus. Due for completion next year, Grounds Manager Duncan Toon has been overseeing the installation of new sports facilities. **P80**

Full time, part time, extra time

On a wet day in spring (when isn't it in the north-west of England?) Pitchcare met with Ben Kay, Head Groundsman at Fulwood Academy and part-time Head Groundsman at Chorley Football Club, to find out more about his dual role and what motivates him. **P88**

WINTER SPORTS

Tingley sensation!

Vicarage Road has been the home of Watford since 1922. In addition, the stadium was also home to Wealdstone FC between 1991 and 1993, and to rugby union side Saracens from 1997 until they moved to their new home at Allianz Park in February 2013. It is here Lee Williams met with Scott Tingley, the club's Head Groundsman **P96**

You name it, I do it!

Paul Wilson is responsible for looking after fifteen acres of land at Redcar Athletic, which includes the main match pitch, three full-size pitches and four development pitches for the juniors which he mainly does by himself. **P104**

EQUESTRIAN

Fix it with flowers

Ripon is known as Yorkshire's Garden Racecourse, due to its most pleasant surroundings and well-kept bedding areas which are often entered into the Yorkshire in Bloom awards. Lee Williams met Carl Tonks, forty-six-year-old Head Groundsman, to find out more. **P108**

PUBLIC PLACES

Open for business

For many years, the distinct beauty of Montalto Estate in County Down was only admired by its private owners. However, the decision to open this beauty to the public has proved a roaring success as Chris McCullough discovered. **P118**

CONSERVATION

The scourge of the links

Sea buckthorn (*Hippophae rhamnoides*) is a species of deciduous flowering shrub often found on links courses. It is native to only a few areas on the east coast of Britain but was widely planted at a time when concerns about stabilising dune systems were common. **P126**

TECHNICAL

Demands rise and yields fall

The wider effects of the hot summer of 2018 are still being felt as seed crops fell victim to the unprecedented conditions. Derek Smith, Amenity Sales & Marketing Manager of DLF Seeds, explains how climatic conditions are a major headache in the planning of seed supply, as demand spiked and stocks fell. **P130**

TRAINING

It's a shared responsibility

In this article, Neil Adams, training and development manager at Reesink Turfcare, whose training is industry-leading and also one of the biggest on offer in the industry, says training is fast becoming a necessity, planned for in the annual budget. **P136**

Do you feel valued?

Grounds Training Tutor Frank Newberry believes that most people want to work for an organisation that values their efforts. In this article, Frank suggests nine ways supervisors and managers can deliver values-based leadership. **P140**



Glen Rayfield, Felixstowe Ferry



Matthew Jordan, Cromer Lawn Tennis Club



Carl Tonks, Ripon Racecourse



Scott Tingley, Watford Football Club



England v Afghanistan at Old Trafford in the World Cup ©Ben Gibson

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Turf REWARDS

Purchase qualifying products and collect points

Extra benefits from Turf Rewards

This year there are some important new additions and upgrades to benefit from, along with a host of new qualifying ICL and Syngenta products and packages. A new look Turf Rewards website is also easier and faster to see what is available and to make claims.

Operated by ICL and Syngenta, Turf Rewards includes offers to improve turf quality, provide education, aid business management and enhance the environment.

ICL UK Sales & Development Manager, Ed Carter, reported the popular scheme has continued to grow year-on-year: "Not only do people get great quality products, but there's the opportunity to improve turf management, business performance and the whole team - at no added cost."

"Some of these tools may be difficult to get directly from the turf management budget, but Turf Rewards makes them accessible and affordable."

Customers simply log their purchases of qualifying Syngenta and ICL products from any authorised distributor on the Turf Rewards website, and points are automatically added to their account.

Glenn Kirby, Syngenta Technical Manager, highlighted that many of the Turf Rewards offers have been selected to improve Integrated Turf Management programmes and get the best results from the qualifying products involved.

"Using tools such as remote sensors and precision measuring devices can help with better decision-making processes. Turf Rewards makes some of the latest technology readily available, without additional club investment."

This season there is greater emphasis on ITM packages involving ICL nutrition and Syngenta fungicide programmes designed to optimise turf health and surface quality. Some popular products and combinations carry double Turf Reward points to multiply the benefits for customers.

Adare to host Ryder Cup



Adare Manor in Ireland is named 2026 Ryder Cup venue

Adare Manor in Ireland has been confirmed as the host course for the 2026 Ryder Cup. A deal struck between the Irish government and European Tour organisers will bring the biennial tournament between Europe and the USA to Limerick.

The news came just four days after Irishman Shane Lowry won the Open at Portrush.

"It will be a fantastic occasion for everyone on the island of Ireland, and for visitors from both sides of the Atlantic," said Taoiseach Leo Varadkar.

The event was last staged in Ireland at the K Club near Dublin in 2006.

It's believed the cost to the Irish government will be tens of million of euros, but the benefit to the economy is estimated at more than 160m euros.

"It is great news for Ireland, and for County Limerick and the west of Ireland in particular," the Taoiseach added.

"Over the years, Irish captains and Irish players have played a huge role in the success of the European team."

"I am sure that, when the Ryder Cup comes to Adare, we will see many more great sporting

memories created, and great sporting friendships forged."

As part of the deal, which was rubber-stamped at an Irish cabinet meeting in Donegal, the future of the Irish Open has also been secured until 2026.

That tournament will continue to be staged on a rotational basis between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

"We are delighted to announce The 2026 Ryder Cup will be staged in Ireland at Adare Manor, which is a world class venue, both in terms of the golf course and the wider resort facilities," said Guy Kinnings, European Ryder Cup Director.

"Today's announcement would not have been possible without the support of An Taoiseach Leo Varadkar and the Irish Government who are in receipt of our grateful and heartfelt thanks."

"Months of careful negotiation behind the scenes have seen us arrive at this point and we could not be happier to be able to take golf's greatest team contest back to Ireland."



Matt Pullen with wife Alison and children Ben and Ellie

Matt completes his 100th marathon race

It has taken him 26.2 years, but Matt Pullen, head groundsman at The Leys School, completed his 100th marathon last month.

He completed his first, the London Marathon, in 1993 when he was 18 years old.

And he chose Northampton for his 100th so friends and family could watch.

Over the years, Matt, 44, has run the London Marathon 21 times and was in New York after the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

"The most memorable was straight after 9/11 -

doing New York that year and being part of the running community," he said.

Matt, who has also run ultra-marathons and says he has a very understanding wife, added: "There are more people who have climbed Everest, and I believe more people in Great Britain have swum the Channel, than have run 100 marathons."

And he's not stopping at 100 - Matt has plans for more races, including Chicago later this year.

Two NGOs seek retraction of US agencies' crumb rubber study

Finding that 'exposure to humans appears limited' is not supported by the evidence say PEER and the Ecology Center

Two Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs) have filed a request for the US EPA to retract its recent study on recycled tyre crumb rubber materials, claiming that the report violates information quality guidelines.

The 6 August complaint from the Public Employees for Environmental Responsibility (PEER) and the Ecology Center (Michigan) has come in response to a joint report from the EPA and the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR). In it, the agencies found that, whilst there are a variety of chemicals present in the materials - commonly used in playgrounds and synthetic turf fields - human exposure to these "appears to be limited".

The conclusion, however, was criticised as "premature", particularly because the second part of the agencies' studies is to focus on human exposure and has yet to be released.

And PEER and the Ecology Center are now seeking for the agency to retract its conclusion and conduct further studies on the safety of artificial turf, in order "to ensure the objectivity,

utility, and integrity of the information EPA disseminates to the public."

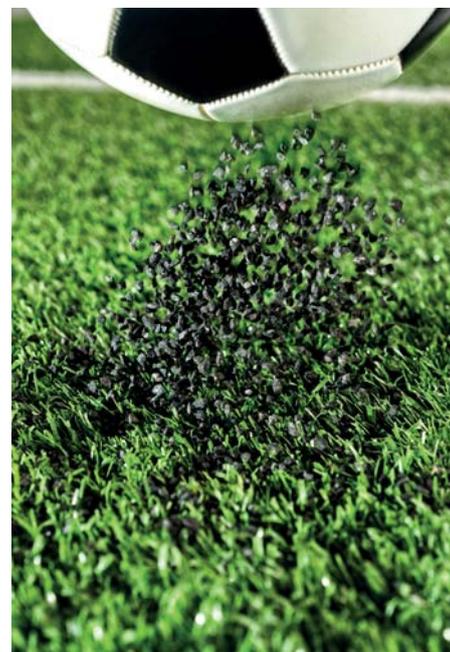
The letter, filed under the Information Quality Act, argues that the study is "based on inaccurate, incomplete, and unreliable information regarding the potential risks to human health and the environment".

Specific concerns include statements that it:

- used an 'inaccurate' lead testing methodology
- tested for volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and semi-volatile organic compounds (SVOCs) at 'inadequate' temperatures
- failed to consider the combined effects of various chemical components of tire crumbs or the impact of substances that lack toxicity information

And the conclusion it draws on exposure, they say, "is not supported by the evidence and is outside the scope of its assessment".

Therefore, the NGOs are asking for the EPA to retract its conclusion and issue a public statement that the study has been withdrawn.



Moreover, they want the agency to "either undertake an adequate testing protocol that cures the flaws enumerated above, or reissue the report with explanations of these additional limitations and removal of all conclusory statements about low exposure to the chemicals associated with artificial turf".

The organisations have requested a response within 90 days.

See also 'Blinding us with science?' on pages 14-15 of this issue.

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BEM for Alan

Long-serving cricket stalwart Alan Vollans has been awarded the British Empire Medal

Dedicated cricket man Alan Vollans has been awarded a British Empire Medal in the Queen's Birthday Honours for services to the game and the local community.

Alan, aged 80, has served Anston Cricket Club for forty years as a player, groundsman and then as a coach, setting up a junior team which provided the seed for the growth of a junior section which now attracts more than 150 children a week.

"I got quite a shock when I heard the news because I didn't know I was in line for this sort of thing, but obviously I'm pleased and proud," said Alan. "The response has been phenomenal."

The dedicated servant joined Anston CC as a senior player in 1979 at a time when there were only two men's teams playing competitive cricket, plus a Sunday friendly side.

Out of a will to see a junior team, Alan started coaching a small group of young boys and formed a team which entered the local junior league.

With the success of the U11s team he continued with other age groups (U9s and U15s).



He got trained to ensure the highest possible standard of safeguarding and became child welfare officer for the Bassetlaw and District Cricket League.

As a result of this, Anston CC went through the England and Wales Cricket Board Clubmark Accreditation.

Alan works with local primary schools and arranges sports sessions and events. He is a coach for softball cricket in primary schools under the England and Wales Cricket Board's 'Chance to Shine' programme.

Working with schools in the Dinnington and

Anston area, he enables all eight junior schools to be able to provide cricket sessions and all schools soon entered the Boys Kwik Cricket competition.

Alan, Anston CC's president, also set up and played for the Yorkshire Over-50s team, the side eventually spawning two Over-60s teams in the county and now an Over-70s team in tandem with Lincolnshire.

The award also comes in the year Anston CC celebrates its centenary and the 25th anniversary of its ladies hardball cricket team.

NFL debuts at White Hart Lane

NFL makes its debut at the new Tottenham Hotspur stadium

The NFL made its debut at the new Tottenham Hotspur Stadium in July when 150 teenagers took part in NFL Academy: Stadium Showcase, the final tryout for selection in the first intake of the landmark NFL Academy.

The hotly-contested trials marked the first-ever NFL event at the spectacular new stadium, which will host its first two NFL London Games later this year when the Chicago Bears face the Oakland Raiders and the Carolina Panthers take on the Tampa Bay Buccaneers.

The trialists were put through a series of NFL Combine-style drills under the scrutiny of NFL Academy Head Coach, Tony Allen, and NFL UK Head of Player Development, Will Bryce. Also scouting the talent were NFL Academy ambassadors, including Pittsburgh Steelers superstar wide receiver Juju Smith-Schuster, Carolina Panthers' London-raised defensive end Efe Obada and two-time Super Bowl winner Osi Umenyiora and his BBC TV colleague Jason Bell.

The NFL Academy, the first of its kind outside of the US, will be based at Barnet and Southgate College and will give student athletes, aged 16-18, the life-changing opportunity to combine education with life skills and intensive training in the sport under full-time professional coaches. The Academy

will begin operations in September 2019.

Students will not only be given pathways into employment and further education, but even the opportunity to play NCAA college football in the United States.

Alistair Kirkwood, NFL UK Managing Director, said: "It's been fantastic seeing these young aspiring athletes represent the NFL in its first-ever event at the new Tottenham Hotspur Stadium. I'm very excited to watch the

successful applicants grow and develop from September onwards."

Smith-Schuster added: "I've really enjoyed taking part in the trials and being able to speak to the students. I've been very impressed with the athleticism and talent on display. It's amazing to see the passion for American football here and to be a part of helping the sport change people's lives. And what an incredible venue for NFL games."



Julia becomes Campey MD

New Directors of Campey Turf Care Systems appointed



Left to right: Lee Morgado, Richard Campey, John Campey and Julia Campey

Julia Campey has been appointed as the new managing director of Campey Turf Care Systems, with former MD, Richard Campey, taking the position of Chairman.

As part of the company restructure, John Campey and Lee Morgado have been appointed directors and Neil Armstrong, who joined Campey in 2010 as accounts manager, will take up the position as company secretary.

Julia has been a key figure at Campey since 2004 and has been the sales and marketing coordinator for the last ten years. In this role, she has developed the corporate presence of the company throughout the UK, Europe and other parts of the globe, including the USA, Australia and Asia.

She has organised exhibitions as well as educational tours for overseas visitors and

provided invaluable support to the sales team in the pursuit of excellence in product development, sales and back-up services.

Richard is stepping aside from his previous role and handing over the day to day activities to his daughter, but he remains an integral part of the company, and he will still be involved in many sales and educational events.

Speaking about Julia's appointment, Richard said: "I've had a lot of successful years at this company, and I'm very proud of what we have achieved. Julia has been a part of that success for many years and has extensive knowledge of our product range and the industry, and I'm very confident in her ability to take Campey forward."

He continued: "Lee has worked his way up through the company over 13-years and has a great understanding of how we operate and has a brilliant relationship with our customers and dealers, not just here in the UK, but throughout the world. Lee and John have been great assets to us, and I think both will use their practical experience to great effect in the boardroom."

Lee, who started with Campey in 2006, has seen his role in the company grow and change direction over the years. He started life at Campey in the workshop and progressed to be a sales demonstrator, before taking on numerous renovations across Europe and further afield, becoming product specialist for southern Europe, and has also seen his sales area expanded to cover Denmark.

Along with John, Lee has a vast amount of experience from the field and both will work actively in the new structure to maintain the founding principles of the company, ensuring that Campey continues to innovate, educate and provide excellent customer service.

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'Churchy' retires

Nigel Church retires from Ransomes Jacobsen

After five decades in the greenkeeping industry, Nigel Church has retired from Ransomes Jacobsen. Here, former colleagues Ian Mitchell and Peter Driver look back on the career of an industry titan.

The word 'legend' is an over-used term, especially in today's society and, looking up its meaning in the dictionary, it says 'an extremely famous or notorious person, especially in a particular field.' Two of its synonyms are 'superstar' and 'icon'.

All of these words apply to one of the UK's most respected and valued members in the turf industry, Nigel Church, who retired at the end of June after almost fifty years in the sector. We had the pleasure of working closely with Nigel for decades and his knowledge, technical ability, eloquence and downright likeability has shone through in everything he does.

Nigel joined Ransomes Sims & Jeffries as an apprentice back in the 1970s, along with other industry notables such as Bob Buckingham, Bob Bevan, Paul Watson, Richard Bishop, Richard Walne, Graham Dale, Jeff Anguige and Barry Beckett.

Readers of a similar age will recognise many of these names demonstrating that this generation of apprentices were the nucleus for the then new Toro European distribution - all built on the Ransomes skills they had been taught by John Wilson, Ken Buckledee and Guy Catchpole. In its day, Ransomes was considered the 'university' for the UK turf industry.

Nigel fulfilled many roles within the Ransomes business and the industry in general. In his time, he has been a demonstrator, a technical rep and an area rep; he has also had responsibility for export sales, national accounts, regional sales management and training.

Included in his impressive CV is an eight-year sojourn, when he left Ransomes to work for one of its dealers, Kingston House Mowers, in a sales role. He was back at the company in 1998, when it was purchased by Textron, became Ransomes Jacobsen and played a significant part in providing continuity as the two businesses merged together.

Later in his career, he joined the new Cutting Edge Training division at Ransomes Jacobsen with a remit to pass on his extensive knowledge and experience to the next generation of sales and technical professionals



within the dealer network. This was another area where Nigel excelled and the quality of training delivered by him and his colleagues was arguably the most concise, detailed and effective across the entire industry.

In the past few years, he has continued to expand this role, travelling to all points of the globe delivering training in his enthusiastic, effervescent manner and has recently returned from his final visit to the Far East.

Nigel 'on tour' is the stuff of legends. Many of us will never forget the long days and short nights at exhibitions and shows, where we enjoyed the camaraderie of a close-knit team in which 'Churchy' was often the pivotal point ... late into the evening, with a beer or gin and tonic in hand, he was always one of the last to leave the bar. Then, next morning, he was nearly always the first down to breakfast, bright-eyed and bushy tailed (well, sometimes), ready to prepare for the day's training seminar

or long day on an exhibition stand. The man certainly has stamina.

Nigel has forgotten more than many people in this industry will ever know and he will be sorely missed as he rides off into the sunset (probably on a Ransomes Highway 3). It has been an absolute pleasure to work with a man of this calibre - kind, knowledgeable, dedicated, humorous, affable - and who is instantly recognised across the industry. Just try walking with him across the halls at Saltex, BTME, GIS and any other international event and see how long it takes to get from A to B!

As we said at the beginning of this appreciation, 'legend' is an over-used word in today's society, but not in Churchy's case.

The global turf industry's sincere best wishes go out to you Nigel, to Sylvia, your family and grandchildren, for a very long and happy retirement. It is well deserved.



Nigel 'Churchy' Church in full flow during a Ransomes Jacobsen product training day

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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'jimmythemower' blown away by Ransomes factory visit

Jimmy Broadhouse shot to social media fame when he posted a picture of a council pitch he cut in Bilbrook, South Staffordshire with the message, "it might only be a council field next to the tip, but to the kids round here playing football it's Wembley. So I always cut it like it is."

Jimmy's now famous stripes were cut with a Parkway 225, and he's used Ransomes mowers since starting his business, Ditton Services, with a MK 4 Motor Triple that he fully restored for commercial use with his late dad, who was a retired engineer.

Before the factory tour and a chance to stripe the turf on Ipswich Town's Portman Road pitch, Jimmy cut the Ransomes football pitch with the Parkway 3 Meteor, before finding out the machine would be his for a year.

"I'm blown away by being invited down to Ransomes," he said. "What an honour it is to be here and test drive a brand-new machine. To be presented with the keys and for them to say we can make one to spec is just unbelievable, it's the stuff of dreams."

"I've had a fantastic day coming down to Ipswich, having a look round the factory and then to the football club. I walked across the pitch and had a look at the renovations for the coming season and stood in the middle of it and got to see what a fantastic job these guys do, I'm really, really chuffed to bits."

Jimmy's tweet has over 44k likes and has been seen more than 3m times on social media as well as his BBC Midlands video, which was trending number one on the BBC News website.

His tweet has struck a chord with groundsmen and the general public with an overwhelming number of positive comments and feedback coming Jimmy's way. Ransomes' sales manager, John Quinton, is one of the millions that have seen the tweet and was delighted to show Jimmy around the factory and hand over the keys to his new mower.

"We wanted to surprise Jimmy by loaning him a new machine for a year because he's made a real difference to those he's cutting pitches for and this is our way of recognising that. He has a genuine enthusiasm for his job and the Ransomes mowers he uses, and I'm really pleased we've had the opportunity to bring him to the factory because he's had a great time."



Toro Student Greenkeepers

BIGGA reveal the finalists of the Toro Student Greenkeeper of the Year

The British and International Golf Greenkeepers Association, alongside Toro and Reesink Turfcare, has revealed the eleven finalists who will contest this year's Toro Student Greenkeeper of the Year Awards.

The 31st hosting of the finals of the prestigious awards will take place at BIGGA House in North Yorkshire, following a nationwide search for the country's leading student greenkeepers.

A record 46 students were nominated for the Toro Student Greenkeeper of the Year Award, with seven talented candidates making it through to the grand final, to be held on Monday 9th and Tuesday 10th September 2019.

Up for grabs will also be the fourth Toro Young Student Greenkeeper of the Year Award, which is only open to qualifying students under the age of 20 at the time they were nominated. Four candidates have been invited to attend the finals.

The Toro Student Greenkeeper of the Year finalists are:

1. Thomas Bird, Sutton Coldfield
2. Daryn Curtis, Farleigh Court
3. James Dawson, Oulton Hall
4. Vince DeMarzo, The Wisley
5. Jason Norwood, Rudding Park
6. Matthew Strudwick, Royal Norwich
7. Nicholas Turner, Royal Dornoch

The Toro Young Student Greenkeeper of the Year finalists are:

1. Tom Bromfield, Trentham
2. Josh Marshall, The Worcestershire
3. Sam Richards, Sherborne
4. Lewis Westwood, Celtic Manor

Vince DeMarzo of The Wisley is set to become the first student ever to have participated in both awards. Vince was runner-up at the first Toro Young Student Greenkeeper of the Year Award in 2016, winning a trip to Continue to Learn at BTME in January 2017.

Each year the awards enable BIGGA, the UK's only membership association for golf greenkeepers, to work alongside its Partners, the turf maintenance equipment manufacturer



Toro and distributor Reesink Turfcare, to celebrate the next generation of talented greenkeepers who are dedicating themselves to a career within the industry.

The Toro Student Greenkeeper of the Year winner will receive an eight-week all expenses paid scholarship to America, including a six-week residential turf management study course at the University of Massachusetts, a trip to the Golf Industry Show in Orlando, Florida and a visit to Toro's facilities.

The Toro Young Student Greenkeeper of the Year winner will receive a work experience placement at the exclusive Vidauban Golf Club in southern France. They will also receive a trip to Continue to Learn at BTME and enjoy a five-night package that includes hotel, four days of education, travel and £125 expenses, plus a Toro training voucher.

Stuart Green, head of member learning at BIGGA, said: "I was once again astounded by the enthusiasm and knowledge for the industry shown by the candidates and it's clear that the future of the industry is in safe hands."

"My thanks go to Toro and Reesink Turfcare in their continued support and thanks go to everyone who took part this year."

Amenity Standard launch

The Amenity Forum is holding its annual conference and exhibition on October 10th, an event which has become very much 'must attend' for all involved in or with an interest in amenity management.

This year the theme is '21st Century Amenity Management' and is set to be the best yet with some excellent speakers and exhibitors. It will be held at the Pirelli Stadium at Burton on Trent. Tickets are £85 + VAT for early birds booking before 1st September 2019.

The Amenity Forum is set to launch the new Amenity Standard at the conference. This standard, akin to the Red Tractor in the food sector, will provide assurance to all that operations are being undertaken to recognised assurance scheme levels. Also, very soon, the

Forum will be publishing a document and template to help operators and others in producing integrated management plans.

Professor John Moverley, the independent chairman of the Forum, said "Over the last ten years, the Forum has developed strong recognition for the work of those in the amenity sector. We embrace all sectors of our diverse and essential sector and have pushed forward standards and engagement and commitment to best practice. We now seek to fully drive this forward and a key objective is to increase public awareness of the professionalism of our sector and provide the facts about what is undertaken - exciting times!"

For further information, contact admin@amenityforum.net

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BIGGA

British and International
Golf Greenkeepers Association



Photograph courtesy of Ash Youd Photography

Tree planting rise 'needs to happen quickly'



Significant rises in tree planting in the UK "need to happen quickly" if other targets to cut carbon are not met, government advisers have warned.

The Committee on Climate Change (CCC) recommends 30,000 hectares of woodland should be planted annually, more than double the new trees planted last year.

And it said this may have to rise to 50,000 hectares if other carbon reduction targets are not achieved.

The government said it planned to "rapidly grow forest cover", and that it has signed up to the CCC's goal of the UK of cutting all greenhouse gas emissions by 2050 - as published in the Net Zero technical report.

The committee - made up of experts in science, economics, and business - said this required woodland to increase from 13% of land in the UK to 17%.

Charity the Woodland Trust said this would be equivalent to about 1.5 billion new trees and that future generations would be "let down" by poorer air quality and rising "urban heat" if the committee's targets were not met.

The CCC said 30,000 hectares (116 sq miles) of new trees are needed per year until 2050. This is equivalent to filling more than 46,000 standard football pitches or a space about three-quarters the size of the Isle of Wight every year.

Ewa Kmietowicz, the CCC's transport and agriculture team leader, said: "The government needs to develop a strategy to meet the 30,000-hectare target and it needs to happen quickly."

However, the CCC said tree planting may need to increase further - to 50,000 hectares per year - if other sectors of the economy including industry and transport do not reduce emissions enough.

Ms Kmietowicz added: "It takes time for trees to grow and absorb carbon. There are many high upfront costs to planting trees."

The CCC said it had not worked out the point at which tree planting may have to increase to 50,000 hectares per year but "it would depend on all that is happening across the wider economy".

Figures show almost 13,400 hectares (51.7 sq miles) were planted between April 2018 and March 2019 with the vast majority - 11,210 of which were in Scotland.

England planted about 1,420 hectares, Wales 520 and Northern Ireland 240.

New OPM measures

Tighter measures on the import of oak trees come into force in England to protect the country against oak processionary moth

Strengthened measures on the import of most species of oak into England were introduced to protect native trees from the threat of the tree pest Oak Processionary Moth (OPM) on Monday 15 July.

The bolstered measures will only permit imports of certain oak trees, including:

- those from OPM free countries
- those from designated pest free areas including Protected Zones (PZ) - an area of the European Union declared free of OPM
- those that have been grown under complete physical protection for their lifetime

This Statutory Instrument (SI) builds on measures introduced in August 2018 and applies to all oak trees, except cork oak, over a certain size. This is because these trees represent the greatest likelihood of introducing OPM into the UK PZ, as they are more susceptible to pest populations and more difficult to inspect.

The restrictions will cover both imports from overseas and the movement of trees from areas of the country where OPM is already present - in London and surrounding counties.

The Plant Health Service has received reports of



an exceptional expansion of the OPM population in parts of Europe due to the hot weather experienced last year.

The Plant Health Service intercepted findings of Oak Processionary Moth (OPM) caterpillars on trees recently imported from the Netherlands, and are asking everyone to urgently check recently planted large oak trees.

Dr Anna Brown, Head of Tree Health & Contingency Planning, Forestry Commission, said: "Those of us involved in importing or trading plants must maintain our vigilance against exotic pests and diseases such as OPM. There is a lot we can do such as only buying stock from reputable, responsible suppliers and inspecting imported plants."

"These stronger requirements will increase our

protection, but my message remains the same: inspect, inspect and inspect again. We can't check imported plants too often for signs of trouble. Don't presume that because your supplier found no evidence of a pest or disease that you won't either. You might spot something that they have missed."

If you suspect OPM, you should not attempt to destroy or move infected material yourself as the nests and caterpillars can pose some risks to human health.

Visit the Forest Research website for more information on how to identify OPM. To report sightings of pests and diseases, use the TreeAlert online portal.

<https://treealert.forestresearch.gov.uk/>

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The Rubber Crumb Debate

Blinding us with science?

The EPA's long awaited - and very overdue - study on rubber crumb was released in July; or at least Part 1 was. The 300+ page document is not exactly enthralling bedtime reading and, in truth, by its own admission, declares 'it is not a risk assessment'. We can only await the probably delayed Part 2 with interest! A baffled **Peter Britton** looks on with concern

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) released the first part of its study on the recycled crumb rubber - used in the majority of synthetic turf sportsfields - at the end of July. The official title of the nearly 300-page document is *Synthetic Turf Field Recycled Crumb Rubber Research Under the Federal Research Action Plan, Final Report Part 1, Tire Crumb Rubber Characterization Volume 1*.

The report was authored by the EPA's National Exposure Research Laboratory, Office of Research and Development, as well as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry.

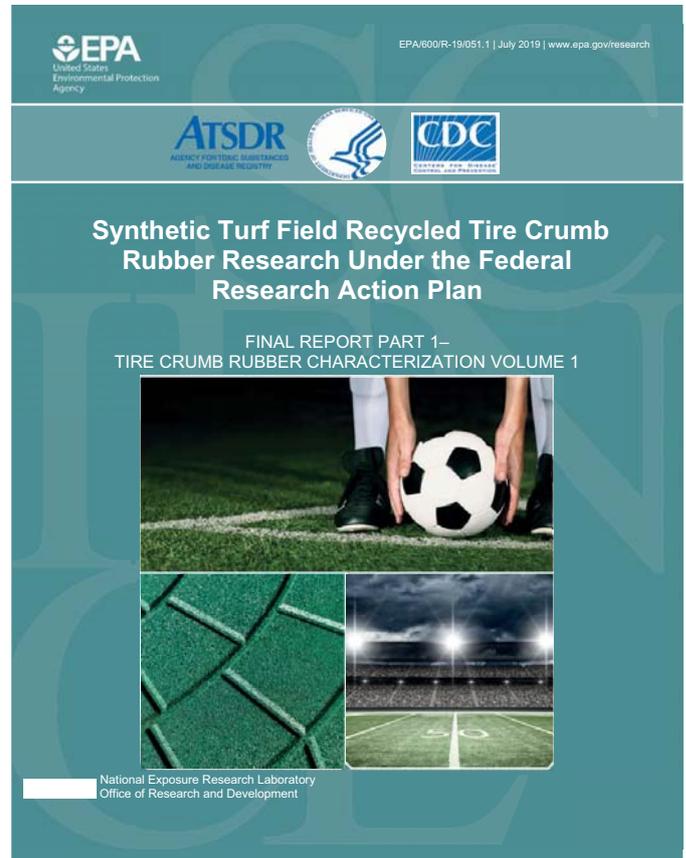
The report opens by making this disclaimer: "The findings and conclusions in this report have not been formally disseminated by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention/the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry and should not be construed to represent any agency determination or policy."

The Synthetic Turf Council (STC), a member-based synthetic turf advocacy organisation, released the following summary of Part 1 shortly after the report's release:

- This research represents the largest and most robust study of synthetic turf fields and tire crumb rubber to date in the

United States.

- Findings from this study support the premise that, whilst many chemicals are present in the recycled tire crumb rubber, exposure may be limited based on what is released into air or biological fluids.
- The presence of a substance does not directly equate with human exposure. Whilst there are many chemicals associated with recycled tire crumb rubber, the EPA laboratory experiments suggest that the amount of chemicals available for exposure through release into the air and simulated biological fluids is relatively low.
- Emissions of many organic chemicals into the air were typically found to be below detection limits or test chamber background, and releases of metals into simulated biological fluids were very low (mean bioaccessibility values averaged about 3% in gastric fluid and less than 1% in saliva and sweat plus sebum).
- In general, concentrations [of measured metal and extractable semivolatile organic compounds (SVOC)] in this study were consistent with, and within the range of, concentrations found in previous studies.
- Whilst there is concern about chemical exposures resulting from the use of recycled tire



and other materials in synthetic fields, it is important to recognise that some of the chemicals are likely to be present in other types of fields, including natural grass fields. For example, metals, (including lead) and PAHs (including benzo[a]pyrene) of potential concern at synthetic turf fields with tire crumb rubber infill, are also often found in surface soil in the U.S. and may be present at natural grass playing fields.

- This report is not a risk assessment.

According to the STC, Part 2 of the report will include data to characterise potential human exposures to the chemicals found in the rubber crumb material whilst using synthetic turf fields. Part 2 will be released, along with results from a biomonitoring study

being conducted by CDC/ATSDR, to investigate potential exposure to constituents in rubber crumb.

The research activities in Part 1, and the resulting findings, do not provide an assessment of the risks associated with playing on or contact with rubber crumb, according to the STC. Instead, these research results should inform future risk assessments.

So, much like the European Chemicals Agency (ECHA) report of a couple of years ago, this latest report plunders both existing data, along with some new research, and presents its finding in such a way as to appear to be doing something positive, but without reaching any hard and fast conclusions.

Reaction to the study in the USA was strong. US congressman Frank Pallone (D-New Jersey) welcomed as a

“significant first step toward assessing its safety”, the finding that crumb rubber contains a number of metals and volatile organic compounds (VOCs), but said it is “entirely premature for the report to suggest that consumers’ exposure to the material’s chemical contents is low.”

“Exposure testing, including biomonitoring, must be done to fully understand the impact these chemicals are having on those that play on crumb rubber fields,” said Mr Pallone. He strongly encouraged the EPA to complete the second phase of its research “so that we may take the next critical step toward assessing any potential health risks.”

Kristie Trousdale, deputy director of the Children’s Environmental Health Network, agreed that the EPA’s finding is ‘poorly worded’.

“It possibly doesn’t mean that human exposure is limited, but rather that not all chemicals in crumb rubber are emitted and therefore bioaccessible to humans. Part 2 of the study will assess human exposure to those chemicals emitted via biomonitoring.”

Dan Bond, president and CEO of the Synthetic Turf Council, commented that the industry group is also looking forward to the release of the human exposure portion of the study “in order to provide parents and communities the certainty they deserve.”

He also pointed out that the findings presented thus far are consistent with previous studies. “This report highlights what we already know about crumb rubber infill in synthetic turf fields,” said Mr Bond.

“The report reconfirms that the mere presence of a substance does not equate with human exposure,” he added.

The US Tire Manufacturers Association (USTMA), not unsurprisingly, applauded the EPA for completing the research, and said it is “committed to assisting governments, scientists and other stakeholders conducting further study on this issue.”

Environment and Human Health Inc, meanwhile, pointed out that neither the first nor second part of the agencies’ research constitutes a risk assessment - and only when one is conducted will there be a finding whether the fields



“As sports minister, I promote a reasonable balance between environmental protection and the legitimate interests of sport. Many thousands of sports facilities in German municipalities would otherwise be threatened with closure”

present a danger or not, stating that “that part of the study will be critical.”

Meanwhile, in the European Union, thousands of synthetic sportsfields are threatened with closure following the planned EU ban on microplastics. Germany’s Federal Interior Minister Horst Seehofer has stated that he wants to reach a transitional period to protect and safeguard thousands of amateur sports clubs.

“As sports minister, I promote a reasonable balance between environmental protection and the legitimate interests of sport,” he commented. “Many thousands of sports facilities in German municipalities would otherwise be threatened with closure.”

Artificial grass pitches emit a lot of microplastic to the environment and, along with the rubber crumb used as infill material, the EU say that they should no longer be permitted from 2022.

Seehofer and the German Football Association (DFB) want to work for a transitional period of six years for existing pitches. According to the DFB, there are currently 5,000 artificial turf pitches in Germany. “If it really comes down to the fact that soon there will be no artificial turf pitches, that would surely

be the breaking point for many clubs,” said former Bundesliga football professional Mike Rietpietsch.

Back in the USA, but on a smaller but nonetheless equally important scale, a second round of test results show toxic playgrounds at a Washington D.C. school.

The Ecology Center of Michigan revealed that recycled tyres at Takoma Education Campus have high levels of lead. Multiple pieces shown to parents at a community meeting had lead above one thousand parts per million. For context, the US EPA says anything above 400 parts per million is not safe for use on playgrounds.

One parent, Chioma Oruh, who collected the samples from the playground of her child’s school campus, spoke out at a community meeting: “I would appreciate if our District government would spend less time trying to play ‘Jedi mind tricks’ on us and telling us things aren’t what they are and really address this.”

Parents from other affected campuses weighed in at the meeting. “It’s disgusting and appalling that we know that this is a problem and we’re choosing to do nothing about it. The sense of urgency for me is

very strong,” said Fareha Ahmed, mother of a child who attends the Truesdell Education Campus in Washington.

“We have a material, as opposed to something like wood fibre, that is rich in a soup of chemicals - that was engineered for a tyre,” explained Jeff Gearhart, director of testing lab The Ecology Center.

DC’s Department of General Services is responsible for these playgrounds. They paid for their own set of tests which stated the playgrounds are safe. It still pledges to test all DC playgrounds by January 2020, adding in a statement: “The Department of General Services (DGS) understands that a community group hosted a forum on July 29th on local District playgrounds, and the agency respects this group’s right to address issues of concern to them and their membership. Similarly, DGS, the Department of Energy and Environment, D.C. Public Schools and industrial hygienists from SaLUT held a meeting on July 15th with members of the Takoma Education Campus PTO and looks forward to continuing its work with the community as well as the Inter-agency Working Group on Artificial Turf and Playgrounds.”

A cynic may say that the EPA Part 1 report smacks of self-interest, protection of a viable, yet unsustainable way of disposing of old tyres, and a disregard for the health and safety of all that play on surfaces that contain rubber crumb - or, at best, a lack of urgency to provide the defining answer.

With mountains of old artificial surfaces currently stockpiling in Holland or heading off to third-world countries for re-use (as reported recently), it is clear that there needs to be an urgent review, worldwide, on the possible dangers associated with these types of surfaces. If nothing less, the industry currently involved in manufacturing and installing these surfaces need some clarification, as do parents and children.

Can we really wait another two years (or more) for the EPA’s Part 2 and, even then, is it not highly likely that they will, once again, blind us with science?

The Worcestershire Golf Club

The hills are alive ...

The Worcestershire is regarded as being one of the very best golf courses in the Midlands, nestling as it does into the stunningly beautiful backdrop of The Malvern Hills. Lee Williams speaks to **Steven Lloyd**, the Course Manager



Steven Lloyd first got into the industry through his granddad and his uncle. "Whilst at school I did work experience at Leominster Golf Club in Herefordshire. This then turned into a summer and school holidays job. When I left school in 1995, I was given a position at the club as apprentice assistant greenkeeper; I spent twenty-two months at the club until I decided to move on as there was no education forthcoming other than just working."

"I moved to Burghill Valley Golf Course in 1997 as an apprentice, and here I was able to gain my qualification, which I did at Elmwood College in Scotland on block release twice a year - two weeks in spring and three weeks in autumn. In a four-year period, I gained my NVQ Level 2 and 3 in sports turf, and I also have my spraying

certificates PA1, 2 and 3 whilst working my way up the ranks to Deputy Head; a position I held for eighteen months. Things weren't working out, so the club had a rejig and I was given the position of Course Manager - at twenty-one years old! I worked in that role for fourteen years before taking the position here at The Worcestershire in October 2014."

Steven's granddad was the man who inspired him to get to the position he is in today. "Sadly, he died two years ago, but he was the one who got me into it, even when I left to go and do other things it was still always a matter of pop up and see Grandad, have a cup tea and discuss the job."

The Worcestershire is an 18-hole Par71, 6450 yard parkland course; Steven tells me more. "The course sits at the foot of the Malvern Hills, so it's very picturesque with



I will tend to go heavy on maintenance in early spring and again through the autumn period. I don't do a lot through the summer period





The year I came in they spent £25,000 on spare parts alone. The fleet was on its knees

the hills providing a beautiful backdrop. It has some nice elevation changes and is not too demanding when walking - the hillier parts are early in the round, then it flattens out. We have a small practice area - chipping green and putting green - and we have a bigger practice area which, unfortunately, is situated away from the clubhouse at the end of the driveway.”

“The course lies on a heavy clay soil profile. The topography works quite well

though being at the foot of the hills, so a lot of surface water does run through as it's not the sort of heavy clay where the water sits on top, slowly absorbs and gets muddy. Additionally, over the last fifteen years, a lot of drainage work has been carried out on the more problematic areas. I was told by a lot of sales reps when I came here that I wouldn't get much work done in the winter; its reputation being that it was really wet. But it hasn't turned out like that, it's been a good site to work with. Whenever we look to carry out drainage works, there is always a decent outlet to take it to.”

Steven explains that the greens consist of three different construction types. “The course, designed by Alister MacKenzie, was built in 1927 and all the original eighteen greens were clay based push-ups with no irrigation, so they held moisture. In 1940, the back nine of the course was compulsorily purchased by the government, and they built a military hospital on it because Malvern was away from any major cities and it was deemed a safe area to do that. The course



Course Manager, Steven Lloyd





Summer 2018



Fungicides we have now are not as effective as the old contacts. We use a lot more turf hardener to try and help keep the plant healthier and stronger

was reduced to nine holes over the war period and then, in the late sixties, the land was freed up again. By that point, there was an infrastructure of buildings and roads.”

“In the seventies, the club bought additional land and brought in Hawtree and Co. to redesign the golf course. Out of the original layout, we have six original greens, plus the Hawtree greens, whilst the 15th green was rebuilt in early 2000 as it was having quite a lot of issues; so they built it to

USGA spec! So, we have three distinct types of greens to manage, and drainage has been the big issue on the older ones.”

Steven explains their maintenance. “We cut at 6mm in the winter and down to around 3.5 to 3mm at other times dependent on what we have going on in the growing months of the year. The seven McKenzie greens are on quite severe slopes, so we have to watch our speeds in summer; we can get to a point where they are

unplayable, and you can’t keep a ball on. We will roll three or four times a week through the summer with the Smithco turf iron so, along with cutting, we get to eleven on the stimpmeter quite comfortably. I will tend to go heavy on maintenance in early spring and again through the autumn period. I don’t do a lot through the summer period. I play golf myself and so I’m aware of the frustration of pitching up on a lovely summer’s day, walking up to the green and realising

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Getting Personal

Steve Lloyd - a family man who dreams of playing for Spurs

Who are you? Steve Lloyd - Course Manager at The Worcestershire Golf Club.

Family status. Married to Amanda with ten-year-old twin boys Callum and Ethan.

Who's your hero and why?

Tiger Woods because, despite everything, I think he works harder than anyone else.

What would you change about yourself? Play better golf and not be losing my hair.

What's your guilty pleasure? Doing nothing in the sun whilst on holiday.

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

What's the best part of your job? Looking back at what has been achieved in the day or week.

... and the worst? Managing expectations.

Do you have a lifetime ambition? To design and build my own course.

Favourite record, and why? Oasis, Wonderwall. It was released the year I left school and started greenkeeping.

Who would you choose to spend a romantic evening with? My wife because we don't get to do it very often these days.

If you won the lottery, what is the first thing you would do? Buy a plot of land and build the family home we really want.

Which three people, living or dead, would you invite to a dinner party? Tiger Woods, Gazza and Mike Tyson.

If you could be anyone for a day, who would it be and why? Harry Kane ... just so that I can play football for Spurs.

Do you have any bad habits? Using my phone too much.



... or any good ones? I'll happily help anyone if I can.

Do you go to bed worrying about the next day's workload? No definitely not. I go to bed and fall asleep really quickly, then deal with tomorrow when I get up.

What are you reading at the moment? Not really into reading, but I do read articles online.

What's the best advice you have ever been given? Don't ask anyone to do something you wouldn't do yourself.

What's your favourite smell? Freshly cut grass.

What do you do in your spare time? Play golf, help coach the boys football team and chill out.

What's the daftest work-related question you have ever been asked? Why do we need an irrigation system when it rains a lot in the UK.

What's your favourite piece of kit? Smithco turf iron.

What three words would you use to describe yourself? Hard-working, helpful and determined.

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

What law/legislation would you like to see introduced? For the UK to govern itself.



there are maintenance holes everywhere, which is disruptive to the play of the ball, so I like to keep that to a minimum."

During spring maintenance this year, we ran over one way with the Graden scarifier, followed by the Charterhouse Verti-Drain going down to eleven inches. We spread the sand, brushed in, then followed up with Toro ProCore with half inch tines at two-inch centres. We then spread more sand and brushed in. Over the week, we applied fifty tonnes of sand to the greens. In autumn, we will carry out the same process, but use the Graden in two directions. Through the summer season, we will do two or three light topdressings. We have a

Poa/Bent sward which is quite tight, so trying to get sand in there in the summer can be a pain in the rear."

When Steven first arrived at the club, the thatch levels in the greens were at 50mm, which was an issue. "Over the last four years, we have hollow tined nine times using half inch diameter tines at inch and half spacings, which has removed a lot of material. This, along with using the Graden scarifier and adding around 120 tonnes a season of sand, has brought that down to around 25mm. Alongside this, we have installed new drainage into six of the greens, lifted the turf, trenched out and put drainage lines in."



Leaf blowing



Over a four year period, we have revamped or installed sixty-two bunkers altogether, which has provided much more visual impact out on the course

“Our seventh green, for example - one of the old MacKenzie greens - regularly used to go on a temporary in November and stay there until April every year. We added drainage in November 2015 and has never been on a temp again since it went back on that Christmas. This has helped us keep thatch levels down. Our last thatch reading in the top 25mm was down to 4% organic matter, which has decreased really well as it was at 12% before. In a nutshell, we hit them

hard when we have the opportunity, and then leave them for around seven months - occasionally going over with the Air2G2 that I hire from a friend and the Toro Procore with micro tines - but we will roll straight after to create as little disruption as possible.”

Steven uses a predominantly liquid-based fertiliser programme on the greens. “In the last two years, we have dropped in the addition of Biomass sugars and HumiMaxx, I find this has helped to reduce nitrogen

input a little bit. I found that we don't have to apply as many liquid feeds as we used to. In spring, during the renovation period, I will use a granular and then everything else is a liquid mix. For Poa/Bent greens we are running quite a low nitrogen input, which helps keep the speed up as we don't get that flush of growth. It seems to be helping with disease management too; we would spray six or seven times in the past with a fungicide. This is good news as the



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My budget was significantly less to solve the problems, so I went back to the basic principles



Left to right: Adan Troop, Josh Marshall, Tom Howells, Phil Birch, Steven Lloyd, Clive Jones, Martin Knight and Ken Threadgill

fungicides we have now are not as effective as the old contacts. We use a lot more turf hardener to try and help keep the plant healthier and stronger.”

Since Steven took over at the club, he has looked at improving the machinery whilst also making the most of what he inherited. “Previously, the club would budget each year as it came. They had a £50,000 budget, which was split between projects and machinery; it was a bun fight to try and work it out. The year I came in they spent £25,000 on spare parts alone. The fleet was on its knees. There was two of everything because, half of the time, one of them had broken down. I put a proposal together in the first winter to clean out the front-line mowing equipment and bring in additional equipment that would allow us to carry out our own projects, as they were paying a lot of money out and not getting a lot back for their money.”

“I put a package together for thirteen bits of new equipment which the club accepted in the first spring I was here. We have done this over a five-year hire purchase agreement with T H White Groundcare

based in Redditch. This comes to an end soon, so we now need to make the decision about keeping what we have or going again with new. We have probably replaced a third of the machinery so far, and we do have quite a big fleet. One machine I would like to invest in is the Air2G2 - it would be nice to have it available when we want it.”

Steven has five full-time staff, one part timer and a summer casual. Clive Jones, Deputy Head Greenkeeper, has been at the club 32 years straight from school and knows the course like the back of his hand. He has an NVQ Level 2 in sports turf plus spraying certificates PA1, 2 and 3. Adam Troop, Assistant Greenkeeper who also doubles as the handyman around the club, has eight years' service. He has his NVQ Level 2 and 3 in sports turf and chainsaw certificate. Greenkeeper Tom Howells has been with Steven for four years. He previously worked in the pro shop, is a scratch golfer, has NVQ Level 2 in sports turf and currently doing his Level 3, holds spraying certificates PA1, 2 and 6 and a chainsaw certificate. Josh Marshall, apprentice greenkeeper, has been at the





AFT trencher in action

club for eighteen months and is currently doing his NVQ Level 2 in sports turf. He went through the junior ranks at the club but wasn't keen on becoming a pro golfer so joined the greenkeeping team. Phil Birch, 55 years old, Apprentice Greenkeeper joined in April. He was previously a postman for 30 years. The part time staff member is 69 years old Ken Fredgill, who works three days a week as a greenkeeper/mechanic. "He is like gold dust to us," says Steve. The

summer casual is the ex-Head Groundsman at Worcester Warriors, Martin Knight, who is now semi-retired.

Steven and his team have been working on some big projects in the last four years addressing the course's most significant issues the drainage, irrigation and the bunkers. "We have managed to drain the five worst greens on the course. In October 2017, we were lucky enough to have a new Rain Bird irrigation system put in, including a

//

I play a lot of golf myself and that frustration of pitching up on a lovely summer's day, walking up to the green and realising there are holes everywhere

new ring main, pump set, control system and a valve in head system around the greens and approaches. All the pipework and cabling has been taken over to the tees, and this will be phase two of the project which we will do in-house over the next few years alongside tee reconstruction."

"Nine years ago, the club had major issues with stone contamination in the bunkers, along with poor drainage. They brought in a company, at a cost of £80,000,

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We have three distinct types of greens to manage, and drainage has been the big issue on the older ones

to rebuild the bunkers, lay drainage and put in sportscreed into the bunkers. Unfortunately, a year after the work was completed, the company went bust ... and the warranty went with it!"

"My budget was significantly less to solve the problems, so I went back to the basic principles. We've got good drainage outlets in the base, so that was fine. Every time we rebuilt a bunker, we shaped it so it only had to deal with the water that lands in it, not the runoff from other areas; that reduces all the washouts. As a liner, we just went back

to traditional methods and used turf, laying it green side up. We gave it a month to root down a bit, then sprayed it off with Roundup, filled with four to five inches of pack sand, wacker plated it down on the bases and a couple of inches up the faces."

"We have tried to make the bunkers more visual by raising a lot of the faces, and we've added some extra bunkers for the longer hitters. Over a four year period, we have revamped or installed sixty-two bunkers altogether, which has provided much more visual impact out on the course."

Club history

Golf has been played in the Malvern area since the late 1800s, initially mostly on common land.

The Worcestershire Golf Club itself was formed in 1879 and, for several decades, played on Poolbrook Common using several different course routings.

The old clubhouse is located about one mile north of the current course on Poolbrook Common. In the 1920s, it was decided to move from the common, so a local farm, Wood Farm, one mile south of Poolbrook Common, was purchased.

The club invited golf course architects Harry Colt of Sunningdale fame whom, as a youngster, had himself played golf on the Poolbrook Common course, and Alister MacKenzie, later of Augusta National fame, to submit designs for the new course.

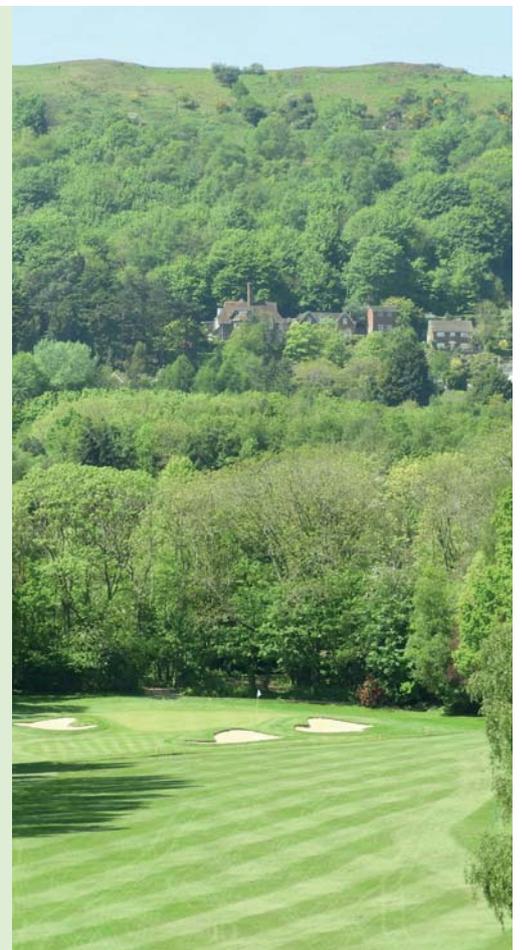
MacKenzie tendered the lower price and was awarded the work. In reality, MacKenzie's price was well exceeded and, when the club committee complained to him, he apparently informed them that it wouldn't have been any higher if they hadn't tinkered with his design so much! The new Wood Farm course opened for

play in 1927 and play continued here until World War II. During this period, the land comprising the second 9-holes of MacKenzie's course was taken over by the Ministry of Defence to build a hospital for anticipated D-Day casualties. In fact, several such hospitals were constructed within a short distance of the club.

This land was not recovered from the MoD until the early 1970s, by which time it was covered in brick buildings and concrete roadways

In due course, most of the buildings and roadways were removed or covered over. Residential housing however now covered some of the original second 9-holes of MacKenzie's original course. To make the course 18-holes again, an additional 9-holes, designed by Hawtree and Co, were built and, when incorporated with elements of the original MacKenzie first nine, an 18-hole course was re-established.

In 2000, the present clubhouse was opened. This replaced the original Wood Farm farmhouse that, with various modifications, had served for seventy years.





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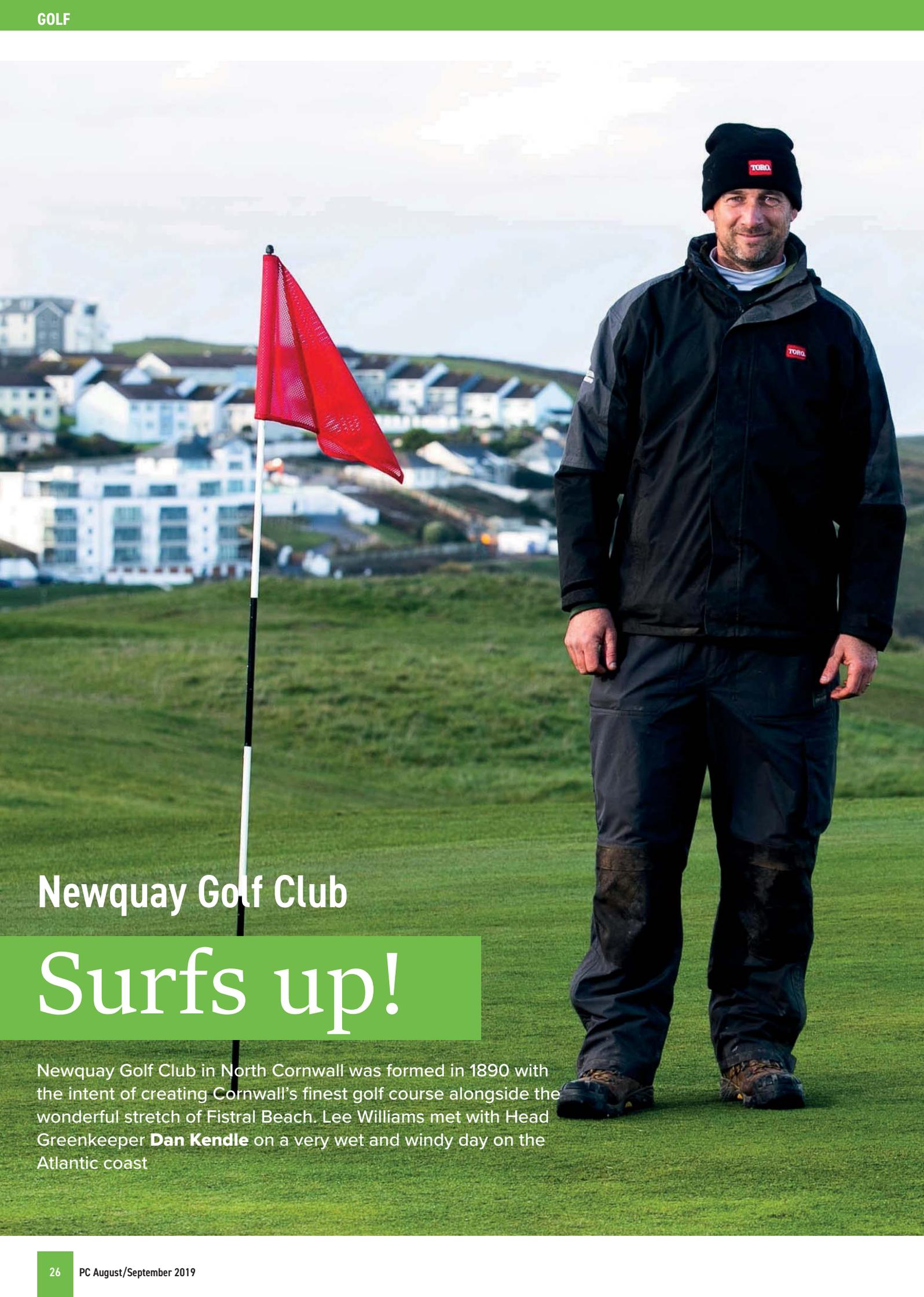


TR320



TR330



A man wearing a black TORO beanie, a black TORO jacket, and dark trousers stands on a green golf course. To his left is a red flag on a black and white pole. In the background, there are white buildings on a hillside under a cloudy sky.

Newquay Golf Club

Surfs up!

Newquay Golf Club in North Cornwall was formed in 1890 with the intent of creating Cornwall's finest golf course alongside the wonderful stretch of Fistral Beach. Lee Williams met with Head Greenkeeper **Dan Kendle** on a very wet and windy day on the Atlantic coast



Outside 'The Tower' clubhouse, I'm welcomed by Dan Kendle and taken to the greenkeepers building which overlooks the 18 hole, Par 69 course, from where stunning views from his office greet the eye.

Dan tells me the club has recently invested in a new irrigation system - and he is happy with the extra benefits this brings compared to the old system. "We had an old Tonick irrigation system with Hunter pop-ups, which wouldn't allow us to irrigate overnight as it no longer worked properly.

So, we were manually switching pop-ups on in the valve boxes, which was far from ideal. In April 2014, Irritech were asked to do an appraisal of the system and, basically, they condemned it! There were big health and safety issues; UPVC piping, joints that were cracking; the list went on. Basically, we needed a new system. The case was put to the club at an AGM, where myself and Roger Davey (from Irritech) gave a presentation on the case for a new irrigation system. It went to a vote - and we snuck through with fifty-one percent."

"Part of the problem was that, when

Roger did the initial plan, he did it for everything, and that was what was quoted for, which came in at nearly half a million pounds. So the members were baulking at that. So, once we had trimmed it down and negotiated this, that and the other, we got the final figure down to about £245,000."

"We looked at various systems. The chairman and I visited other courses with Rain Bird and Toro systems and, in the end, decided on a site similar to ours who were using a Toro Lynx layout. It just seemed the most suitable to us. Additionally, with having a Toro fleet of machinery, the club



I had lived in Cornwall twenty-five years previously, whilst on my university course, and had always wanted to come back. I felt it was the right time. I love the lifestyle here; I know it sounds cheesy, but it's somewhere that is close to my heart



Hole 12 - © Airborne Vision



The sward density has increased and now the species content of the greens is around 70-75% bent/fescue

was keen on bringing everything under one manufacturer. Full Circle Irrigation started work at the end of October 2017 and the system was all up and running by the end of March 2018. Everything is now controlled through a PC or my phone. It's a godsend; the difference is just unbelievable. It's improved the surfaces in just one season already. If we hadn't had this system for the heatwave that hit us last year, I probably

wouldn't have any greens now!"

Dan began his working career as a public rights of way officer for Lincolnshire County Council, after getting an HND in Countryside Management at Aberystwyth University. He explains how he found his way into greenkeeping. "After four years, I just got sick of turning up at farmyards and unloading stuff to put on a public footpath, and the farmer was putting it back on the truck as fast as I could take it off. I used to play cricket with Sam Rhodes, who is the Courses Manager at Woodhall Spa. One day, I saw him in town and asked him if any jobs were coming up at Woodhall. He said there was and it all sort of slotted into place. Fifteen years later I was still there. I started as an assistant greenkeeper on the Bracken course, which is the newer course there, and after four years I got moved over to the Hotchkin, which is the championship course, where I spent my final years as the first assistant."

"I felt it was dead man's shoes at Woodhall, and I was never going to get the chance to progress any higher. I had lived in Cornwall twenty-five years previously, whilst on my university course, and had always wanted to come back, so I applied for the job here at Newquay Golf Club in 2014 and



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Dan shakes hands with Reesink's John Pike

got it. With a wife and two young kids, I felt it was the right time. I love the lifestyle here; I know it sounds cheesy, but it's somewhere that is close to my heart that I always wanted to come back to."

I asked Dan would he ever consider moving again. "If something big came up I would certainly consider it, I have the ambition to progress, but here I consider from where the course was to where it is now, that it is still a project that I'm working on. Also, it's still early days and a job I enjoy."

Helping Dan to look after the course is Scott Paterson, Deputy Head Greenkeeper - four years' service, NVQ Level 3, plus PA 1, 2 and 6 - and Trevor Curtis, Assistant Greenkeeper - one month's service, NVQ Level 2, plus PA 1, 2 and 6. Dan is currently finding it hard to attract good new staff, which is a problem I hear about all around the country from both head greenkeepers and head groundsmen. I believe it is an issue that, as an industry, we must address together.

As well as his HND in Countryside Management, Dan has his NVQ Level 2 and 3 in Sports Turf Management, spraying certificates PA 1, 2 and 6, chainsaw licence and various other H&S related certificates.

Budgets for the year are put to a management committee, and within that is a greens chairman who Dan reports to. "I put together my proposed spend for fertilisers, wetting agents etc. and that is given to the finance guy on the committee. We then sit down and juggle things around. It's quite strange how it all works, but they are pretty accommodating. Whatever I need to spend on the course in terms of feed etc. he will work it into a budget which I can control."

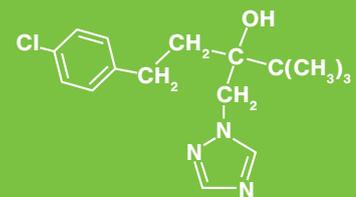
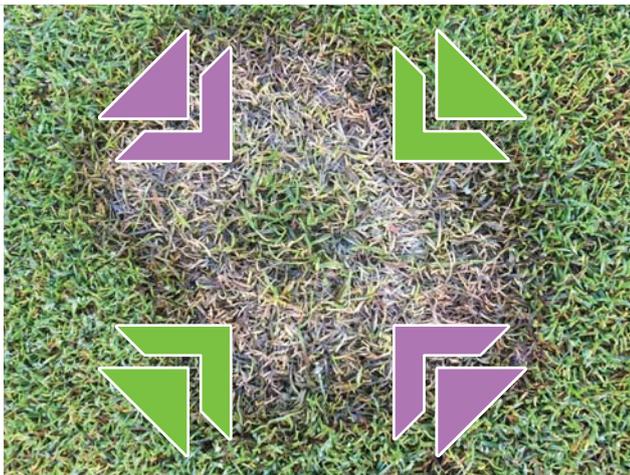
The course is a Links, but Dan doesn't class it as a true links. "It's more of a links style. We are not wall to wall fescue; one side of the course is old agricultural land and the soil is quite rich. Through the middle, it is more sand based, but we get a bit of clay and shale at either end, which can cause issues."

Dan doesn't use agronomists; he tends to work with the people around him. "We used to have one, but I have moved away from that now. It's either myself, input from the local reps or or bouncing ideas off other course managers in the area."

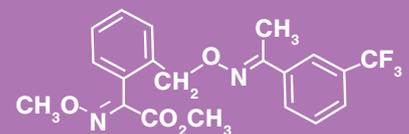
The greens are USPGA spec, and only in the last year has Dan started to buy dressing in. "Before this, we were utilising sand from a car park extension, where around 300 tonnes of sand had been



In my first year, we ended up putting about 150kg of nitrogen down. The year after I tried to drop it to 90-100kg and they were still screaming for more



Tebuconazole



Trifloxystrobin

Getting Personal

Dan Kendle - he would ensure Donald Trump gets a haircut

Who are you? Dan Kendle, Head Greenkeeper at Newquay Golf Club.

Family status. Married to Leah with Alexa (8), Jago (5), and Paddy the Cadoodle.

Who's your hero and why? Lawrence Dallaglio, Wasps Legend. He played his entire club career for one team - a rarity in this day and age.

What would you change about yourself? Be able to switch off outside of work.

What's your guilty pleasure? Anything sugary.

What's been the highlight of your career so far? Securing my first Head Greenkeeper position is up there, alongside the praise for the improvements made at Newquay.

What are your pet peeves? Poor time-keeping and ignorance.

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

What's the best part of your job? Working outside with stunning views along the Cornish coast.

... and the worst? Winter storms blowing straight off the Atlantic Ocean.

Favourite record, and why? Too many to single one out.

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

If you won the lottery, what is the first thing you would do? Book a holiday.

If you were to describe yourself as a musical instrument, what would you be and why? An oboe - why not!!

Which three people, living or dead, would you invite to a dinner party? Lawrence Dallaglio, Denzel Washington and Robin Williams.

If you could be anyone for a day, who would it be and why? It's been said before, but, Donald Trump, just to see what really goes



on in his head. Oh and I'd make sure he had a haircut on that day.

Do you have any bad habits? I'm sure my wife could list a few.

... or any good ones? Probably a shorter list than the bad habits.

Do you go to bed worrying about the next day's workload? Yes, constantly.

What are you reading at the moment? Lee Child, Past Tense.

What's the best advice you have ever been given? You can't make an omelette without breaking eggs.

What's your favourite smell? A good curry.

What do you do in your spare time? Avid follower of Wasps Rugby and Norwich City FC, days out with the family and taking Paddy on walks along the coast.

What's the daftest work related question you have ever been asked? Far too many to be honest. Not so much of a question but one lady member, on finding out we take the efforts of our Rabbit Control to the local zoo, commented that "they must have a wonderful exhibit of rabbits there", not realising they are actually being fed to the carnivore section.

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

What three words would you use to describe yourself? Hard-working, dedicated, passionate.

What talent would you like to have? Mind reading would be invaluable in this industry.



extracted. When I first came in, the machinery side of things was dire, so I had a wish list of machines and, to save money, I used that sand as topdressing, but it wasn't ideal. Now we are buying in a medium coarse sand."

Dan talks me through the maintenance of the greens. "Cutting heights during the winter will go up to 5mm, possibly 6mm, depending on temperatures and growth. During the summer, we won't go any lower than 4mm. At present (May) we are 4.5mm. We just did our maintenance three or four weeks ago, so we have got germination coming through now, so I'm just trying to protect those seedlings a bit. Within the next few weeks, we will go

down to 4mm, cutting every day up until December; it's bonkers! And we try to go over with the turf iron three to four times a week."

"We don't tend to do much scarifying. We have a maintenance period at the end of March beginning of April and, last year, we started doing one in August where, traditionally, it would have been October. We've started trying to do it during Boardmasters week when the course is particularly quiet, and we are pretty much guaranteed the temperatures." Boardmasters is a festival that markets itself as 'five epic days of music, surf and beach lifestyle'. This year's event features Florence + The Machine,





I have now said that I'm going to have a few evenings where I'm going to take the committee and members out on a course walk

the Wu-Tang Clan, Lewis Capaldi and Rudimental, amongst others. "We will do a verti-cut in those two weeks, but we don't do a massive amount because I don't want to stress the fescue out. We will do monthly aeration through the summer using pencil tines on the Toro ProCore. In the spring maintenance period, we used half inch blunt tines to make some pots, overseeded,

topdressed with a tonne of sand per green and then went over with 6.5mm tines at a depth of 4 inches to close everything up a bit. In August 2018, we hollow cored, and that was the first time we had done that in my time here and, I believe, the first time in about twenty years. We don't have a problem with thatch, it was more to recycle the soil we had just cored, verti-cut, then

brush the soil back in and blow off the debris. It seemed to work quite well, but I don't think I need to do it again any time soon."

Dan tries to educate the members on the benefits of the heavy maintenance on the greens. "For the last few weeks, I have been getting asked 'when are the greens going to be good again?', or 'why are you









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I just got sick of turning up at farmyards and unloading stuff to put on a public footpath, and they're putting it back on the truck as fast as you could take it off



Toro Irrigation system on the 17th green

What's in the shed

Toro Greensmaster 3400 Triflex x 2
 Toro Groundsmaster 4300
 Toro Reelmaster 5410
 Toro Workman HDX
 Toro Multi Pro WM sprayer
 Toro ProPass 200 wireless topdresser
 Toro ProCore 648
 John Deere Gator HPX
 EZ-GO ST400 electric buggy
 Woodbay 3900 greens iron
 Kubota L5040 tractor
 John Deere 1550 tractor with loader
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doing it; the greens were brilliant?'. It's trying to get that message across, that we are making what's good even better. We do a monthly newsletter, and I have an article in that every month. I hold nothing back about what we are doing and why we are doing it. I have now said that I'm going to have a few evenings where I'm going to take the committee and members out on a course walk. I hope this will help them to understand visually why we do what we do, because I don't think they appreciate the time and effort that goes into prepping the course each week."

Dan tells me there were no historical records of fertiliser inputs, and he had no real clue about the kind of inputs the greens required when he first arrived at the club. "In my first year, we ended up putting about 150kg of nitrogen down. The year after I tried to drop it to 90-100kg and they were still screaming for more, it's that old adage

of weaning a drug addict off their fix, so we were up at around 120kg. Then, last year, we managed to get it to around 90kg, and this we year are looking at around 75-80kg, so we have nearly halved the amount of nitrogen input. Alongside other products, such as seaweed, it has made a massive difference to the quality of the greens. In conjunction with the irrigation, the sward density has increased and now the species content of the greens is around 70-75% bent/fescue."

The club has a full Toro cutting fleet, with some on an operator's lease; the ProCore, Workman, Multi Pro and ProPass are all on a lease-purchase agreement. "I believe the club has just made its last payments on the purchase agreement this year, so we now own them, and the operator lease on the cutting machinery is all on a rolling replacement. We have a Triflex ready to go out this year and a new one coming in.



The Clubhouse

A mansion called 'The Tower' was built for the Molesworth family in 1835. It included a castellated tower and a private chapel as the family were devout Roman Catholics. The home was often rented to wealthy families when the Molesworth family were in their inland home. The Tower was eventually sold to the Treffry estate in 1906, and the club purchased the property freehold. The Tower is now used as the clubhouse.

The Royal Seal of Approval

Newquay Golf Club has also been graced with its fair share of Royal visits. Their Royal Highnesses the Prince of Wales and Prince Albert (later to become King George VI) spent many enjoyable golfing holidays at Newquay from 1911 onwards and were honorary life members of the club.



14th hole



We are not wall to wall fescue; one side of the course is old agricultural land and the soil is quite rich

There is other machinery we need, like a deep aerator and a flail cut and collect, so I have a meeting scheduled this week to see how we are going to fit those into a three-year plan.”

Dan’s next project, now the irrigation system is up and running, is to look at the bunkers and tees. “We didn’t really do a lot this winter, because Scott was off sick, so it was down to just two of us! And, at times with holidays, there was just one of us on site - it was a nightmare! Generally though, through winter, we will do bunker construction and revetting. We have seventy-six bunkers on the course, and we have now put an appraisal together for the ones we think we can get rid of and ones that maybe could go in. It’s just a matter of planning out how many we can get done per year. We are also looking at releveling and turfing some of the worst tees.”



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The iconic Headland Hotel sits next to the course

Course History

Royal visits, the Headland Riots and a Harry Colt's design. These events have shaped the course and club into what it is today; one of Cornwall's finest. A revered Harry Colt designed course built in 1890.

Not only a landmark of natural beauty, Newquay's iconic Links also possesses a colourful and exciting history that has made it the prestigious club that it is today. The location of Newquay's Golf Links is perhaps one of the finest in the world, along the whole length of the wonderful stretch of sand known as Fistral Beach.

The Headland Riots

One man had a vision to make Cornwall the rival of the south coast resorts. The plan began at Newquay and the man was Silvanus Trevail.

In 1890, Trevail, once Mayor of Truro, formed the Cornish Hotels Company, with the aim to create a chain of first class hotels whose guests could move between them at a whim.

His vision was to turn them into an upmarket estate, the pinnacle being a luxury hotel called the Headland.

The scheme was not without enemies and the discontent of Newquay locals finally erupted into the now infamous Headland Riots.



It's trying to get that message across, that we are making what's good even better

The proposed site of the hotel had previously been used as land on which farmers grazed livestock and local fishermen dried their nets.

It is little wonder that their hackles rose as Trevail's proposals threatened to ruin their livelihoods. Despite local opposition, work on the Headland Hotel began in August 1897.

Outraged farmers and fishermen rushed to the site, where they tore down the wooden works office. Valuable tools and planks of wood were hurled off the cliff.

When Trevail returned to the site the following day, the mob were waiting. Missiles, including eggs and apples were hurled at him, before he was pinned to the railing and subjected, as the press reported, to a "very fierce outpouring of contempt and insolent abuse."

Although hundreds took part in the demonstration, only twenty-two men were charged. The men were fined £2 each, a large sum in those days, for committing malicious damage to goods.

Construction continued, although unemployed miners from Redruth had to be

employed as local workers were reluctant to return.

Today the Headland is as grand a hotel as Trevail could have wished, although it got off to a shaky start.

The Links

The original plans for the land were to build a housing estate where the golf club now lies, with three parallel roads running between Tower Road and the sea. The Headland Riots of 1887 prevented this, meaning the planned development came to a halt, and the Links were spared.

Since the election of the club's first president, Mr H F Whitefield in 1890, the club has seen considerable developments. In 1908, it obtained a new lease from the Treffry Estate, expanding the club's grounds further to the 6,000 yards that it is today and introducing the 11th and 12th fairways. Thanks to Colt's revolutionary designs, the club has always prided itself on its modern course planning techniques. Over the years, no expense has been spared to make the course the best it can possibly be.



5th hole



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Felixstowe Ferry Golf Club

Making his own mark



I think it was just a case of making my own mark on the course and trying to turn it back to be a little bit more of a links course than what it was. Having worked here for those years, you notice things going differently and it didn't sit right

Felixtowe Ferry's Course Manager **Glenn Rayfield** is on something of a mission to return the only links layout in Suffolk to its traditional values with the aid of his committed team. As Blair Ferguson discovers, there's a lot going on at this 130 year old course, not least a passing interest in Love Island, apparently!

For the last decade, Felixtowe Ferry Golf Club's Course Manager, Glenn Rayfield, has been slowly implementing his vision for the courses. For fifteen years, he worked his way up through the ranks at the club and, during that time, made plans for what he would do if it was ever under his stewardship. Since 2009, he has worked, along with his staff, to bring some tradition back to Suffolk's only links course.

The club sits on the edge of the North Sea and, on this particular day in June, the rain has given way to the sun and provided us with still conditions for the morning. Before we head out onto the course, there's a chance to meet the greenkeeping team - deputy Andy Barker, first assistant Jonathan Smart, mechanic Malcolm Baxter,

greenkeepers Zoe Chisenhall, Matt Simpson and John Major and apprentice Harry Stambridge.

During the half an hour in the break room, conversation goes from pleasantries, to work and finally to Love Island - a subject we all seem reasonably tuned in to despite only watching it because our significant others have it on in the background. Then it's back to work. Some work that needs to be done is brought to Glenn's attention and a plan is made before we head out onto the 18-hole Martello course, named after the striking Martello Tower that sits alongside the 17th green.

This course, along with the 9-hole Kingsfleet, has been undergoing a series of positive changes during Glenn's time in charge. In 2018, Felixtowe Ferry was



Sprinklers got introduced to a very old course and suddenly we're overwatering and overfeeding with dominant rough grasses coming in, but I think we're starting to turn the corner



awarded Golf England's 'Championship Venue of the Year 2017,' and it's easy to see why as we drive around on the E-Z-GO. To get the course to an award-winning standard, Glenn explains that it's been a case of long-term aims with slow gains.

"I think it was just a case of making my own mark on the course and trying to turn it back to be a little bit more of a links course than what it was," he explained. "Having worked here for those years, you notice things going differently and it didn't sit right; things like the bunkers. We're trying to get back to revetted bunkers, tighter fairways, and the big one was trying to introduce more fescue into the greens with bent because we were nearly 90% poa. Sprinklers got introduced to a very old course and suddenly we're overwatering and overfeeding with dominant rough grasses coming in, but I think we're starting to turn the corner."

"We started ten years ago, and we had two options; we could go for the fast route that would disturb the play for four to five

years quite heavily, or a slow and steady way that would avoid that disturbance, and that's what the club decided to go for. We transferred to pure sand topdressing to try and neutralise the soil because there was a lot of thatch and a lot of rich soil where we'd been using different dressings, so I wanted to get more sand in to help it dry out and start to try and push it."

"The bent took reasonably well and I don't think you ever win that battle with the poa, but we're getting closer than where we were, so that's rewarding. We're probably about 30-40% poa now, which is a big switch and it should enable us to start tackling areas, but again it all goes back to the budget and how many times you can overseed each year; and we had to drop some out for a few years when it was tough. When I took over, there was only six of us, and we needed to target certain areas."

"Now we've progressed a bit, we've been able to start looking at other areas like ecology and bees, but selling it to the club was never that easy. Over the years, we've





There's so much bad press with golf courses saying that they don't do anything for the wildlife and it's far from it. You only have to look at the outstanding work you see in the ecology reports in magazines

chipped away at it by doing things that don't cost a lot of money. We've just bought two beehives and a colony of bees from Sheriff Amenity, and I think it's important to try and do something for pollination. It's a big thing at the moment."

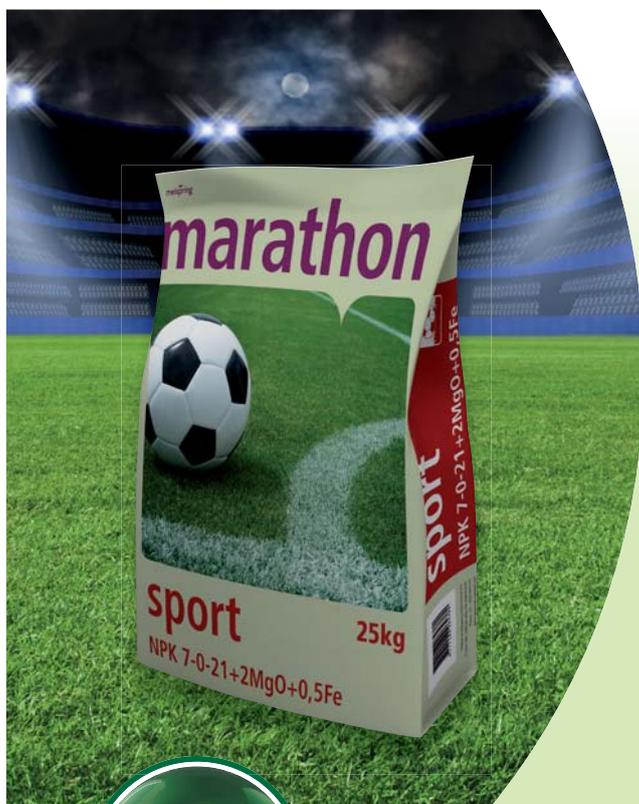
"There's so much bad press with golf courses saying that they don't do anything for the wildlife and it's far from it. You only have to look at the outstanding work you

see in the ecology reports in magazines. I have two members who volunteer to do ecology work to build bug huts, and we have wild marsh orchids, which are quite rare, and a lot of kestrels and short-eared owls around the course. For us, it's about doing what's right for the area."

"When you've got something that's such a long-term aim, like the bunkers or introducing fescues, then the priority can

shift to ecology or other projects. There's always a fresh opinion each year when a new captain comes in, but we've worked quite well with a rolling plan from a course committee through the course chairman. In the twenty-five years I've been here, it's been exceptionally difficult with different committees and mindsets as we've gone along."

"We changed from a golf club to a limited



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I don't like this mentality of a two-year apprenticeship then you've got your NVQ, and off you go. If you're going to bring them in, then make a career for them and show them



Greenkeeper John Major cutting the practice green



Martello towers

Martello towers, sometimes known simply as Martellos, are small defensive forts that were built across the British Empire during the 19th century, from the time of the French Revolutionary Wars onwards. Most were coastal forts.

They stand up to 40 feet (12m) high (with two floors) and typically had a garrison of one officer and fifteen to twenty-five men. Their round structure and thick walls of solid masonry made them resistant to cannon fire, whilst their height made them an ideal platform for a single heavy artillery piece, mounted on the flat roof and able to traverse, and hence fire over, a complete 360° circle. A few towers had moats or other batteries and works attached for extra defence.

The Martello towers were used during the first half of the 19th century, but became obsolete with the introduction of powerful rifled artillery. Many have survived to the present day, often preserved as historic monuments.

company some years ago, which made a difference because we went from trustees and a committee to a board. Several other clubs have done that. We now have a set of people who are business minded and want to see the bigger picture. So, there was a business plan put together for putting the driving range up, and that is looking like it's on target to pay for itself. It's been exceptionally popular."

"Every future plan depends on how we've done each year. Next year's projects get given the go ahead, or not, based on if we've had a good year and we try, like everywhere, to work a good year in advance and not get ahead of ourselves."

Whilst the slow and steady approach has required patience, it has provided significant improvements across the club. Two years ago, the new driving range was built and has been very popular with members and casual golfers and, in April 2018, a major irrigation project was undertaken that increased the amount of available water from 8,500 cubic metres for 27-holes to 30,000.

Despite having a vastly increased amount of water to use in England's second driest area, Glenn is conscious of being responsible with it. He is pleased that the club has been able to use readily available water from a nearby reservoir located at the

bottom of a farmer's field which was built to maintain marshland. Previously, twelve million gallons of water a year from this marshland was pumped into the sea, but that water is now being used on the courses, saving the club a significant sum going forward through not using mains water.

Completing larger projects, such as the irrigation, makes it easier for the greenkeeping team to achieve the standards they are after, but it is the day to day management of the team that provides the ongoing success. Glenn's team are clearly a happy and engaged group who are free to air their ideas and opinions, and a lot of that comes from the style of management they work under.

"I'm fortunate that I've got an exceptionally good bunch of staff, and it's nice because I've selected them and built that. We've had some come and go, and I've now got to where I want to be with staff that want something out of the job."

"I always believe that people need to be self-motivated and enjoy what they're doing. If I can help them enjoy it, then they will naturally return with interest in what they do. I've run most of the staff here through their NVQ Level 2 and 3 and management NVQs. We just got a small workplace employer



Mechanic Malcolm Baxter at work



I think there's a lack of respect from people for what we do. I follow a lot of people on Twitter, and you see some of the pitch marks people leave. And the big one you hear now is 'I've just raked all these bunkers, look at the footmarks that have been left'

award from the local college for the work we do with NVQs, which is something I feel very passionate about because I was given that chance, and I don't like this mentality of a two-year apprenticeship then you've got your NVQ, and off you go. If you're going to bring them in, then make a career for them and show them. My young apprentice, Harry, is quality and he's really keen, and that's how I like it to be."

"If people are doing it out of interest and self-motivation, they do things and notice things, and you just want them to think for themselves rather than just be a cog in the machine that needs to be told what to do all the time. I want them to come to me with ideas because, even though I make the final decision, I don't know everything, and everyone has an idea worth having and I think it's quite well known around here that we are a happy bunch and I like to be relaxed with them all."

"Over time, as they come to understand working that way, they come and say 'I've noticed this, do you want me to go and do that?' So, people know what we're doing and what we're trying to achieve, and they're happy to contribute ideas within that."

"I would hate to be an office-based course manager and, by having my deputy take on

the 9-hole course, it gives him a chance to run budgets and have his own ideas. It gives him a chance to see how it is to think and be responsible for a course when the weather's bad, when disease comes, and all he has to do is speak to me, and we'll talk it through. We meet every fortnight and have a discussion about how things are going and what he's got planned. That enables me to focus on the main course a bit more without taking too much of an eye off of the 9-hole. And it allows me to be a bit more hands-on with my job."

"I've got a very good first assistant who is very forward thinking as well, and he is coming up with ideas all the time. I have Mel, who has been here for twenty-five years, who does a lot of the servicing and most of the mechanical work, as well as irrigation, and I'm now getting to the point where everyone can do everything, so holidays aren't a pain and I think it helps with the dynamic of it. I think we've got a long way to go, but the budget will dictate the speed we can get there, you can't do everything through passion and effort, it just doesn't happen."

The task faced by Glenn and his team is a reasonably unrelenting one. On the day I visit, the course is busy with members before a society visit in the afternoon.

During our drive around the course, the importance of the societies to the club's revenue is outlined, as is the pressure on the greenkeeping team to deliver.

This pressure will be familiar to a lot of greenkeeping teams at members clubs, who will be seeing their maintenance windows reduce to one rigid week. Because it is the only links in Suffolk, Felixstowe has a unique selling point that other courses don't, and that feeds the popularity. Whilst these visits increase the pressure, Glenn is acutely aware that the revenue helps fund his budget and the club, and he knows, through Twitter, that others are in similar situations. As well as seeing those who share his time pressure issues on social media, he also sees an all-round decline in golfing etiquette.

He explains: "I think there's a lack of respect from people for what we do. I follow a lot of people on Twitter, and you see some of the pitch marks people leave. And the big one you hear now is 'I've just raked all these bunkers, look at the footmarks that have been left'."

"We've had to send letters to members about pitch marks and divots. Even little things like the hitting areas, when we walked past there were four baskets that had been left out, but they walk past the area where

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they got them from on their way out, and you just think why they can't put them back?"

Away from seeing the negative side of the job, Glenn uses Twitter in a very positive way, along with a large number of greenkeepers. Sharing ideas and learning from other people has always been a part of the industry, but the introduction of social media has made the world smaller, and the sharing of those ideas much easier, whilst bringing a community feel that can sometimes be missing in a profession that demands so much time on site.

"You can use Twitter to share your own ideas, look at other ideas and share proud moments during tournaments; and I can try and get people to hear about Felixstowe," Glenn explained. "My twitter is based around golf only; it's set up as @ffgc1880, and that's just for work. I like to show people what we're doing during tournaments, and you get other guys coming back saying 'brilliant job', which is great. You can get on there and say, 'I've had this problem ...', and people are happy to offer you advice."

"I follow certain people that I really respect and look at what they're doing. Dave Edmundson from the Island Golf Club is one who I spent some time with in America on a Toro visit. He's a decent, down to earth, passionate guy, and he's been on Twitter

during the R&A Amateur Championship showing everyone what's going on, and he's a very interesting greenkeeper to speak to."

"You do meet people at shows and golf days, but those occasions are few and far between. I love it when people put up something they've made to do a certain job, and often it's a great idea, and a lot of other industries wouldn't do that and share secrets. It's also interesting to see when people do certain things at certain times of the year because it gets you thinking, and it's the same with seeing how people get on with different products."

When you're working with a limited number, products and machines become very important. Glenn has a long-standing relationship with local Toro distributor, Reesink Turfcare, and focuses on using machines that offer value for money and help him utilise the number of staff he has.

"When you don't have as many staff as you'd like, machines become really important. When we got new machines, it was the driving force behind things because I explained we were being asked to do more than we could physically do, so to stand a chance we need the machinery to do it. With eight staff I think we are a little bit shy, so getting the machinery was a big bonus."

"Everything for me is about value for money. With the Toro mowers, I believe the



It's also interesting to see when people do certain things at certain times of the year because it gets you thinking, and it's the same with seeing how people get on with different products





When we got new machines, it was the driving force behind things because I explained we were being asked to do more than we could physically do, so to stand a chance we need the machinery to do it

reliability is there, and our maintenance bill proves it. The relationship I have with the rep is second to none, if you've got a problem or need something checked or to borrow a machine they're happy to help, and that's all relevant, and Julian Copping at Reesink has been brilliant with us."

"We're lucky that all of the reps for the dealers in this area are really good guys, but Toro just give me the complete package on the range of equipment I need, and I think it's second to none, I really do. I'm now onto ten years with them, and I still don't regret

any of it."

Toro has been a pivotal part of the journey for Glenn's ten years in charge, and they will continue to contribute going forward. A new ProCore 78 will be used along with a verti-drain to get an exchange of air and water in some of the older fairways that are still recovering from 2018's arid summer that saw Felixstowe Ferry go eight and a half weeks without rain. Fairways, paths, tees and everything that's run its course will be refreshed as part of the ongoing plan.

Recovering those fairways, introducing

more fescues to the greens and renovating more bunkers are the main projects going forward to bring a traditional links appearance back to the course. For now, Glenn regards the course as looking the most links it's ever looked since he took over, and he - along with his dedicated team - will continue to slowly implement his plan until the Martello Course reaches its full potential.



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Carden Park

Carden of delights

There's a destination to die for in the Cheshire countryside - with just a little golf on the side, as **Greg Rhodes** discovers



If you've tended the golfing turf at Gleneagles, you expect to work to exacting standards of greenkeeping. Peter Pattenden is privileged to have done just that and has been applying his experience and team management skills learnt there at an equally expansive golfing destination nestling between the open landscapes of the Cheshire plain and the rugged Welsh hills.

Carden Park is a rural sport and leisure destination that includes a 198-executive room high-end hotel, award-winning spa, sauna, gym, indoor swimming pool, and two 18-hole championship golf courses, the Cheshire and the Nicklaus, in England's Top

100, contrasting in their concept and design.

A 1,000-acre estate merits a grand approach and Carden Park is no exception. A one mile drive adds both an air of seclusion and builds expectation of what lies at the end of it.

Back in the 1980s and '90s, De Vere Hotels was one of the largest golf operators in the country and included some magnificent estates in its portfolio, including Carden Park which it later sold in 2006.

Today, the estate is being further developed under its present owner, who has reintroduced one or two of its finest, formerly forgotten, features and elevated



I have everything I need here. When I go out, it's into a beautiful setting that many would love to work within





Last year's drought really affected the Cheshire, and we struggled to irrigate it off the mains. Every morning at 3.00am we'd be out watering the tees and greens

the estate to a higher level of leisure provision, as the growing tally of awards confirms.

Carden Park's luxury golf breaks include time relaxing in candlelit treatment areas within the high-end spa, workouts in the fully-specified gym, a refreshing swim in the 20m indoor pool or an invigorating session in the hydrotherapy pool and sauna and steam experiences.

Tennis is on offer too. "We treat our two hard courts with algacide, powerbrush them every six to eight weeks and paint them every season," says Peter.

Carden Park includes football among its wide-ranging provision. Training facilities can be hard to come by and Carden's sole surface has played host to some high-ranking guests, Peter discloses.

"Full-size, FA specified, the pitch has seen La Liga's Real Betis, Bulgaria's PFC Ludogorets Razgrad and Italy's Genoa all

training here before European games, whilst Sheffield Wednesday came for pre-season training when their own facilities were being renovated, whilst Wrexham and Preston North End squads have also played here," he reveals.

Living on site is the dream of many a greenkeeper and those that do remark on how uplifting it can be to walk out of your home in the morning greeted by birdsong, fine views and manicured acres, without the intrusion of noise, traffic and transport delays.

Peter lives on the estate in "a lovely house I feel privileged to live in," he says of his period home, "and beautiful surroundings - something really special."

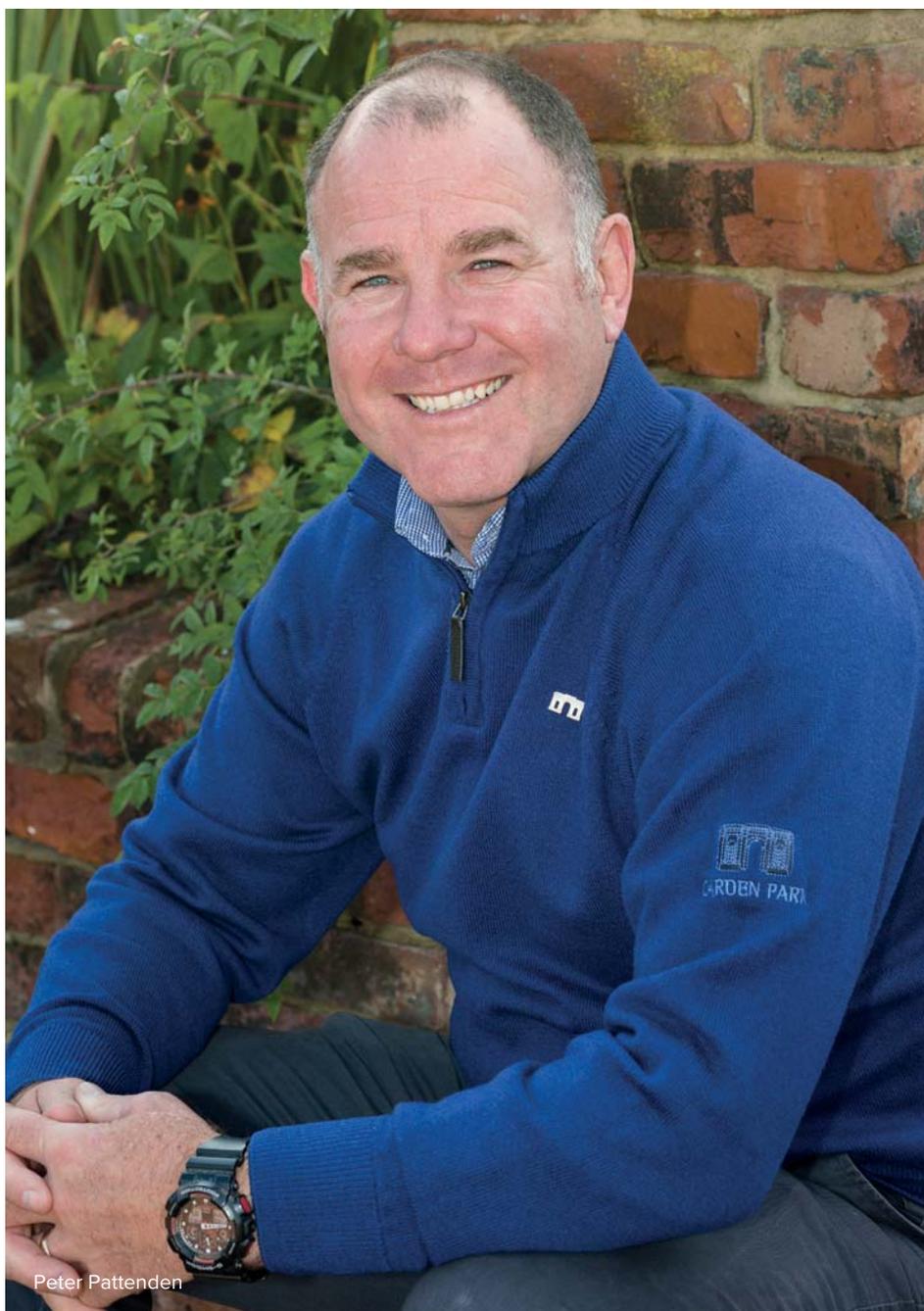
Peter spent his apprenticeship at Gleneagles between 1992 and 1996, before moving to Bonnyton Golf Club, East Kilbride, where he was deputy head greenkeeper for three years.

In 1999, he returned to Gleneagles as head greenkeeper of the PGA Centenary course. "I was born and bred nearby, so it was a natural move back there for me," Peter recalls.

Perhaps 'the seven-year itch' kicked in because he decided to move south of the border to Carden Park in 2006, the year that owner De Vere Hotels was sold and the estate passed into new hands.

"When the position of Golf Courses and Carden Estate Manager came up, I didn't hesitate."

A place like Carden Park can wrap you in a sense of security that must be hard to



Peter Pattenden



Peter's pick of the holes

"The 18th on the Cheshire, teeing off a sandstone cliff, takes some beating. A beautiful hole."

"The 17th on the Nicklaus - right in front of the hotel. The biggest hitters can make it over the pond. A really nice hole."



resist. "I have everything I need here. When I go out, it's into a beautiful setting that many would love to work within."

Both of Carden Park's 18-hole courses are said to pose a unique round, "with some excellent hazards and tight fairways to navigate through".

Superb short game facilities - a new par 3 chipping area to the rear of the clubhouse has been added recently - are available for warming up before teeing off, as is the

21-bay single-tier driving range. A swing bay and fitting centre is taking shape too.

"Both courses are still in their youth and it's awesome to watch them maturing year on year," says Peter, "like seeing the changes to the tree plantation on the Nicklaus course."

Both present different experiences, he adds, the two loops of golf on the Cheshire contrast with straight play on the Nicklaus.

"They're so long though, and not only

challenge golfers but also the greens team as they are extremely labour intensive. Fairways typically stretch to 500 yards and 100m wide, with hundreds of bunkers scattered across them - and of course we're cutting right through the winter months now because of the longer growing season, which adds to the workload."

The Cheshire

Celebrating its 25th anniversary in 2018, the

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The greens, bunkers and tees are all drained and storm systems take off the water during heavy rainfall

Cheshire course was originally designed by John Higgins in 1993 at 6,824 yards. “Constructed on free-draining substrate, the course rarely if ever closes due to waterlogging,” Peter explains.

“The layout has changed over time,” he continues, “and major improvements put in place since opening include the permanently surfaced cart path, recently constructed under a £400,000 project.”

Buggies can leave their mark on

approaches and fairways - Carden’s plan was to minimise the potential for turf damage by laying metallised trackways specifically for the purpose, bearing in mind the number of E-Z-GO carts plying the courses. “We run one of the country’s largest fleets,” Peter announces, “62 lithium battery-powered golf carts on lease, plus two six-seaters for transporting guests.”

For many sports sites across Britain, 2018 was a year to remember, for all the wrong reasons. Carden couldn’t escape the ravages of the weather.

“Last year’s drought really affected the Cheshire, Peter recalls, “and we struggled to irrigate it off the mains. Every morning at 3.00am we’d be out watering the tees and greens.”

Bunkers have come in for major work as Cheshire’s original total of 104 is being cut to 64 under a five-year programme, with the remainder renovated.

“Raking, flymoing and daily marker



The Cheshire 18th tee





Chipping green



Three or four years ago, we used compost teas and saw such a reduction in disease that we plan to return to them

moving was taking so much time out of the day, it was difficult to sustain," says Peter. Time devoted to daily maintenance of greenside bunkers and those on fairways once or twice weekly can mount up, and you have two courses to tackle, each attracting 40,000 to 50,000 rounds a year."

"And we have to keep repairing the bunkers - and the sides of the fairways - that badgers damage in their search for worms and chafer grubs - there are a couple of setts in the grounds."

By the time of its 25th anniversary, the Cheshire had notched up one million rounds. "Among many tournaments held on the course, perhaps the most famed was the Pre-qualifier 1 for the European Tour from 1998 to 2002," Peter says.

Famous faces have pitted their golfing prowess against Carden courses, including footballers Michael Owen and Peter Crouch, comedians Jasper Carrott and Paddy McGuinness, world snooker champion

Dennis Taylor and actor Johnny Briggs amongst a host of other celebrities.

The Nicklaus

Leading majors winner (18) Jack Nicklaus carved a second career for himself designing golf courses, many reflecting The Golden Bear's record of long hitting off the tee.

He constructed Carden Park's course in 1998 and, at 7,045 yards, it is a tad longer than the Cheshire.

A tour flagship, the Nicklaus hosted five years of the Senior Open Championship qualifying until 2005.

With USGA specification greens throughout, the Nicklaus has a head start on many private members clubs, but the course poses headaches for Peter and the team in other ways.

"The Nicklaus is a contemporary course," Peter notes, "with heavy tree-lined holes and tighter fairways. We leave it natural, but our biggest challenge is that the





The Cheshire 18th tee



Jeff Jones

course is built on clay and the fairways can become very heavy going. Between 2007 and 2009, I brought in a construction team to work with us installing drainage across the course, costing six-figure sums. Laid at 9m centres, then sand slitted at 45 degrees angle to 2m centres, topped over the drain lines to keep them open.”

“The greens, bunkers and tees are all drained and storm systems take off the water during heavy rainfall.”

Last year, the team renovated 4,500m² of teeing surface, lifting and levelling over an intensive two-week window, with help from contractor Greentech.

It also signalled a return to a more organic approach. “If you make the plant healthy, it looks after itself,” Peter states. “Three or four years ago, we used compost teas and saw such a reduction in disease that we plan to return to them, with several being trialled currently. Bringing them back means we don’t need to feed the greens so much in winter, which introduces high risk of disease.”

The year-round maintenance workload

demands a big team to help Peter master the terrain. He heads a 16-strong team of full-timers, bolstered by another four part-timers when the new season tees off in April.

Peter’s is no island domain and he relies on two deputy course managers to look after the courses. Both in their roles longer than Peter, they know Carden like the backs of their hands.

Phil l’Anson has been here for seventeen years. “He’s a very clever guy, who’d like to be an agronomist, is in charge of our fertiliser calibration programme and completed his diploma in turfgrass science two years ago,” says Peter.

At Carden just a year less than Phil is Dougie Neilson. “I first met Dougie as a Gleneagles seasonal greenkeeper. It was a pleasant shock to see a friendly face when I arrived at Carden. He’s great at motivating the team to get up and out of the shed in the mornings.”

Also one to be mentioned is Jeff Jones. “Still full time at 77, he communicates well with young people, is a first-class stonemason and tackles



We treat our two hard courts with algaecide, powerbrush them every six to eight weeks and paint them every season





Both courses are still in their youth and it's awesome to watch them maturing year on year. Like seeing the changes to the tree plantation on the Nicklaus course

hard landscaping tasks.”

“He has fantastic energy,” adds Peter, “and leaps out of bed for the 40-minute drive to work from his home in Holywell. He loves it here. His wife Jill is 25 years younger than him.”

Loyalty runs deep within the team. “More than half of the guys have been with me since I arrived. They love working here too. They're a versatile and multi-skilled bunch.”

“Five or six new guys have come in on my

watch,” he adds. “The core of the team is pretty young - mid-twenties.”

It comes as no surprise to learn too of the turnover of kit at Carden Park, given the huge acreage under Peter's care.

“We introduce new machinery every year on a rolling plan,” he explains, “mainly Toro, with back-up from Cheshire Turf Machinery, which I've worked with since I came here.”

Go with the flow

Climate change is on the lips of many now, usually for negative reasons. The big upside for Carden Park is the wines flowing from the three acres of vineyards that golf club members and hotel guests enjoy.

“It's all consumed on site,” says Peter, “nothing is sold anywhere else. Laid in the early 1990s, the terroir delivers consistently high quality vintages - we

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 Toro 3250, tees and approaches
 Toro 4100 rough x 2
 Pro-Flex 120 and Progress, both tractor mounted
 Toro 5610 fairways x 2
 Toro 5410, for the football pitch
 Toro 3500 Sidewinder for cutting the drive and a 5-a-side pitch
 Ventrac 4500Y with different attachments, tough cut deck, contour deck and stump grinder x 2
 Toro 5800-D sprayer
 Toro Workman with Dakota topdresser, for topdressing tees and greens
 Dakota Turf Tender 440 for topdressing fairways and football pitch and topping bunkers with sand
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Topdressing with the Dakota

harvest Pinot Noir, Sauvignon Blanc, sparkling white and "pink fizz", created using the traditional Champenoise method, used to produce Champagne, with a second fermentation in the bottle, not in the vat," Peter adds.

"Estate worker Keith Latham is in charge of cutting the grass between the vines twice a week, whilst also pruning growth from the end of October to early November."

"Grapes are crated on a Monday, loaded and transported to Halfpenny Green Vineyard just outside Wolverhampton, where it is fermented and bottled for us."

Last year's swelteringly hot spell may

have severely challenged turfcare across Britain, but Carden Park was enjoying a bumper crop of grapes, Peter reports.

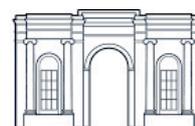
"In 2017, the harvest generated 5,500 bottles - last year that had risen to 15,500.

"The vines grow from a sandy gravelly soil," he explains. "It turned hot in May, with showers and there had been no late frosts, which can knock the flowering back, so conditions came together perfectly to create a great harvest."

"We sell all our own wine in-house - for the 70 to 80 weddings we host every year and in the Vines restaurant, (its name inspired by Carden's viticulture). I have thoroughly enjoyed learning about winemaking - a high point of my time at Carden Park."

Not every grape goes into winemaking. "Our director of spa takes some of the juice, including pips, to use as the basis of certain facial treatments," Peter reveals.

Moving through to next year, 2020 could deliver another landmark for Carden Park. Nominated for World Golf's English Golf Course of the Year Award, the estate promises to reinforce its status as one of the UK's top golfing and leisure destinations. Just rewards for Peter Pattenden and the team working in what is a constantly evolving landscape of sport.



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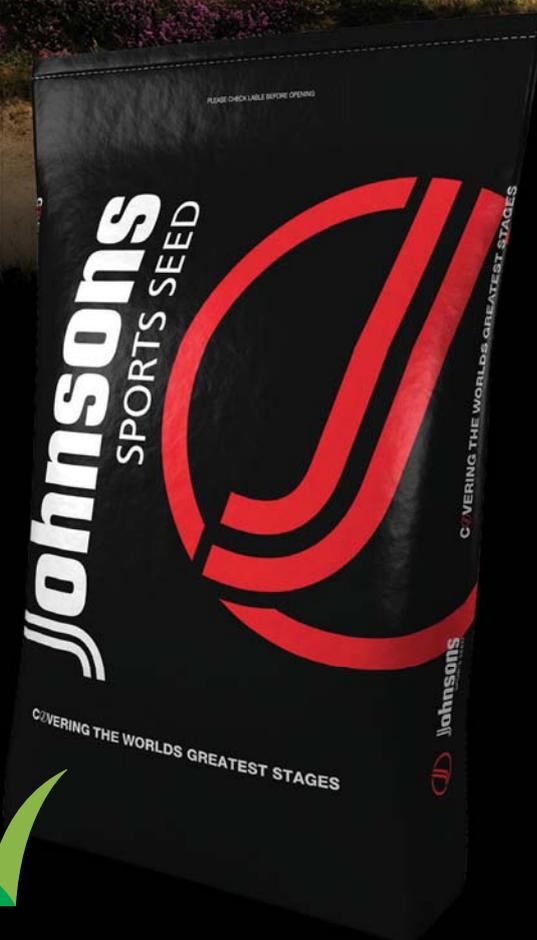


“ For me, the decision was easy; Johnsons J Premier Fairway, along with J All Bent, has moved our sward composition towards our ultimate goal of providing our members with the heathland characteristics we all aspire to.

Graham Brumpton

Course Manager
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Newclose County Cricket Ground

Vision expressed

There cannot be many more pleasurable things to do on a warm summer's day than to visit the Isle of Wight albeit via, what is considered, the most expensive ferry crossing per mile in the UK. I am here to meet **Andy Butler**, the head groundsman at one of England's newest cricket outgrounds. Peter Britton reports

As a regular weekend user of the Wightlink ferry crossing to Yarmouth on the Isle of Wight (or 'the Island' as we locals affectionately call it), I was somewhat surprised to see so many vehicles queued for boarding on a mid-week day.

I was forgetting, of course, that even islanders need their regular supply of crunchy nut cornflakes, baked beans, toiletries etc. and, therefore, there were all manner of vans, lorries and HGVs waiting to make the short crossing. So many, in fact, that it looked, at one point, that I might not make it onto the ferry for my allotted slot.

As it turned out, I was the second to last

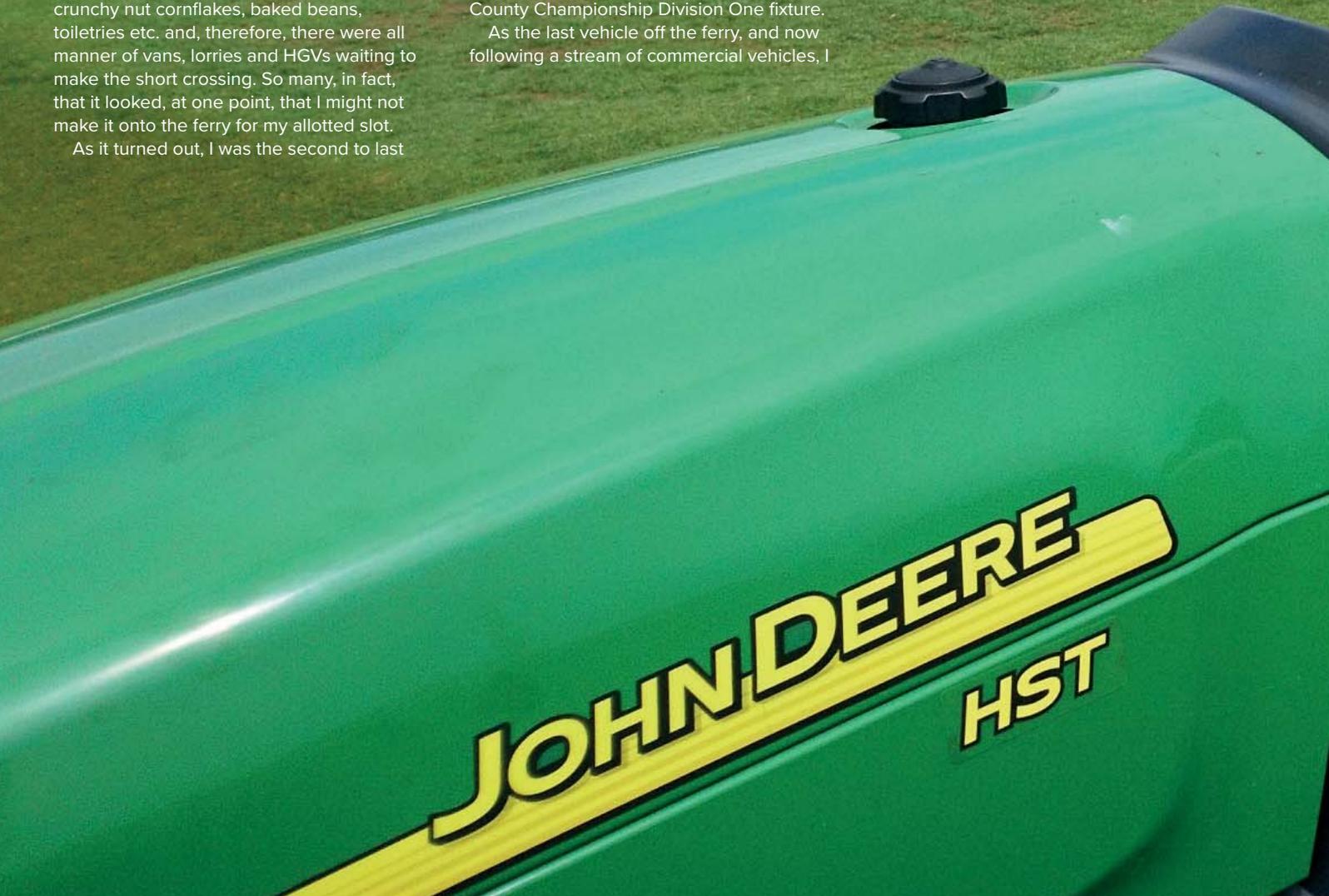
vehicle on, with the queue, and no doubt some frustrated drivers, still stretching out a good way behind me.

With Google maps set to direct me, I disembarked and headed for the island's main town of Newport to locate Newclose County Cricket Ground and its head groundsman Andy Butler to find out more about the man and how Hampshire County Cricket Club had chosen the venue for its County Championship Division One fixture.

As the last vehicle off the ferry, and now following a stream of commercial vehicles, I

was concerned that I might be late for my 11.15 appointment, but I needn't have worried as Google did its job and I arrived five minutes early. Waiting to meet me was Andy.

The ground is accessed via some rather grand iron gates leading down a driveway to a splendid pavilion overlooking the purpose built cricket ground. I am suitably impressed, as I'm sure the first class cricketers and their



JOHN DEERE
HST



Brian Gardener

This article appeared in the *Island Life* magazine a few months before the Newclose ground opened in 2009.

Speculation was rife when people driving along the Blackwater Road on the outskirts of Newport spotted the huge mounds of soil in a field. Rumour had it that hundreds of houses were going to be built on the site of the old agricultural showground. Instead, the Island is going to have a new cricket ground with a capacity of up to 2,000 people, which has been designed so that the superb pavilion and the surrounding banks will give it the feel of a modern amphitheatre.

Businessman Brian Gardener is the inspiration behind the Newclose County Cricket Ground. He realised the Island had needed a Gold Standard ground for a long time to help the sport move forward on several fronts. For example, Ventnor Cricket Club (of which Brian is president) has won the silver division of the Southern Electric League for the past four seasons, but their Steephill ground was deemed unsuitable for promotion to the gold division.

Should the club enjoy similar success in the next couple of seasons, they will achieve promotion and play their league matches at Newclose, bringing to the Island the highest standard of cricket ever seen here.

Ventnor chairman, John Hilsum, and former Cricket Development Manager on the Island, David Kilpack, were among those who helped Brian from the start. A management committee was formed and received a setback when the first site for the proposed ground at Whitecroft was considered unsuitable by the planners.

Undaunted, Brian purchased the old showground at Blackwater. The team then worked closely with planners and permission was eventually achieved. Brian said, "There was bound to be a lot of negotiation because this is a major sports development on the Island, but I'm delighted that we were able to agree on a way forward."

Thousands of tons of earth had to be moved so that archaeologists could examine the site, and the main road outside the ground had to be widened. Brian, who is one of the trustees, donated the field and provided part of the funding. More came from the National Sports Foundation and the England and Wales Cricket Board also provided guidelines on planning the ground and pavilion.

Members of the public will be invited to join the Friends of Newclose County Cricket Ground - which is a registered charity - and it is hoped to attract corporate sponsors. Brian emphasises that people are welcome to come to the ground to see cricket and to use the



restaurant and the bar in the pavilion which will have a main lounge and dining area, a kitchen, umpires' room, scorers' room, committee room, offices and stores.

Games will be held several times a week during the season with games in the evenings for adults and juniors.

The Isle of Wight Cricket Board achieved minor county status last year and, when Newclose is finished, it will become the only minor county in Britain to have its own county ground. The intention is to stage minor county matches at the ground within a few years.

Organising the work is a full-time job and there's still a lot to be done on the site before the ground opens for the 2009 season - but Brian Gardener's dream will soon be realised.

He's been coming to the Island all his life and has owned property here since the early 1990s. Brian has been fascinated by cricket since he was eleven-years-old and he was already a good organiser when, with a few friends, he formed the Wimpeyanian Cricket Club (named after the Wimpey estate where he lived) in Isleworth in the early 1950s.

"In those days, there were no facilities for playing cricket," Brian says, "and you were lucky if you owned a cricket bat." He made a cart of an old box from his grandmother's florist shop with wheels from an old pram and used it to carry their gear to the local park. The cart, fitted with shelves, was their 'pavilion' with score cards made from florist funeral cards and his sister helped to sell jam sandwiches and lemonade to raise funds for bats and composition balls made of cork.

They played two innings 'test' matches with the adjoining council estate boys and their dads acted as umpires. Brian picked up the rules of the game from 'Play the game' books and television, but says cricket has always been in his blood.

Asked if he wished he had played cricket professionally Brian said "It would be a fanciful idea, but I do wish I had played more cricket at club standard." But the boy who played cricket in the park with his friends in the '50s can say that he has realised another dream. It's taken four years to achieve but Island cricketers can now look forward to playing on a Gold Standard cricket ground.



The journey to work! Leaving Lyminster harbour

entourage will have been on first sight.

Everything looks pristine and 'new' and, after offering me a coffee, Andy tells me that the ground is just ten years old. "It was the vision of Brian Gardener," he explains. "He was passionate about cricket and did much to help the sport prosper on the island. He had previously been President of Ventnor Cricket Club which was, at one time, the home of the Isle of Wight Cricket Board, but they have now relocated here, although the indoor school is still there." (See side bar for more information).

We enter the Brian Gardener Pavilion and sit down in the Brian Gardener Meeting Room to continue my interview. The views across the amphitheatre style ground - landscaped and constructed by Speedcut Contractors - are splendid. Its rural setting adds to the ambience.

I begin by asking Andy how he first started out in the industry. "Mum and dad were single handicap golfers at Osborne Golf Club, and they were advertising for a greenkeeper. I worked there for eighteen months, before moving on to Ryde Golf Club where I spent a further eight years. It was



The peaceful rural setting of Newclose



whilst here that I gained NVQ 2, 3 and 4 via Sparsholt College, Winchester, and I also have PA 1, 2 and 6."

"From there, I moved to the Plessey Sports Ground in Cowes looking after a cricket square, two bowls greens and a football pitch. It is now known as the Isle of Wight Community Club. I was employed there for ten years."

It was during this time that Andy, in his spare time, used to look after the lawns of a large house owned by Paul Rudling, the CEO of SP Systems who manufacture wind turbines.

"It was Paul who suggested that I should go self employed - you have the knowledge, so use it, or words to that effect."

So, after discussing the idea with my wife Sharon, I went back to Plessey to explain the benefits to them of taking me on as a contractor rather than

as an employee - wages, NH contributions, holiday and sick pay, that sort of thing, and they jumped at the idea. It is a contract I still maintain to this day."

Andy lives in the village of Northwood, a few miles south of Cowes and not far from the Newclose ground, although nothing is too far on this 150 square mile island.

In addition to these two main contracts, his company - not surprisingly called Andy Butler Sports Ground Specialist - looks after seven bowls greens on the island, along with various smaller contracts and renovations for golf clubs, football clubs, large gardens and such like. He also has contracts on the mainland, one of them being the maintenance of seven bowls greens in Eastbourne. I am intrigued and ask him how that came about.



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Mowing on Sunday ahead of the Hants v Notts County Championship match

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- Charterhouse 7212 Verti-Drain
- Graden (tractor mounted)
- Blower (tractor mounted)
- Toro 3300 Workman with topdresser
- Graden sand injection
- John Deere Aercore 800
- Groundsman aerator
- Sisis Auto Rotorake Mk5 x 2
- Toro 3250 with Thatchaway units
- Air2G2
- John Deere 3245C ride on rotary mower
- John Deere 2653B triplex mower x 2
- John Deere X748
- Toro Groundsmaster 3500
- John Deere X155R lawn tractor
- John Deere 220B pedestrian greens mowers x 12
- Shibaura greensmower
- Weibang rotary mowers x 5
- Ransomes Mastiffs x 2
- Poweroll County (owned by Newclose)
- Linemarkers x 4
- Stihl brushcutters
- Stihl blowers
- Stihl hedgecutters
- Knapsack sprayers
- Billy Goat vacuum/blower
- Bernhard Express Dual 4000
- Bernhard Anglemaster 1000

"I was asked if I would demo the Graden Sand Injector for one of the clubs and said I would only do it if they got other clubs involved. On the day, five other bowls club greenkeepers turned up and it became something of a mini-seminar. On the back of that, we got the contract to look after all those clubs and two more into the bargain. Given the austerity measures in place, the local authority was, I think, rather glad to hand the work over to us. It wasn't my intention, but it has worked out very well. I have a supervisor over there, Paul Donno, who looks after the day to day running for me."

In addition, Andy has five employees, a couple of whom have been with him for ten years. Whilst Andy spends much of his time at Newclose, the others look after the other contracts, both on the island and the mainland. "We do a lot of Air2G2 and Graden work, especially for golf clubs in Dorset and Hampshire."

I suggest that it must be expensive to transport equipment over on the ferry. "It is; a 4x4 and trailer can cost £170 and this has to be passed on to the client, but they all

seem to like our work and never complain. I guess that says something about my team's commitment to our work."

And does he leave them to it? "Well, yes, but occasionally I'll pop in and check on their work. The company does, after all, carry my name."

One contract recently undertaken was the reurfing of 12.5 acres of lawns for a gentleman working in the 'financial sector'. We gave him the option of either seeding or turfing and, although turfing was more expensive, that's what he chose. I guess he wanted instant results. The timing was a bit difficult though as the job started at the same time as cricket renovations. We used 50% big roll; the rest was lawn turf rolls. In all, we put down over a hundred tonnes of fine soil. The work included converting a meadow to lawns. We finished the whole job just a couple of weeks before Christmas - not the ideal weather for establishment, but we were blessed with a fairly mild December. I have to say it looked fantastic when it was completed. The local turf supplier was delighted too; they'd never had such a large order!"



Monday morning nets



Square under cover ahead of the Hants v Notts game - roros from Stuart Canvas, flat covers from totalplay



Hants v Notts match pitch

All the equipment at Newclose is owned by Andy, with the exception of the Powerroll County, which is owned by the club. Cricket equipment remains at Newclose in a purpose built workshop below the pavilion. All other machines, of which there are many, are stored in a lock-up facility in Cowes when not in use.

Machines are supplied by Hunt & Forest, a mainland John Deere dealer, and all carry a 5% surcharge to get them over to the island. Andy has his own grinders for cylinder sharpening and considers the Mastiff a pain

compared to the John Deere's; "twenty minutes to do a JD and over two hours on the Mastiffs," he bemoans.

Back to Newclose and I ask how Hampshire chose the ground. "The seconds have played here a number of times, so they knew the facility well. In addition, and because of the Ageas Bowl hosting World Cup matches, they have played all their home games here, as have the Hampshire Academy team. And I honestly believe we have the best square and outground in the county."

"Hampshire's head groundsman, Nigel Gray (the man who can't retire!) has visited a few times in the past, and he came over on the Saturday before the game just to check that everything was in order. He must have been happy, because I didn't see him again, although a few Ageas Bowl lads helped out over the four days."

The match lasted until 3.15pm on the final day, with Hampshire running out winners by 244 runs. The highlights were centuries from Indian Test batsman Ajinkya Rahane and the home team's captain, Sam Northeast in their

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Getting Personal

Andy Butler - communicate, listen and remain ... and don't show off!



Family status? Married to Sharon with two teenage daughters - Mollie and Tillie.

Who's your hero and why? Booby Stokes - making a six year old cry with joy (1976 FA Cup final).

What's been the highlight of your grounds career so far? Probably preparing Newclose Cricket Ground for the recent County Championship game.

If your younger self saw you now, what would they think? He's worked hard and done okay for himself.

What job would you love, other than your own? Head Greenkeeper - based on one site - sounds appealing, without the stress of running a business.

What was the most embarrassing moment in your life? Dislocating a shoulder showing off diving into large waves.

Brexit or Remain? Remain.

What is your favourite film? Pulp Fiction.

What is your favourite sport? A couple of years ago I would have said football, but now it's definitely golf.

What would you cast into Room 101? Cricket players who walk on freshly painted crease lines and bowls players that put their woods on the green when I'm still mowing

Do you have a lifetime ambition? Not really. I just try to give my girls guidance and the best possible future.

Which three people, living or dead, would you invite to a dinner party? Whitney Houston, Freddie Flintoff and Louise Redknapp.

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

What's your favourite smell? Coming home after a long day and smelling my wife's cooking. I imagine that must be a nice smell.

Which three albums would you take to a desert island? Lionel Richie - Can't Slow Down; Sister Sledge - We Are Family; Billy Joel - Piano Man.

What's the daftest work-related question you have ever been asked? When a playing surface is flooded and players ask "is it playable?"

What's your favourite piece of kit? Tough one. It depends on the season. Spring working on a bowling green - Sisis TM1000. Autumn working on a cricket square - tractor mounted Graden. Winter working on golf greens - Air 2G2.

What three words would you use to describe yourself? Conscientious, hardworking, grumpy.

What is the single most useful thing you could tell a 16-year-old grounds person? Listen.

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



Stuart Broad in action

second innings. "I'd have taken that if you'd asked me at the start of play," beamed Andy.

And was he nervous in the run-up to the game? "No, not at all. I know we have a quality ground here, from the pavilion, to the hospitality marquee, the outfield and the square; and you can't beat the setting either."

"It was intense though and I only relaxed once the game was over. I found the experience enjoyable only then, and I look forward to hosting the county XI again very soon."

Crowds exceeding 5,000 visited over the four days, with a good number travelling from the mainland. Sadly, for all those involved in Newclose, Brian Gardener passed away in February 2015 and never saw his ambition realised.

The original square, constructed by Speedcut, comprised ten Ongar Loam pitches. Over time, Andy has added another seven by heavily scarifying and topdressing with Ongar. These are used by junior sides, often with a two matches being played at the same time. A

safety net separates the two games across the centre of the square.

"We will have accommodated around seventy games by the end of this season, which looks like being the new 'norm'. A few years back, when Ventnor were relegated from the Southern Premiership and returned to their home ground, we dropped down to just thirty games. That was a fairly relaxed season for me but, of course, that affected bar takings and important revenue for the club, so I'm actually really pleased our fixture levels are back up again."

Andy is very much a family man and he fully acknowledges the part his wife played in allowing him to start up his business. "It was very much a joint decision. Sharon had a well-paid job and, with my Plessey contract secured, I knew I'd have some money coming in but, of course, I had to buy new machinery if I was going to be able to expand the business, and that would mean considerable financial outlay."

"In addition, she was bringing



An overseeded used pitch - it won't be used again this season



Nets on day 3 of the Hants v Notts game either side of the match pitch



The local press react favourably

up our two girls, Mollie and Tilly, pretty much on her own as I was working seven days a week. I still do to be honest, especially in the height of summer."

"Sharon and the girls play netball, but not for the same team, so the banter between them when they come head to head can be quite amusing."

They have represented the Isle of Wight at the biennial Island Games, as has Andy at football, but his chosen sport to play now is golf. Has he ever played cricket? No, I don't really enjoy watching the game, but I

thoroughly enjoy preparing the grounds. It is so different from any other sports surface preparation."

"I helped out at the Ageas for the World Cup and preferred the day we were running on and off with the rain covers. When the match was uninterrupted, I found myself walking over to the nursery ground to help out the lads working there."

What does he do for relaxation? "I like to play golf whenever I get the opportunity. We also have a large circle of friends and we will often go camping en masse somewhere on

the island. Our girls still join us which, at fifteen and seventeen years of age is, I guess, something of a rarity these days."

"In a few days time, Sharon and I are off to Gibraltar to watch this year's Island Games in which they are competing."

"Oh, and my seventy-eight year old mum does my accounts. It drives her mad because I store things up and dump everything on her in large bundles!"

Even working long hours family, it seems, remains important to Andy.



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Lancashire County Cricket Club

The Merchant of Old Trafford

Old Trafford, known for sponsorship reasons as Emirates Old Trafford, opened in 1857 as the home of Manchester Cricket Club and, since 1864, has been the home of Lancashire County Cricket Club. This is where Lee Williams met with **Matt Merchant**, the 45-year-old Head Groundsman who has been at the club for twenty-nine years



It's early June in Manchester when I pull up outside the Emirates Old Trafford cricket ground, and the heavens have opened! Next to the media centre, where the groundstaff's brew room is situated, I'm met by Matt who gives me a warm welcome and drags me immediately in out of the rain.

In the next few months, Matt and his team will have the enormous responsibility of getting the wickets and outfield in pristine condition ready for some big fixtures in the ICC Cricket World Cup and the fourth Ashes Test match in the first week of September.

I asked Matt is there are any special considerations when maintaining the surfaces for such big games? "The set-up is no different to what we would do for any County Championship game, one dayer or Twenty20. For the World Cup, Ashes and any high profile games, we're under an extreme amount of pressure to produce the right track - the main issue we have to deal

with is the volume of practice. From the 14th June right through till the 12th July there will be training every day. We are used to players training, but not on consecutive days, so we will have to manage that accordingly. They are training on the outfield and in the nets before their games. We have England, Pakistan, India, Afghanistan, West Indies and New Zealand. We will have some night-time training as well given we have two day/night games."

I interject to ask if this will mean more hours for him and the team? "A lot more hours. We will probably start at 6.00am and finish around 6.30pm for training days, and on day/night training session we will be working from 7.30am until 9.30pm. Day/night games hours are 10.00am till 11.00pm; starting at 10 allows us to get the outfield and square cut and nets ready, plus other jobs before the media circus arrives. Whilst normal match days we will be starting at 5.30am and finish at 9.00pm. It's going to



I don't know how we encourage more younger people into the industry, but it may be down to the colleges and our industry bodies to try and raise the profile of the job



Image courtesy of Ben Gibson



England v India T20



It's going to be a long four weeks, but we are all looking forward to the experience as last time we had the World Cup here was in 1999

be a long four weeks, but we are all looking forward to the experience as last time we had the World Cup here was in 1999. At that time, I was twenty-four years old and wasn't really interested in what was going on. We had three games at Old Trafford that year - two qualifiers and a semi-final. This year, we have six. I think, of all the venues, we are hosting the most games, with the biggest being our first game - Pakistan v India - which, I have been told, we could have sold out eighty times over they had that many applications for tickets." (The ICC later confirmed they had received 700,000 ticket applications).

Matt explained how TV camera positions affect how many wickets can be used. "We have five TV pitches out on the square

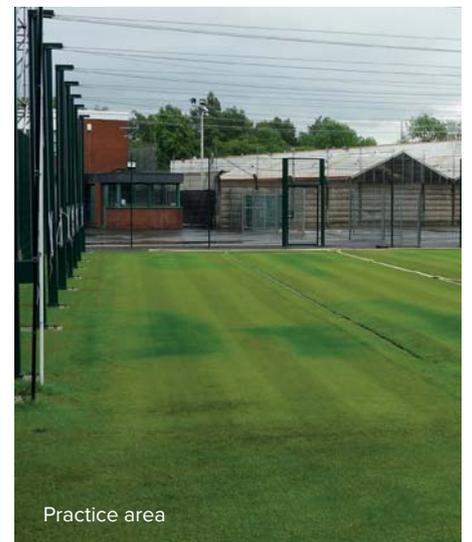
available to the pavilion camera gantry. So we must keep one for the Ashes Test match in September, whilst the other four pitches we will use for the World Cup. Pakistan v India and England v Afghanistan will go on the same wicket; then we will use another for West Indies v New Zealand and West Indies v India, then a fresh pitch each for South Africa v Australia and the semi-final."

The temporary stand went up in April and will not come down until after the Ashes Test match in September; it adds an additional 8,500 seats and takes the ground to its maximum capacity of 23,500. To fit such a sizeable temporary stand into the ground, they must reduce the size of the practice area to accommodate it. Matt tells me that you wouldn't catch him sitting at the back of it, such is the height of the structure!

Matt explains how he started his career at Lancashire County Cricket Club. "My mum and dad were publicans who owned the pub just over the bridge. Pete Marron was the Head Groundsman at the time and was a regular in there. I came here for work experience for two weeks prior to an Ashes Test Match, and I really enjoyed it. The following year I got a phone call from Pete



Head Groundsman, Matt Merchant



Practice area



Covers at the ready



asking me if I fancied joining the grounds team as an apprentice, so that was it. I said yes and started in April 1990. I have worked my way up through the ranks, so to speak, and have been Head Groundsman since 2009 when Pete retired. This is my tenth season in charge.”

Pete was the man who inspired Matt throughout his time with the club. “From employing me when I was a young lad to the day he retired after twenty-five years, I

always looked up to him. I’m grateful he gave me a chance as I was a bit of a tearaway and, without him, might not be where I am today. Sadly, he passed away in May 2015 and he’s sorely missed.”

Matt liaises with the operations director to discuss and set budgets for the year. “I will go to him and say I need this, that and the other, and he will then look at what the financial situation is at the time and set available funds from there. We like to get at



Fertiliser, chemicals and grass seed budgets are similar year on year, and it’s a matter of working within it

Lancashire County Cricket Club, Emirates Old Trafford

Head Groundsman, Matt Merchant

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**We are finding that the
 season is starting earlier
 and finishing later, and you
 know yourself what the
 weather is like around here
 at the start of October**



least one new piece of machinery a year to keep things up to date. Fertiliser, chemicals and grass seed budgets are similar year on year, and it's a matter of working within it."

Matt's team comprises; Andy Carney, age 36, who has been at Old Trafford for four years; Will Gorst, 56, twenty years' service; Harry Morton, 18, two years' service; Colin Bury, 59, twenty-one years' service; Andrew McHale, 24, three years; Les Stephens, 56, two years; and David Shortt, 28, ten years' service.

The outfield was reconstructed by Whitehorse Contractors at the back end of the 2008 season using an 80/20 sand/soil rootzone mix on a 100mm gravel raft with drains every five metres. For the new square, which was turned through ninety degrees in 2011, the chosen contractor, Bancroft, used GOSTD 500 Special Mix from Surrey Loams Ltd. Construction comprised 100mm

of limestone to dust chippings with 200mm of the GOSTD loam on top; the clay content was approximately 30%.

Equipment available to Matt consists of a fully automated irrigation system on the main pitch and on the net area with Rainbird sprinkler heads. "That is fed by a borehole," explains Matt. "Then, under the car park, there is a 90,000-litre tank, so we have plenty of water available to us ... but, being in Manchester, we don't always need it. Just look at today!"

"We have one SGL MU50 lighting rig which we got four or five years ago, after we'd had three concerts in a row - they trashed the pitch. Two weeks after the last one, we had a Test match against Pakistan, and the light helped us recover the worst areas before the fixture. Now we use it to help with recovery from the shade cast by the new media stand. Sheet wise, we have



Left to right: Les Stephens - seasonal, Will Gorst - Assistant Groundsman, Jacob Graham - seasonal, David Shortt - Assistant Head Groundsman, Andrew Carney - Gardener, Colin Bury (sat down) - net area Assistant Groundsman, Matt Merchant - Head Groundsman, Paul Bryson - World Cup staff, Andrew McHale - seasonal, Ben Stephens - World Cup staff, Harry Morton - seasonal



six Climate Covers from totalplay, rain covers from Stuart Canvas, which are mainly used in the practice nets, and we also have the Stuart Canvas hover cover.”

The club has invested in hybrid SISGrass pitches in recent years. “We have two pitches on the main square; one that we are going to use for either a men’s or women’s Twenty20 game later this season, and one at the far edge of the square which is going to be used for practice.

These were completed in April of this year. The take-off areas have also had SISGrass stitched into them and, last year, we had two pitches done on the net area. England and Australia used them for the international games, and they seemed to perform really well and lasted twice as long as a regular grass net would do; we got about eight weeks out of them.”

I asked Matt if he sees a green tinge from the fibres once he has prepared the

wicket? “Yes, normally we take all the grass off the wicket, so you do see a tinge of green, the fibres are about 6mm out of the ground. Quite a few county grounds around the country also have them. We will never be able to use them for a four-day championship match as the surface has to deteriorate as the game goes on. But the ECB has allowed us to use these hybrid pitches this year for one-dayers, whether it be a Twenty20 or a fifty over game.”

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General maintenance and renovation of the outfield and wickets is detailed by Matt. "We will take the height of cut down to 12mm on the outfield during the season with the Allett Regal 42 inch mowers and the Toro 6700-D seven unit outfield mower. Last year, the outfield was koroed off by Mallinsons in August after the Liam Gallagher concert. They also did a bit of levelling work using 500 tonnes of rootzone. This was then overseeded with Johnsons Pro Nitro Premier Wicket, which we also use on the square and net area, keeping the ryegrass species the same throughout the ground. End of season renovation work on the square we carry out ourselves. We will scarify using the SISIS Rotorake, going in numerous directions and then finishing off in the line of play, then collect all the clippings with the Lloyds Paladin wicket mowers. We then seed with the Blec Uni-seeder in two directions, to get as many holes as we can and topdress with GOSTD Surrey Loam using fifteen, twenty-kilo bags per wicket using a SISIS Truspred."

"Once a pitch has been used, we will flood it down, hand fork the foot holes and level them, lightly scarify the surface, seed it and apply a light topdressing. We tend to find that we can look at reusing it five or six weeks later, so we can't put too thick a topdressing on. Normally, because they get so hard, we end up overseeding them two or three weeks in so, by the time they come back into play, we have reasonable grass cover."

Matt likes to aerate the outfield when he gets the chance during the season. "With so many games - and men, women and the academy players training here now - it's very rare we get the chance to verti-drain during the season, so we tend to go out with the Toro ProCore when we can. We tend to do most of our deep aeration over the winter period."

It's the same when it comes to his fertiliser regime. Matt finds himself working around the players. "It's very few, and far between. Lately, we have been putting down ICL's



For the World Cup, the only issue we will have to deal with is the volume of practice. From the 14th June right through till the 12th July there will be training every day



Stand construction



I have worked my way up through the ranks, so to speak, and have been Head Groundsman since 2009

Sierrablen, which gives us six to eight weeks and, two days ago, we had it sprayed with a 14:0:7 and Primo Maxx. We tend to go granular, liquid, granular; this gives us the best results when time allows.”

Matt’s machinery is a mix of owned and hire purchase over five years and he tends to be loyal to his local dealer, Cheshire Turf Machinery. “We use them for the maintenance contract on the machines we have purchased from them, so the

mechanics, Robin and Warren, are in here quite a bit. They are reliable, and we have established a good relationship with them over the years. We have recently purchased a new Blotter water removal machine, so we now have three of them, which is ideal - being in Manchester!”

Matt’s main item on his wish list is a new SGL lighting rig. “I would like to invest in a lighting rig for the square, a few of the other county groundsmen have enquired as well,

but you are looking at about £60,000 to £70,000. It would be a bespoke rig to span the square, and the wheels will run in the take-off area, so they don’t touch the playing surface. I have put it into my capital budget for next year and we’ll wait and see what happens.”

I asked Matt what he thought the advantages of the lighting rig would be when prepping the square. “We are finding that the season is starting earlier and finishing later,

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SGL MU50 lighting rig



Lancashire County Cricket Club

and you know yourself what the weather is like around here at the start of October; once it starts raining you just can't get on them. So, the idea is that, once we have renovated and overseeded the square, we'll use the lighting rig to encourage quicker grass growth, giving us more time."

Matt has significant concerns about our industry going forward. "For me, we have really struggled with getting young

people involved in the job. There doesn't seem to be any interest in it at all. The long hours, weekend work and the pay are not particularly great incentives. For instance, for the World Cup we have advertised locally through the college because we have Myerscough who come into the indoor school, and there has been no interest whatsoever from younger people. I don't know how we encourage more younger people into the industry, but it may be down to the colleges and our industry bodies to try and raise the profile of the job."

A brief history

Lancashire Cricket Club represents the historic county of Lancashire in cricket's County Championship. Founded in 1864 as a successor to Manchester Cricket Club, Lancashire have played at Old Trafford since then and, in 1865, played their inaugural first-class match, beating Middlesex at Old Trafford.

Old Trafford is England's second oldest Test venue and hosted the first Ashes Test in England, in July 1884, and two Cricket World Cup semi-finals. In 1956, the first 10-wicket haul in a single innings was achieved by England bowler Jim Laker who achieved bowling figures of

19 wickets for 90 runs - a bowling record which is still unmatched in Test and first-class cricket. In the 1993 Ashes Test at Old Trafford, leg-spinner Shane Warne bowled Mike Gatting with the "Ball of the Century".

Extensive redevelopment of the ground to increase capacity and modernise facilities began in 2009 in an effort to safeguard international cricket at the venue. The pitch at Old Trafford has historically been the quickest in England, but will take spin later in the game. It is located about 0.5 miles (800m) from Old Trafford football stadium.



It's very rare we get the chance to verti-drain during the season, so we tend to go out with the Toro ProCore when we can



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Cromer Lawn Tennis and Squash Club

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Every year the Lawn Tennis Association and STRI visit lawn tennis clubs all over the country to assess their courts. In April 2019, they went to a Norfolk coastal town and two months later announced that Cromer Lawn Tennis and Squash Club had some of the best courts in England. Blair Ferguson reports



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I'd love to say it's all down to me, but the courts were in good nick when I joined. I wouldn't say they were any worse back then, but I would say we've kept them at that high standard and maybe progressed them that bit more

The report stated: "The grass courts at Cromer are some of the best grass courts in the UK. They are well managed, dominated by perennial ryegrass and are open for play for six months of the year. The courts and surrounds are always beautifully presented and are a credit to the grounds team."

The ten grass courts have been under the control of Head Groundsman, Matthew Jordan, for eleven years. Along with his assistant, Peter Cooper, they have produced grass courts that rival some of England's highest profile venues and have elevated the already high reputation of their club.

"We have a report from the LTA each year,

and I think it has got better as the years have gone by," Matthew explained. "I'm proud to have received recognition for the work Peter and I do, and it's great for the club as well. The LTA go to all the clubs in the country, so they know what they're looking for and for them to commend us so highly is nice."

"One of the guys from the LTA meets the chairman to discuss finance and where the club is going long-term, and the STRI take soil samples, do ball bounce tests, Clegg hammer tests, moisture readings and count the species of grass. We had that back, and it was really good; we're over 90% ryegrass, and only Wimbledon could say they have 100% because they koro off their courts

every year, which is something we couldn't afford to do here."

"They take grass samples from the baseline, service line and net. The baseline will be pretty much all ryegrass because they get fairly worn, so we replace them totally, whereas you have other species in the service line and net line because they don't get worn out each year."

"I'd love to say it's all down to me, but the courts were in good nick when I joined. I wouldn't say they were any worse back then, but I would say we've kept them at that high standard and maybe progressed them that bit more."

"When I first started here, organic matter was quite high and it's down to your



Players often go to the closest one, and I'd do the same, so we rotate them to keep the wear equal because you want them to all to be playing the same during the tournaments

renovation to sort that. We increased the amount we scarify, and we verti-cut throughout the summer, which keeps on top of that throughout the year, and it's gradually coming down. It won't reduce dramatically in one year, it takes time, so we are continually looking at that."

"The end of season renovation is a key part for us because, if we don't get it right then, we're in for a challenging year. We do our renovation in September and it consists of heavily scarifying it all first to get rid of the dead moss, the grass and lateral growth. Over the years, we've gradually done more and more of that, and that has helped progress the courts a lot. Then we spike it all and go over it with seed, loam and pre-seeder which obviously helps the grass grow, then we drag it all in and, fingers crossed, it will grow like it has done previously."

"The development of machinery has been important, and our renovation is where we see most of that. We used to scarify with a walk behind machine, and to do ten courts five or six times in different directions took a long time. Now we've got an Allett BJB42 scarifier that picks up all the debris; and we go over with that in four different directions five or six times to really rip it all up. Once we have done that, we cut it and then spike it with a John Deere Aercore to get the moisture and air flowing through the ground. Then we use two tonnes of Kettering court loam to fill out any hollows."

Cromer has 150 adult members and 120 juniors, as well as teams and tournaments. Because the courts are busy throughout the six months, Matthew is conscious of giving the members as long a season as possible and opens the courts in the middle of April rather than the usual beginning of May. As



Peter Cooper and Matthew Jordan



well as keeping the members happy, it also gives him the chance to take advantage of warmer September weather for the renovation and avoid any cold snaps that could hamper growth.

Having the courts in prime condition has always been crucial for Cromer because of the tournaments they host. In county week, they host players from six counties and have constant tennis from 9.00am to 6.00pm. In junior week, play goes from 8.30am until it gets dark to facilitate 300 children and, during Norfolk senior week, which is in its 100th year at the club, 160 players use the courts.

Attracting such large numbers to the town is important for the club and surrounding businesses, and the ability to host these events relies heavily on the grass courts and their ability to take a high amount of tennis.

Matthew explained: "If the club didn't

have the grass courts, it wouldn't be thriving like it is because we wouldn't get the tournaments we have or get tennis societies returning that have been coming here for years just to play on grass."

"Doing small things like rotating courts makes a big difference throughout the season. The four near the clubhouse haven't been played on for three days as they were getting a bit worn; it's because players often go to the closest one, and I'd do the same, so we rotate them to keep the wear equal because you want them to all to be playing the same during the tournaments."

"Cromer is a big holiday destination, so people go online and look at the tennis club, and then they come down here and think 'wow'. And there is a bit of a wow factor because a small town like Cromer has ten of the top grass courts in the country and it is a big draw for the town. For our junior week



If the club didn't have the grass courts, it wouldn't be thriving like it is because we wouldn't get the tournaments we have or get tennis societies returning



Four all weather courts complement the ten grass courts



It works well because we do that and the LTA buy machinery which we share between all three clubs. It's beneficial to them because they want to keep grass court tennis up and running



we will have 300 kids, and they'll bring their brothers, sisters and parents, and they'll stay in the town, and that generates a lot of money for local business."

Attracting young tennis players has always been important to the LTA and providing them with good courts to play on is a high priority. The 2019 report isn't the first time Matthew's expertise has been recognised by the LTA. Four years ago, he was asked to conduct the renovations at Felixstowe Lawn Tennis Club and, a year later, Frinton Lawn Tennis Club.

"The LTA want another Wimbledon champion because the profile of tennis gets a massive lift when it happens, so they want to promote grass court tennis as much as they can and, for that, they need courts for people to play on," Matthew said.

"Over the last three or four years, we've also been going to Frinton and Felixstowe to do their renovations. We help maintain and oversee their courts, spending a week at each venue to do the work."

"The LTA approached us because we're quite local compared to a lot of the other clubs, and we started off by doing the

maintenance, and now we go down every other month and oversee both clubs. and do their fertilising and spraying applications for them."

"It works well because we do that and the LTA buy machinery which we share between all three clubs. It's beneficial to them because they want to keep grass court tennis up and running."

"I always think you should keep maintaining and updating machinery because, if things do go wrong, it'll cost you a fortune; that's why we always have our machinery maintained at the end of the season. The LTA has been really helpful over the last few years because when they do their visits, they'll also look at what machinery is needed and then it's up to us to get prices. This year, they are buying us a new sprayer because ours is getting old, but thinking of it as a cost between three clubs makes financial sense for them and their aims."

The involvement of the LTA during Matthew's time at Cromer has been an important factor in progressing the courts. Every other year, a two-day seminar is held



The members are a good bunch



We want to keep the bar as high as possible, but there probably comes a point where we think can we go any further without spending more money?

at The All England Lawn Tennis Club, Wimbledon, for grounds professionals and those responsible for grass courts, which allows groundsmen to learn from the Wimbledon grounds team and apply it to their situation.

A couple of years ago, Matthew saw germination sheets on the baselines of some Wimbledon courts. Whilst he doesn't have the resources to trial them at Cromer, the Wimbledon team were happy to show him courts that were and weren't using them and, as a result, he now uses them

successfully himself. Others in the industry, like head of courts and horticulture at the AELTC, Neil Stubley, are always happy to help and Matthew is keen to pass on that knowledge to others.

Taking on advice has been a contributing factor to Matthew's success so far and may prove to be important going forward. During our interview, we covered how he got the courts to this point, but he has now set a new standard for himself. In the immediate future, he isn't aiming to raise those standards, but consolidate them and

continue to do what is best for the club.

"For next year, we just don't want to get any worse, so there is a bit of pressure. We want to keep the bar as high as possible, but there probably comes a point where we think can we go any further without spending more money? The only thing we could do is koro them all off, but the club wouldn't pay for that because there's no point because they, the members and the LTA are all happy. And it may not be beneficial for the club."

"The members are a good bunch, and

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The members are a good bunch, and they will always pass on their appreciation, which is always nice to hear because they are the ones that play on them all the time



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they will always let you know their appreciation, which is always nice to hear because they are the ones that play on them all the time. And when we have our big events, people come from all over the country, and they appreciate the courts as well. It's great to get feedback like that."

"I'm not sure where the next level up is, but I think we just need to keep doing what we are doing. The club may decide they want to koro the courts or the LTA may suggest it. At Frinton, the courts are set in four blocks, and they had three of those koroed off and started again."

"One thing that would improve the courts is having an irrigation system put in. We have a couple of connections for hoses along the bank at the back of the courts, and we have a long hose and a travelling sprinkler which isn't a great way to do it because, sometimes, the sprinkler will get stuck creating a massive puddle on there."

"The technology is obviously there to do things like that with app-controlled systems, but because of the weather and only being

open six months of the year, the club isn't likely to pay for it."

"You can't beat natural rain, but last year was probably the hardest since I've been here in terms of keeping the courts alive. The heat came at the wrong time for us because it was leading up to a tournament, so the courts were really dry and being played on no end, so we didn't get a chance to irrigate because the system is too slow."

The club isn't afraid to invest when needed, and the quality of the courts is as much a credit to them as it is Matthew. They listen to his opinion, support his decisions and have a membership that does the same. Because of that, they have put Cromer on the lawn tennis map amongst some of the most renowned venues in England and will continue to stay so using Matthew's considered approach.





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Warwick School

Project One

Warwick Independent Schools Foundation has embarked on extensive improvements and modernisation known as its Project One Campus. Due for completion next year, Grounds Manager **Duncan Toon** has been overseeing the installation of new sports facilities. Report by Jane Carley



I'm known as the 'no man'. There is tremendous demand on the facilities and we have to manage them carefully to control wear and, most importantly, ensure quality, safe playing surfaces for the pupils. By gathering data, I can work closely with the sports coaches to achieve this, whilst ensuring that pupils get to play sport year round



Extensive cricket facilities include the Main Square which backs onto the school buildings

We chose a good date in June to visit Duncan Toon, Grounds Manager at Warwick Independent Schools Foundation: it was exactly one year since he took up the role. The Foundation is going through a dramatic period of change, which is impacting on the grounds and sports facilities, allowing modernisation and improvements which will be needed to cater for 2,300 pupils when the Foundation completes its Project One Campus in 2020.

King's High School is to move from its Smith Street location in the centre of the historic county town to new purpose-built buildings currently being constructed on the Myton Road campus, bringing it onto one site with Warwick School, Warwick Junior School and Warwick Preparatory School.

Pupils will benefit from new state-of-the-art buildings, playgrounds and playing fields, connected by interlinking pedestrianised tree-lined walkways and set amidst landscaped courtyards.

Duncan's first task has been to establish and equip a new grounds team, which will oversee and implement improvements to

and maintenance of the enhanced facilities.

Previously Deputy Head Groundsman at Birmingham City Football Club training ground, Duncan has brought a fresh approach, using turf and soil condition data to help plan pitch usage.

"I'm known as the 'no man'," he jokes. "There is tremendous demand on the facilities and we have to manage them carefully to control wear and, most importantly, ensure quality, safe playing surfaces for the pupils. By gathering data such as Clegg hammer and moisture meter readings, I can work closely with the sports coaches to achieve this, whilst ensuring that pupils get to play sport year round."

To cite an example, pitches became very hard last summer and being able to show a Clegg hammer reading of 211 to the rugby coach helped him to make an informed decision to cancel a fixture.

Significant investment in upgrading existing pitches and developing new facilities has been key and is ongoing.

Behind the historic buildings sits the Main Square rugby pitch which takes on the role of cricket outfield in the summer; the Junior Square incorporates a synthetic wicket and



Warwick School grounds in 2018, showing the development of the new King's High School buildings adjacent to the Banbury Square

A sense of history

Dating back to 914, Warwick School is the oldest boys school in the country, and moved to its current twenty hectare site on Myton Road in 1879. With King's High being established in the same year, the Foundation was born, and now comprises Warwick School for boys from 7-18, including Warwick Junior School (7-11s) and King's High for girls from 11-18, incorporating Warwick Preparatory School which is co-ed from 3-7 with girls continuing from 7-11. Project One Campus will see all the schools together on one site for the first time.

Recent developments include the Halse Pavilion, completing the Sports Centre with its 25m swimming pool, fitness suite and gymnasium, and Warwick Hall, completed in 2016 and providing an impressive events venue.

Project One Campus will deliver a new school for King's High, including a Sports and Technology 'wrap-around' built onto the existing Bridge Sports Centre, a shared Sixth Form Centre providing study and social space for King's High and Warwick School together, and a purpose-built, high-tech Music School for Warwick Prep and King's High.

The buildings will offer additional venues for events outside of school hours. The project will also enhance the available sports and play facilities and divert parking and traffic flow to the edge of the site, improving safety and the ambience of the site.

its 1.5ha is the only part of the grounds so far to have a primary and secondary drainage system.

"This area was formerly tennis courts, but the school wanted to extend the sports field, so it was re-levelled and drained.

Unfortunately, the secondaries were installed during the heatwave and opened up, so it had another 200 tonnes of sand applied. But the final results are excellent - we didn't lose a match on it last winter."

The heatwave which gripped Britain in the first few months of Duncan's tenure proved fortuitous, as he explains.

"We were trying to water from two taps which have a maximum of 1.5 bar pressure, so it was a struggle even to use the sprinklers we had. The conditions strengthened the case for a proper irrigation system and we now have a borehole with a licence for 20,000 litres/day, which we would like to increase. Investment was made

in a new set of travelling sprinklers, and I'm looking at a new sprinkler head design."

Benefits extend beyond maintaining playing surface conditions in dry spells.

"I wanted to be bold with renovations from the outset, but it wasn't an option without irrigation," he says. Currently supplied via a network of plastic pipes, permanent pipework is the next addition.

A new 3G rugby pitch, installed by SIS Pitches, was completed in January 2019.

"The 3G is very popular - even in summer it is used for cricket practice, with 150 pupils using plastic stumps," comments Duncan. "It means that we can guarantee pupils are able to play, regardless of the weather, although pupils do alternate between synthetic and natural surfaces."

There's no doubt that the 3G is the centrepiece of the sports fields, with its pristine surface and smart surround in Warwick School's bright blue colours.



The new 3G pitch has proved popular for a range of sports, and offers the opportunity to rest natural turf pitches as well as ensuring sport can take place year round



Seen from the Main Square, the Halse Pavilion offers a 25m swimming pool, fitness suite and gymnasium



Temporary pipes feeding the sprinklers from the borehole will soon be replaced by permanent pipework

Grounds Supervisor, Garry Delday, is now focused on the synthetic pitches, maintaining the 3G after every 10 hours' play.

SIS supplied a small tractor and brush, but Duncan has added a SISIS Osca which is used fortnightly to decompact the infill. Keeping on top of debris is vital and the Osca also helps bring small seeds, such as

sycamore, to the surface for easier collection.

"The carpet should have a 15-year lifespan, but it's good to know that the school has already budgeted for its future replacement. Educating staff and pupils about looking after it, such as wearing the correct footwear, has also been part of our job."

Two Tiger Turf hockey pitches have multi-sport use, which will come in handy when new tennis and netball courts are being developed during summer 2019. Eventually, the new area will also feature a multi-use pavilion for the neighbouring rugby and cricket pitches.

Planned for the heart of the developments is a larger grounds shed,



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Tom Cullen, operating the new five-gang Toro Reelmaster 3575-D fairway mower, is also the school's landscape gardener as well as assisting the grounds team

where the equipment, which is currently spread around the campus, can be housed in one place with a modern washdown.

"This will make a big difference," comments Deputy Head Groundsman, Matt Barnes. "Not only for improved security, but also convenience, saving us having to walk across the grounds to get tools for simple tasks like mower adjustment."

Due for renovation later this year is the floodlit rugby pitch. To tackle its undulations and waterlogging, the surface will be stripped, 200 tonnes of sand spread and the pitches laser levelled before another 200 tonnes of sand are applied.

Soils are relatively easy with the sandy loams drying quickly, allowing the team to get on and mow after rain.

With prestigious fixtures on a frequent basis - mid-June saw sixth formers play a men's side from the MCC, for example - presentation is a priority and this has been factored into some of the new machinery purchases. Clippings from the triples are blown and collected in the new Gator for

disposal, and the SISIS flexi brush is also used to tidy up the surfaces.

To tackle the hard conditions last year, Duncan engaged a local contractor to verti-drain pitches monthly.

"The first time, the tines only went in 7.5cm! We have since seen a major improvement in infiltration and tines are going down to 28cm. We've now invested in a Charterhouse Verti-Drain 2220 and, as it is a high-speed machine, it could treat the whole site in two days if necessary."

He has been particularly impressed with some new purchases: "We bought four Dennis Pro 34R rotary mowers which are excellent for rugby clean-ups, and they are also proving their worth on the cricket pitches - after hosting the Edgbaston under-12s, the clean-up took less than half an hour on two squares. The Infinicut battery mowers give such a fantastic finish and have low noise levels, which is important as we have to avoid noise close to exam rooms. With the Infinicut, we can still carry on and prepare pitches."

In an ideal world, he would like to move to more pedestrian kit, but with limited resources and the workload being as high it is, adding a five-gang Toro Reelmaster 3575-D fairway mower to the existing 3100-D triple has been essential.

A suite of battery powered tools from Husqvarna means that strimming, hedge cutting, tree work with a pole saw and leaf blowing can all be carried out with minimal noise.

"There's a huge difference compared to a petrol blower, for example," comments Duncan. "Operators tend to use the kit for no more than four hours, so one backpack and one portable battery covers all the tools, as long as they remember to put them on charge!"

A new approach to fertiliser takes account of the generally good soil and aims to be organic where possible, with the impending purchase of a 600l Team Sprayer allowing the use of biostimulants.

"We're looking at slow release products so that we're not constantly having to be on



I'm looking to trial four seed mixes and four feeds between the two pitch areas that get the same amount of wear to gauge the differences. I'd love to have more trial plots, but time is the issue - it should be easier next year



Cricket nets sit cheek by jowl with the Halse Pavillion which has completed the school's indoor sports centre



Scott Danter, seen using the 3100-D triple, comes from a cricket club background, and admits that getting to grips with winter sports has been a 'steep learning curve'



Duncan inspects a wicket - pupils get experience of high profile fixtures so standards must match up

the pitches; the sprayer also gives us a lot more options where using granular products would be restricted by a lack of irrigation," comments Matt.

An extensive overseed was carried out last summer, with five pitches also getting winter mixes. "We'll overseed again during the renovations," comments Duncan. "I'm looking to trial four seed mixes and four feeds between the two pitch areas that get the same amount of wear to gauge the differences. I'd love to have more trial plots, but time is the issue - it should be easier next year."

He is also continuing to gather data on turf wear: after looking at the rugby pitches this year, cricket will follow.

Duncan has recruited a team with a broad range of skills. Scott Danter started on the same day as he did last year, and brings experience as a cricket club groundsman, although he admits that learning to care for winter pitches has been a "steep learning curve".

"There's so much to get to grips with, such

as aeration, and how to get the best from our new borehole. This winter we will also have new machines to get used to, but we are keen to do as good a job as possible."

Matt came from another school, and comments that, while he had to cope with sports fields on several sites in his previous role, the demand for pitches is greater at Warwick School.

"It requires a lot more planning to find slots for maintenance, but the improvement to facilities and the investment in machinery is very good for morale. We no longer have to rely on contractors so we can get jobs, such as verti-draining, done at the optimum time."

Grounds and Landscape Garden Assistant, Tom Cullen, splits his time 50/50 between the two areas and comments: "We're benefitting from the investment in equipment and the new team so we can push forward for higher standards. You have to take the highs and lows - we can be working for a whole week to prepare for a cricket match and then it can be called off!"

Charlie Seager, who has worked at



We're benefitting from the investment in equipment and the new team so we can push forward for higher standards. You have to take the highs and lows - we can be working for a whole week to prepare for a cricket match and then it can be called off!



The Junior Square has been fully drained and, after hot conditions affected the secondaries, additional sanding has achieved excellent results



Groundsmanship is a job where you want to get on and do everything to the highest standards, so it can be frustrating when we are rained off, although there's always plenty to do!



The Waterfall, another new area of landscaping, complements the Warwick Hall behind, the school's prestigious performance venue.



The main entrance - Duncan is considering swapping the planter for a topiary depicting the county emblem of a bear and ragged staff

another prestigious school and also had a spell outside the industry, agrees: "Groundsmanship is a job where you want to get on and do everything to the highest standards, so it can be frustrating when we are rained off, although there's always plenty to do!"

"I'm very lucky to have a team that is so passionate about the job and that takes pride in what they do," says Duncan. "There are eight hectares of natural turf, a significant task for a small team, and I would like to recruit some apprentices as I believe they could learn such a lot from the rest of the team."

Everyone feels the pressure from the sheer volume of pupils wishing to use the facilities, he admits.

"In every year group, every single boy plays rugby, and the sports facilities adjacent to the new King's High building will have greater use once they become more accessible to its pupils as they move to their new building on site. Generally, every pitch is in use every day and we have to be able to rest them sometimes. The 3G certainly helps to take the pressure off, but it's important to work closely with the coaching

teams to get the best out of the pitches."

Plans are constantly evolving as Project One Campus progresses; currently, pupils use the sports fields for breaks, with proposals in place for a new play area which will alleviate another cause of wear. One sports field is in temporary use as staff car parking during the King's High School construction and is likely to be converted into a synthetic pitch in the long term.

The team is also responsible for the gardens, all mucking in to tackle projects on wet days.

"I'm aiming for impact and low maintenance so plan to replace some of the established flowerbeds over time. We've just planted a new lavender bed showcasing the school's blue and white colours in the main courtyard, and I'm looking at replacing a planter on the front circle lawn with a topiary depicting the county symbol of a bear and ragged staff. In time, we hope to have more resource available for the lawns as well. It's a challenge and there's lots of pressure but that's a positive, driving us forward to deliver of our best," he says.



Every pitch is in use every day and we have to be able to rest them sometimes. The 3G certainly helps to take the pressure off, but it's important to work closely with the coaching teams to get the best out of the pitches



New planting schemes include a lavender bed in the school's blue and white colours

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I work most weekends at the club, especially when we have the men's team playing on a Saturday and the ladies on a Sunday. It can be tough, but it's a labour of love



Fulwood Academy

Full time, part time, extra time

On a wet day in spring (when isn't it in the north-west of England?) Lee Williams met with **Ben Kay**, Head Groundsman at Fulwood Academy and part-time Head Groundsman at Chorley Football Club to find out more about his dual role and what motivates him





Chorley Football Club



Groundsmanship and greenkeeping have come a long way in recent years and it's a great industry to be in - if you are willing to work hard for it!

I have been following Ben Kay on Twitter for a while now and have been impressed with the work and dedication he puts into his playing surfaces - full time at the Fulwood Academy and part time at National League side Chorley Football Club. This led me to get in contact with him to find out more.

I met Ben at the Fulwood Academy grounds where he gave me a warm welcome before we walked over to his workshop. Tucked away at the back is a cosy little room with a double sofa, which is where we sat down to discuss the finer points of Ben's responsibilities and his career so far.

At the age of sixteen, Ben left school and joined Wigan Athletic Football Club, where he did a two-year youth training scheme which resulted in being offered a one-year playing professional contract. Unfortunately, at the end of that year, he was released by the club and was left with no job and no career path. Ben explains how he stumbled upon a career in the sports turf industry.

"To be honest, I didn't really have any interest in the industry at the time, but there was a job available at Wigan Council in the grounds department. which I took on simply because 'it was a job'. I spent thirteen years working for the council where I started as a general grass cutter; I was then moved up to a leading hand position, overseeing leisure pitches and schools' contracts. I enjoyed how varied the job was from marking out football pitches, cutting hedges and working on bedding plant areas to cutting down trees. Whilst still working at the council, a friend of mine, Danny Mahoney, rang me to tell me there will be a position coming up at Fulwood Academy as he was leaving. So, I applied for the job straight away, and I have been here full time for a few years now."

Ben also works at Chorley Football Club, who gained promotion to the National League at the end of last season, on a part-time basis. "I was good friends with Jamie Vermiglio who, at the time, was assistant manager under Matt Jansen. They



Academy natural pitch



Academy 3G pitch



What's in the shed

Fulwood Academy

- Kubota B2530 compact tractor
- Allett Buffalo 27 cylinder mower
- Allett C24 cylinder mower
- Charterhouse Rapidcore
- Linemarkers
- Etesia rotary mower
- Hayter Harrier 56 roller mower
- Scott's (ICL) spreader
- Gambetti 300 litre boom sprayer
- John Deere 3235C fairway triple mower
- SISIS tractor mounted slitter
- Spring tine 2m
- Charterhouse Verti-broom
- 1.8m topper
- Stihl brushcutter
- Stihl chainsaw

Chorley Football Club

- Dennis G860 with cylinder cassette
- Allett RM34 rotary mower
- Transfer wheel marker
- SISIS Robbi ride-on triple brush

didn't have a groundsman at the time, and Jamie knew what I did for a living and kept pestering me to come and look after the football pitch. One day in November 2017, I decided to go down and have a chat with them and, after much deliberation, I took on the challenge."

Ben works at Fulwood Academy five days a week Monday to Friday from 7.00am until 3.00pm. Then, on his way home to Wigan, he will pop into Chorley. "It's a matter of

nip in, do an hour and, if I have to, clean up after a game. I can be there sometimes until 7.00pm. I repeat this process most weeks as we have so many games on the pitch. I have a laugh and a joke with the chairman at times and say Chorley is more full-time than my actual job at the school. I work most weekends at the club, especially when we have the men's team playing on a Saturday and the ladies on a Sunday. It can be tough, but it's a labour of love."

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Getting Personal

Ben Kay - working outside is the best and worst part of the job

Who are you? Ben Kay, Head Groundsman at Fulwood Academy and part-time Head Groundsman at Chorley Football Club.

Family status. Married to Laura for nine years with a boy, Isaac seven and a girl, Harriet three.

Who's your hero and why?

Alan Shearer... loved the type of player he was and all the goals he scored.

What would you change about yourself? I would have my nose straightened.

What's your guilty pleasure? Definitely chocolate.

What's been the highlight of your career so far? Had no major ones really, but love getting recognition for the work I do.

What are your pet peeves? Goalkeeper coaches ... they think they can do what they want.

If you could go anywhere right now, where would it be? Would love to go to Dubai again.

What's the best part of your job? Working outside and on my own.

... and the worst? Working on my own!

Do you have a lifetime ambition? Be a multi-millionaire.

Favourite record, and why? Iris by the Goo Goo Dolls. It was my wedding song.

Who would you choose to spend a romantic evening with? Has to be my wife.

If you won the lottery, what is the first thing you would do? Buy a non-league football club.

If you were to describe yourself as a musical instrument, what would you be and why? A piano. I'm just a chilled, easy going guy, although I'm sure my wife wouldn't agree.

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



Flintoff and Jim Morrison from The Doors.

If you could be anyone for a day, who would it be and why? Rory McIlroy ... playing golf everyday has to be the best job in the world.

Do you have any bad habits? Scratching my toes.

... or any good ones? Manners.

Do you go to bed worrying about the next day's workload? Yes, every night. I don't think in our industry you can ever switch off.

What are you reading at the moment? I'll be honest.. I never read.

What's the best advice you have ever been given? To always make a good first impression.

What's your favourite smell? It has to be fresh cut grass ha.

What do you do in your spare time? What's spare time ... if I do get any it would probably be playing golf with my mates, as I'm too old for football now.

What's the daftest work related question you have ever been asked? Do you paint the grass two different shades of green.

What's your favourite piece of kit? I could walk behind a Dennis all day.

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

What talent would you like to have? To be a 0 handicap golfer.



Chorley Football Club

Ben does not have any recognised qualifications in sports turf, but holds his spraying certificates PA1, PA2 and PA6, along with some day release certificates he gained through St Helens college whilst working at the council.

Ben works on his own at the school and has a small budget to work with, but he does manage to get contractors in now and again. "I will get the contractors in to do the verti-draining twice a year to break through the clay and keep the sand banding open in the pitches. They will also do the sand

topdressing at the end of the year - if the budget will stretch. I do all spraying in-house using our tractor mounted boom sprayer."

The school has a rolling contract with a local football club - Longsands Lynx - who use the pitches for training every Thursday when the nights become lighter, and around six teams at various age levels play their home games over the weekend.

The school's grass playing area covers 23,000m². This is split between two full-size football pitches, a 9v9 pitch and cricket square in the middle of one of the pitches. There is a full-size 3G pitch,





I have a laugh and a joke with the chairman at times and say Chorley is more full-time than my actual job at the school



three tennis courts, three basketball courts, allotment, greenhouse and chicken pens.

Ben talks me through a typical maintenance week for the school and Chorley FC.

"Monday - got to work at 7.00am, cleaned up all three school pitches from the weekend. Left at 3.00pm to get over to

Chorley to take sprinklers off and cut ready for Tuesday's trial game.

Tuesday - in at work at 5.45am to change tines in the Charterhouse Rapidcore and make a start on spiking the pitches. Did this all day and left at 8.00pm.

Wednesday - in at work by 7.00am. Cleaned pitches from last night's training and made ready for this evening's game. Also did a few other jobs around the school. Over to Chorley for 3:30pm to cut and mark pitch in preparation for two girls finals.

Thursday - in at 7.00am to clean and divot all of the pitches ready for Thursday's training/game.

Friday - another early start. Cleaned up the main pitch and overmarked both 11v11 and 9v9 pitches. Then over to Chorley to double cut and overmark the pitch. Got the sprinklers out and ready just in case the gaffer wanted it watering beforehand.

Saturday - watered pitch early morning and left sprinklers in place. Arrived back at 1:00pm and watered the pitch, removed all sprinklers from the pitch, placed portable goals in place, spoke to the opposition's staff about warm-ups, divoted, had a walk around whilst warm-ups were going on, repairing marks, and removed portable goals. After the game - tied the nets up, a good sixty minutes walk around fixing marks and divots and left around 6:30pm.

Sunday - up early, cleaned up with the Allett, home for 10.00am. Then back up for 1.00pm as the women had a game. Again, spoke to opposition staff regarding warm-ups, walked round divoting, repairing scuffs etc. and went home at half time. I'll go back Monday to 'hoover' the pitch.

So, that's five games we had at Chorley that particular week, as Wednesday there were two finals on the pitch."



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I enjoyed how varied the job was from marking out football pitches, cutting hedges and working on bedding plant areas to cutting down trees

As well as the above 'average week', Ben will clean up and rake the 3G after every sixteen hours of usage and he is responsible for the upkeep of the grounds, the allotment (including a glasshouse) and the chicken pens.

The pitch at Chorley is well used, which makes the upkeep all that much harder with a limited budget, but Ben enjoys the challenges it brings. Last season, over sixty games were played, plus training sessions.

Machinery at both sites is bought second-hand when budgets allow. Ben purchased a Charterhouse Rapidcore last year, "I'm delighted with this machine. It gives me a chance to open up the profile a little bit when I know there is going to be some rain. It's been invaluable to help me get as much playing time out of the pitches as possible. We are also going to purchase a triple soon which will be road legal. The idea behind this is so we can offer to cut

local pitches for a small fee, which will help to fund my budget going forward." (where will he find the time?)

I asked Ben his thoughts on the industry. "Looking from the outside, the job has become more attractive. The Premier League pitches are full of grass and well presented on TV for all the public to see. I think we have seen more and more people coming into the industry. Myerscough College is just down the road from here, and I would like to think they have a full intake of students each year. Groundsmanship and greenkeeping have come a long way in recent years and it's a great industry to be in. I would recommend it to any younger people who are looking for a rewarding career - if you are willing to work hard for it."

Ben certainly works hard in his joint roles and, with the prospect of additional contracting work, one wonders where he will find the time!



Academy pitches

History

Fulwood Academy (formerly Fulwood High School) is a coeducational secondary school located in Fulwood (near Preston) in the English county of Lancashire.

Previously a community school administered by Lancashire County Council, Fulwood High School converted to academy status on 1st September 2009 and was renamed Fulwood Academy. Charles Dunstone sponsors the school through a charitable trust. Dunstone is the chairman and co-founder of mobile phone retailer Carphone Warehouse and chairman of the TalkTalk Group.

Chorley Football Club is based in Chorley, Lancashire. The club competes in the National League, the fifth tier of English football, having won promotion at the end of last season.

The club was founded as a rugby union club in 1875 but switched to football in 1883. They have reached the FA Cup second round twice, in 1986–87 and 1990–91. Their best performance in the FA Trophy was in 1995–96 when they reached the semi-finals.

The club's home colours are black and white stripes, hence the nickname The Magpies.

Chorley play at Victory Park. The ground has a capacity of 4,300, of which 2,800 is covered standing, and 900 is covered seating.



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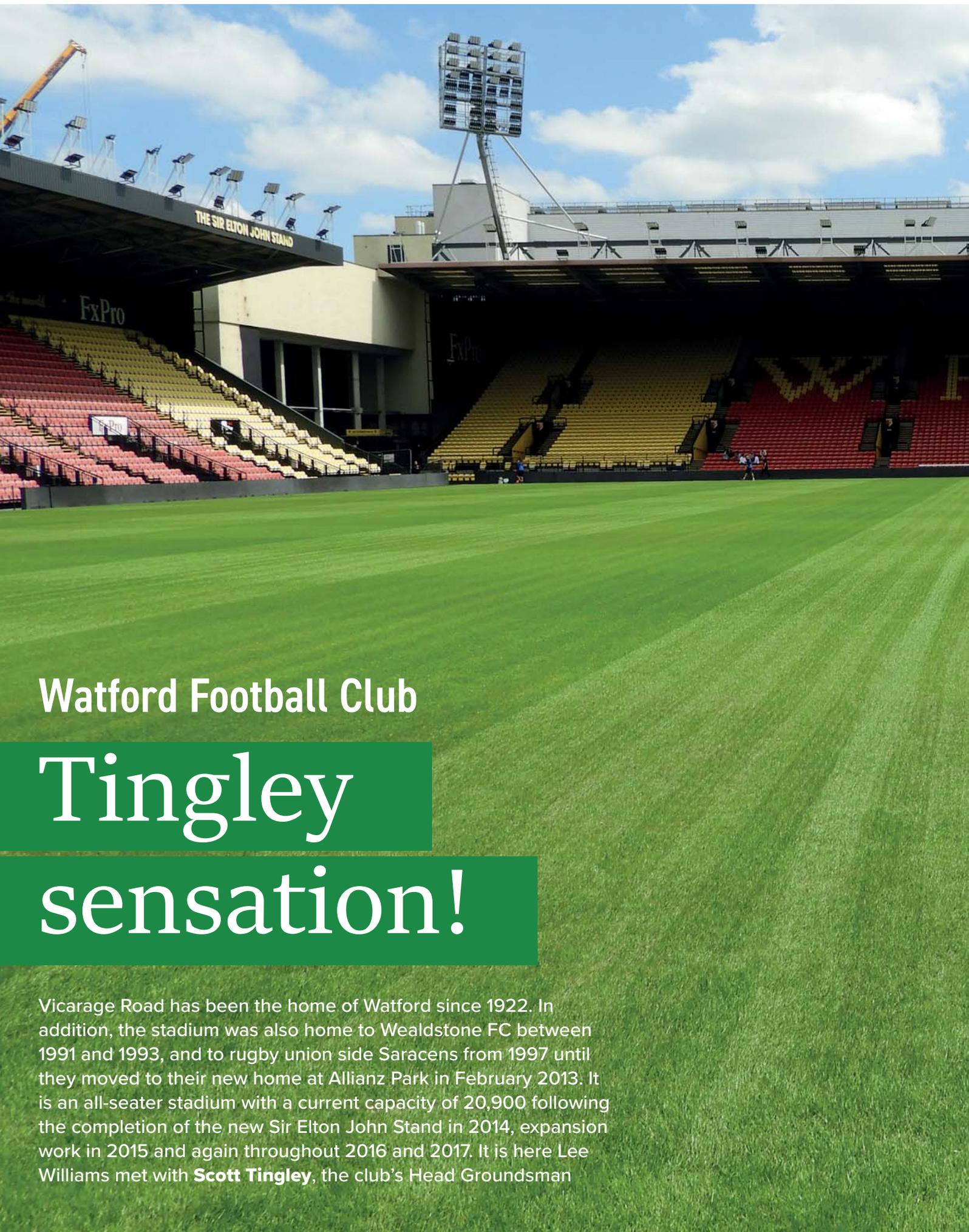
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Watford Football Club

Tingley sensation!

Vicarage Road has been the home of Watford since 1922. In addition, the stadium was also home to Wealdstone FC between 1991 and 1993, and to rugby union side Saracens from 1997 until they moved to their new home at Allianz Park in February 2013. It is an all-seater stadium with a current capacity of 20,900 following the completion of the new Sir Elton John Stand in 2014, expansion work in 2015 and again throughout 2016 and 2017. It is here Lee Williams met with **Scott Tingley**, the club's Head Groundsman



On a sunny day in Watford, I sat down with Scott Tingley in one of the stands overlooking the recently renovated pitch to talk about the challenges he has faced since joining Watford, and the future for him and the club.

Scott first got a taste for working in the sports turf through his dad. "He was head groundsman at Wembley, so I think I was always destined to it. I wasn't the greatest at school and working in an office never appealed to me, so I guess I leaned on my dad a little bit; I just thought it made sense."

"Straight from school, at fifteen years old, I started working for my dad's contracting firm, where I helped with various pitch construction jobs. A position then came up at Chelsea. My dad just happened to be working there that day, when Jason Griffin suddenly turned around to him and said; 'I'm looking for a new groundsman, do you know of anybody?' A few months later I started at Chelsea, which was a stroke of luck on two counts; one because, well, it was Chelsea, and two, because it was approaching winter when the work slowed down, and dad was

probably going have to let me go anyway!"

"I was at Chelsea for six years where I went through an apprenticeship, and also took my NVQ Level 2 & 3 in sports turf. In May 2009, I went to Arsenal working under Steve Braddock. Whilst there, I did my spraying certificates and I progressed to a more senior role where I would manage projects throughout the day with a team of three to four groundsmen, set up on renovations, construction or general maintenance and make sure the work got done. After seven years at Arsenal, I came to Watford after Paul Burgess was brought in on a consultancy basis. Paul was asked about me by the club and approved of my appointment."

I started at Watford in February 2016 and, for one reason or another, the pitch wasn't great, and they had turfed over the Desso! So, at the end of the season, the turf was removed and we went back to Desso. The first few months were definitely a baptism of fire and the only way was going to be up."

Scott's inspiration and love of turf hasn't just come from his dad's influence. "My initial interest comes from my dad but, in

terms of inspiration, it is definitely Steve Braddock. The guy is unbelievable; he just has a relentless nature to want to improve. I have never seen anybody work as hard as him. When I say this, you have some people who are there to cut grass and stuff, but he will do anything and get stuck in. There are not many head groundsmen you will see washing their own machines down at the end of the day, and they are spotless; it's almost like he went over them with a toothbrush. He is just so exact about what he does. But it's one of the things you don't understand and get that full respect for him until you leave. You then realise, on a daily basis, that you are doing all those things he taught you."

Since Scott first joined the club, he has been responsible for his budgets each season. "Our budget has not changed for a few years, but we have managed pretty well with what we are allocated. Anything extra is a capital expenditure purchase and I will put across a business case to justify my reasons."

"Since I have been here, we have been



SGL lighting rigs

quite progressive. When I first came here, we had no machinery and, on my first day, I had to buy two Hayter Harriers as they were the only thing I could get to get the pitch cut, which sounds crazy at a Premier League club, but that was where it was at. I was allowed to go and buy whatever I wanted. The club basically said to me whatever you need just go and get it, we want to try and give you the best opportunity we can to help you succeed with the pitch. It was great; I got to handpick everything. So, straightaway, we got a Toro ProCore, Dennis

G860s and Dennis Premiers and we built up from there. The year after, we bought a tractor to give us more flexibility.”

Scott and his team won the Premier League Pitch of the Year award for the 2017/2018 season, which is a significant achievement, given what had gone before. I asked how he felt when it was announced. “The awards don’t really mean a great deal to me; I come to work to produce a good pitch and the pride element comes on matchday when all the hard work pays off. Even though we won, it’s not the be all and

end all. You can’t get carried away by it or you would end up winning none of them. Winning was great for us, knowing where we had come from which, in theory, was the worst pitch in the Premier League to, within two seasons, being named the best pitch in the league. It was a testimony to how hard the lads had worked, the planning and the hours I put into it myself, and the investment the club made in us. It was something the whole club could be proud of.”

Scott has four additional members of the team: Cameron Hutcheon, Deputy Head Groundsman - NVQ Level 2 and 3 plus spraying qualifications (3 years and 2 months served); Marcus Lilley, Groundsman - NVQ Level 2 and 3 (3 years and 2 months); Harry Volland-Butler, Groundsman - NVQ Level 2 (2 years and 8 months); and Conor Liddell, Groundsman - currently studying NVQ Level 2 (10 months).

The stadium is a Desso, which was reconstructed in 2012, and is the club’s second Desso pitch. The original was one of the first Desso pitches constructed at the time. The original irrigation system, fitted in 2012 with Rain Bird heads, has been changed this summer to Toro Infinity



Head Groundsman, Scott Tingley



There are not many head groundsmen you will see washing their own machines down at the end of the day, and they are spotless; it’s almost like he went over them with a toothbrush



We are big on surface hygiene, so providing the right nutrient balance is just a matter of finding different ways to control disease

around the perimeter of the pitch, with Hunter 180s in the middle. Scott tells me this will give him extra flexibility in terms of being able to water under the lighting rigs due to the trajectory adjustment, enabling him to be more accurate. This, he believes, will help the team maintain the pitch to an even higher standard. They now also have undersoil heating and the addition of six SGL MU360 lighting rigs, two SGL MU50s and an SGL IQ55, which they bought this year after successful trials.

Scott uses Mallinson's for his end of season renovation work. "We only use a contractor for the initial part of renovations. They strip the pitch off with a spiral rake and topdress for us. The reason they do the topdressing is due to the bulk of sand. I have toyed with us putting the sand down, but it makes sense for them to do it as they are in and out within two to three days. After

they have applied the topdressing, we do everything else; working in the topdressing, the verti-draining, procoring, ameliorating any nutrients and correctives we are putting down and overseeding."

Whilst at the ground, I noticed a lot of building work taking place and work being carried out around the pitch. I asked Scott if this had affected his preparations for the new season ahead. "Yes, it's provided something of a challenge to get the pitch renovated and ready for the season. Access is quite difficult; my staff are having to wear hard hats and hi-vis vests to move around the site. It's not been easy thus far, and I don't anticipate it getting any easier before the season starts. We are currently having artificial surfaces installed; one side of the pitch will have a rubber crumb infill where the players will warm up, with a non-fill on the other side. We have moved all of the





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Getting Personal

Scott Tingley - I wonder if Olivia Bowen could convince him to marry again?

Who are you? Scott Tingley, Head Groundsman at Watford Football Club.

Family status. Married once ... never again!

Who's your hero and why? Didier Drogba - 2012 Champions League final.

What would you change about yourself? My inability to drive anywhere without sat nav.

What's your guilty pleasure? Frank's red hot wings.

What's been the highlight of your career so far? Winning Premier League Grounds Team of the Year.

What are your pet peeves? People that put strings out but don't check both ends.

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

What's the best part of your job? End of season renovations.

... and the worst? Wet match days.

Do you have a lifetime ambition? To manage a stadium that hosts Champions League Finals, World Cup Finals etc.

Favourite record, and why? Careless Whisper by George Michael. It's my sing-a-long tune for the car.

Who would you choose to spend a romantic evening with? Olivia Bowen (from Love Island).

If you won the lottery, what is the first thing you would do? Buy a Bentley Continental GT.

If you were to describe yourself as a musical instrument, what would you be and why? A drum because I can be loud and annoying.

Which three people, living or dead, would you invite to a dinner party? Phil Mickelson, Muhammad Ali and David Jason.



If you could be anyone for a day, who would it be and why? Alex Bowen ... I then get two romantic evenings with Olivia.

Do you have any bad habits? I never think before I speak.

... or any good ones? Encouraging others to improve.

Do you go to bed worrying about the next day's workload? I used to, but not any more.

What are you reading at the moment? I have never read a book in my life.

What's the best advice you have ever been given? Learn something and earn something every day.

What's your favourite smell? A roast dinner.

What do you do in your spare time? Play golf.

What's the daftest work related question you have ever been asked? Why do you cut the grass if it's all plastic?

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

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

What talent would you like to have? A golf swing like Adam Scott.

What law/legislation would you like to see introduced? Ban people name dropping other clubs/groundsman when promoting their product.



irrigation boxes to suit and moved sprinklers forward to keep them away from the digital advertising boards."

Scott talks me through the general maintenance of the pitch once the season starts. "We cut at 22mm all the way through the season using the Infinicut mowers, which some will say is quite short, but it was something that started with Marco Silva; he wanted a quick passing surface. When the new manager, Javi Gracia, came in last season, we had a discussion and it was decided he wanted everything kept the same."

"I like to ProCore every two weeks with 8mm tines at a depth of 4 inches, then deep aerate with the verti-drain. We will use the verti-cut units in the Dennis G860s, almost once a week

to groom through it, and we use the Dennis rake cassettes as well, which we use for the same sort of process but tend to go in a few directions on a lighter setting. They don't take as much material out. Between each game, we will also use the Campey UniRake - all the way through the season if we can. If the weather doesn't allow us to in the winter, we will go to a stiff brush and pick up the debris using the Honda rotaries; it's just a matter of picking and choosing your moments. We use a SISIS Variseeder to overseed the pitch, which is set up to put just two bags of seed over the whole pitch. We do this once a month from the start of the season. To help us with germination through the winter, we will



Scott's favourite piece of kit - the Toro ProCore



Left to right: Bradley White (recently moved to Brighton and Hove Albion), Cameron Hutcheon, Gregg Noakes (The Premier League), Scott Tingley, Harry Volland Butler and Marcus Lilley



I come to work to produce a good pitch and the pride element comes on matchday when all the hard work pays off

run the undersoil heating on auto so the soil temperature never drops below ten degrees and, as soon as we start to get constant temperatures again in the soil, it will be turned off.”

Scott puts his own fertiliser programmes together and doesn't solely rely on soil samples when making decisions on inputs. “With a sandy rootzone, we are always having to apply granular fertilisers. When I first came here, we were doing about 35g/

m² per month. Now we are up towards 45-50g/m², but we use low analysis nitrogen feeds and just drip feed them on regularly with liquids in-between. I never used to take soil samples because we would find that, once we got them back, we would have applied something else anyway. So we now do them quarterly to make sure we are on the right track. You can do leaf tissue analysis and other tests, but they are just giving you a snapshot of that moment

in time. I don't like being too reactive to soil samples. I think a lot of the time you can look at it and think we are deficient in calcium, potassium, magnesium and organic material, but you are always going to be as they are the hardest elements to keep in a sand-based Desso pitch. I believe as long as you are keeping your eye on it and not getting any major peaks and troughs that's fine, but obviously the more balanced you can keep it the better. I have written the

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What's in the shed

- Toro ProCore 648
- Kubota STW40 tractor
- Toro Workman
- Team Vixen Sprayer
- Dennis G860 cylinder mowers with 8 blade cassettes, verti cut and rake cassettes x 2
- Infinicut 34" cylinder mowers x 3
- Honda HRH536 rotary mowers x 4
- Pitchmark hybrid line marker
- Scotts (ICL) SR2000 rotary spreaders x 2
- Campey Unirake
- Campey zigzag brush
- Sisis Variseeder 1300
- SGL MU360 lighting rigs x 6
- SGL MU50 lighting rigs x 2
- SGL IQ55 lighting rig



Honda HRH536 rotary mowers

fertiliser programme for the pitch each year, which is now built upon the previous year's results, so I now have a good idea what the pitch needs, when it needs it, and we can be reactive from there."

Scott uses a fungicide programme to control disease throughout the season but tells me the pitch suffers mainly with brown patch in the summer months. "My understanding of brown patch is that, once you get it, you are always susceptible to it, until you change your pitch out. I think we suffer more with it because of the heat and humidity. I put it down to the pitch spending most of its time in the sun, so it's the heat stress that allows it to come on. We used Instrata Elite as a preventative last year. Then, depending on the disease, we went with Banner Maxx (which we are about to lose) and Medallion, depending on the temperatures."

"Fungicides are available, so we are using them, but we are also looking at other ways in terms of correct maintenance, aeration, regular verti-cuts etc. We are big on surface hygiene, so providing the right nutrient balance is just a matter of finding different

ways to control disease. It is an objective we have set ourselves for this year, both in the stadium and at the training ground."

This year, Scott is in the process of putting a scheduled replacement plan in place for machinery. "To date, we have bought everything outright, but a replacement plan will safeguard both myself and the club so that we know what the outgoing are each season, plus they will be aware when machinery is up for replacement."

"We have had so much to deal with here and so much to plan since I came in, but we are now at a point where we can look at other things and implement new ideas."



Stand developments



The club basically said to me whatever you need just go and get it, we want to try and give you the best opportunity we can to help you succeed with the pitch



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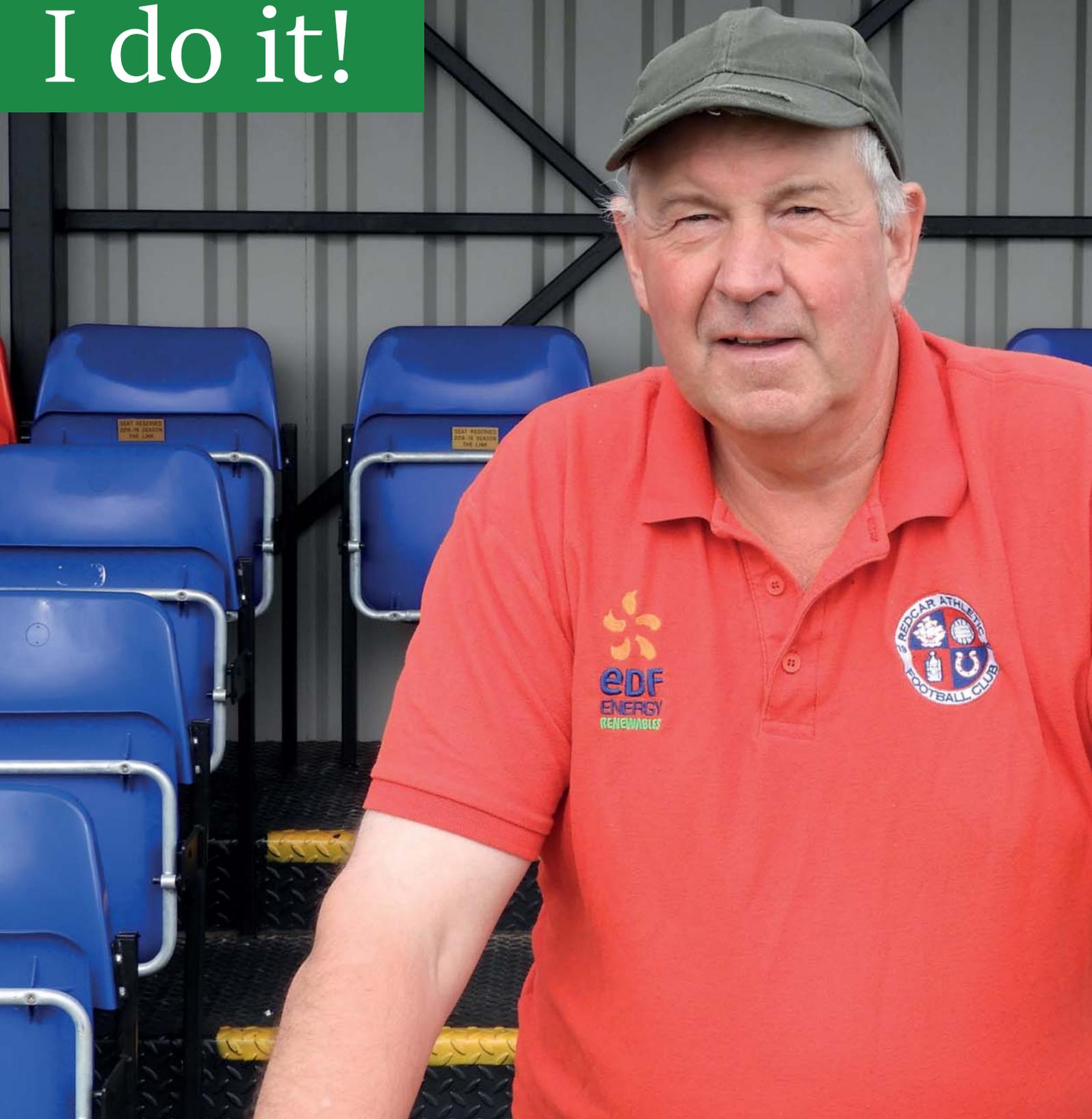
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Redcar Athletic

You name it,
I do it!





The club was established in 1993 as Teesside Athletic and initially played in the Teesside League. In 2005, they joined the Wearside League and, in 2010, the club's name was changed to Redcar Athletic. They finished as Wearside League runners-up on three occasions before finally clinching their first championship in 2018, thereby enabling them to win promotion to the Northern League. Lee Williams met up with their Head Groundsman, **Paul Wilson**

Paul Wilson is responsible for looking after fifteen acres of land, which includes the main match pitch, three full-size pitches and four development pitches for the juniors which he mainly does by himself. Paul explains, "I do get a few helpers now and again if I'm struggling, but not very often. I cut the pitches and mark them out, but my responsibilities also include the management of the clubhouse; looking after the cleaning and maintenance. My wife, Linda helps out a lot with the cleaning and the café - which I'm the manager of at the weekend, as we are open Saturdays and Sundays for football. You name it I do it."

Paul is a former fisherman who had his own boat fishing off the coast of Redcar. But he has always had a love for football and first got into groundsmanship ten years ago after doing his football coaching badges. "I got involved running a junior and senior team here at Redcar; I used to help the groundsman out who was getting too old to carry on and had a lot of health issues. When he packed in, the club had no one to

take over his role and they depended on volunteers to prep the pitches. At this time, I still had my own business as I owned a fish and chip shop, which I purchased after I retired from being a fisherman. Then, in 2009, I sold my chip shop and took up the full-time role here, to pursue my passion for football and groundsmanship. I have not looked back."

Since Paul took on the role ten years ago, he tells me how, at the beginning, it was a real struggle, and he had to be 'creative' with the limited funds available to him. "I used to cut all the pitches with a Saxon Baroness triple mower; that is all I had, alongside a fork and a rake! I needed a brush, so I built my own for the back of the triple, which I used to groom the pitches in winter. Since the early days, the club has progressed and invested in more machinery and equipment."

Paul controls the budget for the playing surfaces, and he does his best to get the most out of what he is given. "I get a budget from the senior section. I was fortunate to get £4,000 a year, but that has just gone



What's in the shed

John Deere 33HP tractor
 SISIS Quadraplay
 SISIS Litamina
 SISIS slitter
 SISIS dimple seeder
 Charterhouse Verti-Drain
 Ransomes Mastiff
 Charterhouse top spreader
 Trimax tractor mounted rotary mower
 Baroness Saxon triple mower

Since Paul first took on the challenge ten years ago, his machinery list has improved significantly. "We received £10,000 in funding from the FA and money from the SITA Trust. This enabled us to purchase a brand-new tractor and various other pieces of machinery which have helped me provide better surfaces for the club and make the job that bit easier. I service all the machines myself, which helps reduce costs. The only thing I can't do in-house is regrind the cutting cylinders. I take them to a local gentleman up the road; Peter James."

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down, believe it or not, to £1,600 for this season as the club want to channel what they have into getting promoted. I want what is best for the club, so I will cut the cloth accordingly. I'm fortunate that we have outside football tournaments that take place, so any profit I make from the café at the weekend the club let me put it back into ground maintenance."

Paul has taken advantage of the FA Pitch Improvement Programme to help improve his knowledge of professional groundsmanship. "I went to all the courses that they put on at North Riding FA. I have completed my Level 1, 2 and 3 Winter Pitch Maintenance as well, which has helped me improve the playing surfaces in the last few years."

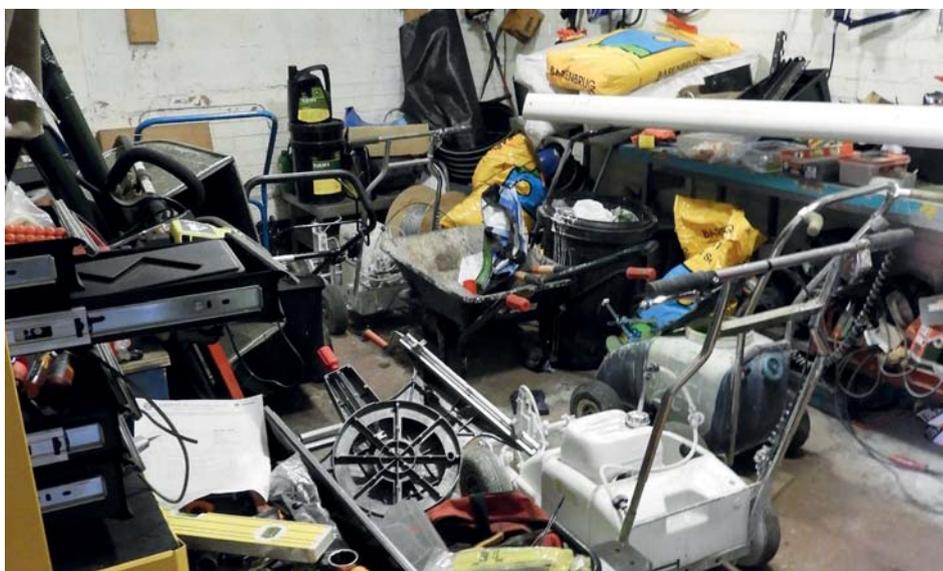
"In 2017, I was nominated by the club for Groundsman of the Year for the North East Region. The judges visited, looked at the pitch and I answered all their questions. I didn't think anymore after that for months. I then received a letter telling me I had won. From there, I was entered into the National award, where I went down to St George's Park and, lo and behold, I won

Step 7 National Groundsman of the Year, which was a very proud moment for me. I believe this coincided with the Pitch Improvement Programme and getting further education, plus working hard; the club is moving forward."

Recently, Paul has had a knee replacement operation which has, unfortunately, meant that he couldn't take out a thorough renovation on the main pitch this summer but is grateful to his volunteers who stepped in for him while he was away. "We have a drop-in centre here at the club on a Thursday and two or three of the guys, who are ex steelworkers in their sixties, have got involved, and they love it. Richard Green has been cutting the pitches, Peter Millburn has been cutting and marking out and Roy, John and Swifty have been painting the fences and turnstiles and carrying out any general maintenance jobs for us. I can't thank these guys enough for stepping up while I recovered from my operation. Due to me only coming back full time recently, I have had to let the main pitch recover naturally, alongside spreading one tonne of sand across both six yard



I cut most of the ground at 25mm in the summer and lift to 30mm in the winter to give it some protection





I do get a few helpers now and again if I'm struggling, but not very often. You name it I do it

boxes, plus a light overseed. Hopefully, next year we will be able to Koro off the pitch."

Most of the pitches are ex-council playing fields which the club inherited and still have public rights of way running through them. "The pitches are basic soil construction and, as far as I'm aware, there are no main drains. However, during the war, the land was used as a prisoner of war camp, so in places, I do hit some areas at 10 inches down with the Verti-Drain, which could be

old drains or manholes. They do drain well and it is not very often we have games called off."

"My main pitch is soil-based but, over the last three years, we have applied sand during the renovation. There are no main drains, but I did have a problem at the north end off the pitch when we had a heavy downpour of rain; it would accumulate behind the goal then spread back up the pitch. So, I took it on board, two seasons

ago, to dig a drainage channel from one end of the pitch to the other, using a 360-degree digger, and had it fall out through the fence which has worked brilliantly."

At the side of the clubhouse, I noticed an IBC on a trailer next to some hose, so I asked Paul what it is used for. "That is my homemade irrigation system which I tow on to the pitch, I then have a pump and a tripod sprinkler which I attach to the IBC full of water. The sprinkler will throw the

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Getting Personal

Paul Wilson - he hates snakes but has interesting shark trivia

Who are you? Paul Wilson, Head Groundsman at Redcar Athletic FC.

Family status? Married to Linda for eighteen years, son together called Tom, step-daughter Leigh-Ann, two daughters from a previous marriage. Two grandsons and two granddaughters.

Who's your hero and why? Sir Alex Ferguson. I admire the way he takes pride in getting to know his players, their families and everything about them.

What's been the highlight of your grounds career so far? Winning Step 7's National Groundsman of the Year in 2017.

If your younger self saw you now, what would they think? Never thought I'd be doing what I'm doing within a local football club... I used to be a fisherman, total different ends of the spectrum.

Which famous people wind you up? Just politicians ... in general.

What job would you love, other than your own? Head Groundsman at a bigger stadium!!

What was the most embarrassing moment in your life? I had a surprise 40th birthday party and they had organised a stripper.

Brexit or Remain? Brexit.

What is your favourite film? Gladiator.

What scares you? Snakes!!

What would your autobiography be called... and who would play you in the film? Life at Sea and Ashore - Russell Crowe.

What is your favourite sport? Football.

What would you cast into Room 101? Snakes.

Which historical time and place would you most like to visit? The Viking age.

Do you have a lifetime ambition?



Retiring and living on a boat.

Which three people, living or dead, would you invite to a dinner party? My late father, Princess Diana and Jack Charlton.

What's the best advice you have ever been given? An old school teacher of mine said to always give something a go so as to not regret it in the future.

What's your favourite piece of trivia? Sharks have been on the planet longer than trees.

What's your favourite smell? Fish and chips.

Which three albums would you take to a desert island? Mike and the Mechanics, Abba, Andrea Reiu.

What's the daftest work-related question you have ever been asked? I often get asked about the fairy rings and if I've spilt some fertiliser in a nice neat circle? Tickles me that one.

What's your favourite piece of kit? SISIS Quadraplay.

What three words would you use to describe yourself? Loyal, determined, honest.

What is the single most useful thing you could tell a 16-year-old groundsman/greenkeeper? Listen, watch and learn.

What talent would you like to have? Would have liked to have learnt to play the guitar!

What law/legislation would you like to see introduced? Stronger penalties for dog fouling - especially on my pitches!



water out to twenty-five-metres radius and empties in fifteen minutes. What I did this year was drop a wetting agent tablet in it, let it dissolve then water one half of the pitch and the other half the next. I will also use it on matchdays to try and slicken up the surface for the players."

Paul talks me through the maintenance of the pitches. "I cut most of the ground at 25mm in the summer and lift to 30mm in

the winter to give it some protection. I use the tractor-mounted Trimax rotary mower. It saves me a lot of time and it stripes them up beautifully and, in fairness, I do use it on my main pitch quite a lot. I like the way it trims the grass up after I have it cut. It stands the grass up nicely. On the main pitch, I will also use the old Ransomes Mastiff from time to time. I would like to use it more often, but the problems with my knee have





I have had to let the main pitch recover naturally, alongside spreading one tonne of sand across both six yard boxes, plus a light overseed

limited this. It's a bit of a boneshaker, but it does a class job."

"I tend to cut the main pitch three times a week. After a game I will go over it with the SISIS Quadraplay and give it a light rake, then I will go over with the SISIS Ltamina to clean up the surface. I have recently purchased a second-hand Charterhouse Verti-Drain which now

gives me the option of putting an aeration programme in place; I hope to get all the ground opened up at least three times a year, at a depth of eight inches."

With Paul having a limited budget and no irrigation system on his main pitch, he takes advantage of slow-release products. "I will use 5-6-month slow release Sierrablen at the beginning of the season,

then again in September. I will use a conventional winter feed in December and, if possible, I like to apply some seaweed and chelated iron to help strengthen the grass plant in the growing season. It all depends on the weather. I found it was still quite mild in December last year and I was still cutting, so my winter feed went down a bit later."



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Ripon Racecourse

Fix it with flowers

Ripon is known as Yorkshire's Garden Racecourse, due to its most pleasant surroundings and well-kept bedding areas which are often entered into the Yorkshire in Bloom awards. Lee Williams met **Carl Tonks**, forty-six-year-old, Head Groundsman to find out more

After a warm welcome from Carl outside the racecourse, we walk through to the paddock. The first thing you see is the lovely well-kept bedding areas and lawns, including old telephone boxes transformed into beautiful displays. Carl explains; "The founding directors of the company had a vision of a friendly place to visit, in nice surroundings. Now, over one hundred years later, that same ethos continues, and we proudly have the title of Yorkshire's Garden Racecourse. At the forefront of our minds is to present a welcoming feeling when visitors enter the course and we feel the numerous planting projects on display achieve this."

"We are long term entrants into Yorkshire in Bloom and have gained many gold

awards in a very strong field and have been category winners. We also assist in the presentation of Ripon City in their applications for Britain in Bloom. When we are posed with an issue, we have the term "Fix it with Flowers" and try to reuse old materials for solving problems. For instance, we continually had visitors driving into areas they shouldn't, so we used old wine barrels filled as planters to make bollards and used old stable feed troughs as planters. Also, our redundant telephone boxes have been vertical planters for several years now and we generally theme the planting scheme colours to events or winning owner's silks of the year."

"With an eye on the environment, the arisings from the lawns and track strip are mixed with the used bedding from



Head Groundsman Carl Tonks







During the season, we will go through sixty to eighty tonnes of soil and use three bags of seed per race meeting

the stables to generate 20-30 tonnes of compost material. Any excess goes to the local allotments and, currently, we are converting shed roofs to green roofs with immediate success.”

“All the plants are produced on-site from seeds or plugs, with around 4,000-6,000 for spring planting and 12,000 for summer schemes. The use of more perennial planting recently has given us the opportunity to lessen the impact of annual plant production, whilst retaining interest and colour.”

Carl explains the soil profile and construction of the racecourse (which was actually a farm up until 1900). “It is silty/clay based (56% sand, 31% silt and 13% clay), on top of a natural gravel bed layer - which is common around this area. If you look at an aerial picture of the site, we are surrounded by water. The river Ure is over the road and we have a canal that runs down one side,

we also have a lake in the middle of the course, and then the old quarry which is now wetland. When I first started here, I was told the river flooding was a hundred-year occurrence, then someone else said fifty years and, in the ten seasons I have been here, we have been flooded three times. When it floods, we have eighteen inches of water over the site and, with the way land management is now, the last time it flooded it stayed here for a week.”

Carl tells me that, although flooding is mainly through the autumn, the course is free draining and generally, within a few hours, everything will disappear. They only have sand slits and drains in their most problematic areas around the track.

Carl makes full use of the fully automatic pop-up irrigation system when required, which is supplied via a borehole. “The Trident system was put in twenty years ago and has since been refreshed to be





operated through a computer system which is fantastic. We have over one-hundred Toro sprinkler heads around the course. It just makes irrigating the course that much easier, compared with other systems I have used in the past. Last year, in the summer heatwave, we used over eleven million litres of water."

The general maintenance of the track is carried out between March and October, and Carl has various other events to think

about during and after the season, helping the course to gain additional revenue.

"Depending on the weather, we start mowing the track around March with a Progressive TDR 12 rear-pulled high speed tipped rotary mower. The British Horse Racing Authority are quite specific on what machines you can use. Ten to fifteen years ago, they pushed us towards using out-front rotary mowers, and there was an issue with stolon growth, which causes horses

What's in the shed

- John Deere 1850 tractor
- John Deere 5065 tractor
- John Deere 310 ride-on mower
- John Deere 155 ride-on mower
- John Deere Gator SUX4
- Trilo S7
- Progressive TDR 12
- Major TPL 11
- 3 tonne trailer x 2
- Cambridge roller
- 5 tonne trailer
- John Deere 55 CK walk-behind mower
- John Deere 55 JS walk-behind mower
- Vicon spreader 200kg
- 600 Litre tractor mounted sprayer
- Flail 6ft topper
- Stihl chainsaws x 2
- Stihl trimmers x 2
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Getting Personal

Carl Tonks - he's had enough of Brexit!

Who are you? Carl Tonks, Head Groundsman of Ripon Racecourse.

Family status? Married.

Who's your hero and why?

The wife - I could not do anything without her.

What's been the highlight of your grounds career so far? Winning Racecourse Grounds Team of the Year.

If your younger self saw you now, what would they think?

You are not going to leave a beautiful corpse!

Which famous people wind you up? Anyone famous (fame is not aspirational).

What job would you love, other than your own? Isle of Man TT Legend.

What was the most embarrassing moment in your life? An incident involving saddle soap!

Brexit or Remain? Are we still discussing this?

What is your favourite film? Uncle Buck.

What scares you? Humanity.

What would your autobiography be called... and who would play you in the film? Touching Cloth - Ryan Reynolds. Apparently people come up to him in LA asking 'what's the going at Ripon'.

What is your favourite sport? Motorcycle road racing.

What would you cast into Room 101? Humanity!

Which historical time and place would you most like to visit? Quarter past three last Tuesday (I had a lovely sausage roll).

Do you have a lifetime ambition? To spend quality time with family.



Carl and the team on his wedding day (left to right): Ted Pyman, David White, Carl, Martin Johnson, John Ireland, David Dalton

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

What's the best advice you have ever been given? Volunteer for everything.

What's your favourite piece of trivia? Grass grows by the inch, and dies by the foot.

What's your favourite smell? Chips.

Which three albums would you take to a desert island? Pearl Jam - Ten, Simon and Garfunkel - Wednesday Morning 3am and Weird Al Yankovic - Poodle Hat.

What's the daftest work-related question you have ever been asked? Did that hurt?

What's your favourite piece of kit? Our irrigation system.

What three words would you use to describe yourself? Not All There.

What is the single most useful thing you could tell a 16-year-old groundsman/greenkeeper? Get educated.

What talent would you like to have? Telepathy.

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

Image: Rumour has it that I only got married to obtain a smart picture of the team. They were my guard of honour!

to slip over the turf. So, the theory was, if we had out-front rotary mowers, the grass would stand up, and you wouldn't get as much stolon growth and lodging of the plant. The theory worked, but the technology, for us, wasn't there."

"We generally cut about twice a week at a height of 3.75 inches, which is dictated by the BHA. We will then reverse cut, even though it's a rotary mower; two cuts before the race meeting will be in the direction of travel, so the nap of the grass is up to requirements. After the race meeting, we will cut in the opposite direction and repair all the divots with a soil

and seed mixture."

"During the season, we will go through sixty to eighty tonnes of soil and use three bags of seed per race meeting. I tend not to go over the top with the quality of seed, not because I am tight, but you tend to find, with predation, we will lose a certain percentage and it will get kicked out again. How soft the going is will determine the amount of damage, sometimes meaning if it's really soft, we could have holes as deep as four inches, so at least half of that seed is never going to see the light of day."

I asked Carl if he ever uses a heavy roller to help take out the hoof marks. "I tend not to roll as





much as we used to. The old practice was to throw a five-tonne roller on, but then you start to get drainage issues. I used the Cambridge roller three-times last year, but it only goes on if I feel it really warrants it. However, the TDR has finishing rollers on it and seems to do the job. I prefer my team to repair the track rather than roll it back. I carry out aeration work with the Soil Reliever, using pencil tines at a depth of seven inches at least three times a year during the season; it takes about twelve hours to do the whole track. In winter, we will use a Soil Reliever with bigger tines."

Renovation of the track takes place immediately after the last race meeting of the season, dependent on the weather. "Over three days, we will gradually take the height of cut down to an inch, vacuum all the arisings off, then springtine harrow - twice clockwise and twice counter-clockwise to rip out most of the thatch. We like to keep a certain percentage in there for the racing season as it gives a cushion. We will vacuum up all the debris left behind from

the tine harrow, then soil and seed any divot marks. Next, we overseed the running line (which is four metres from the running rail), with approximately thirty bags using a disc seeder. This is what gets most wear during the season then, three days after, we use the Imants Shockwave."

Part of the BHA's mandate is that the racecourse has to contract an agronomist to provide a report annually and Carl uses STRI. "The turf culture needed assistance years ago, because the knowledge base in the racecourse industry wasn't as all-encompassing as it could be. Working closely with STRI over the last fifteen years has helped the racecourse industry move on quite dramatically. We have been recommended more viable products than we used in the past; it used to be agriculturally based up until then. We now use a lot more professional groundsman techniques; areas of weak sward will receive individual treatment, using a specific fertiliser, rather than just spreading a 20:10:10 all over the track. Our fertiliser programme depends on

//

With an eye on the environment, the risings from the lawns and track strip are mixed with the used bedding from the stables to generate 20-30 tonnes of compost

the annual soil results, but we will generally fertilise twice a year; once before the start of the season to give it a boost using 65 bags of 16:4:10 and, in the hard wear areas, we will use an organic product. The second application of 85 bags of 5:2:8 will go down in July over the whole of the track."

Carl tells me his boss is a fan of green and yellow, so all machinery is generally bought outright through Ripon Farm Services, the local John Deere supplier.

Carl is from the Black Country in the West Midlands, which is heavily industrialised, and his parents didn't want him to enter that industry. He has always been interested in working in the countryside, which led him to go to agricultural college. "I started my career on farms in the late '80s, but at the time that industry was suffering quite a bit and I saw there was a part-time job going at Wolverhampton racecourse as a sample unit security officer. With my experience dealing with horses, I took that job up for a season and then, because I could drive tractors, I fell into a job as a groundsman at the course. I

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Course history

The first recorded horseraces in the Ripon area took place in 1664 on Bondgate Green. Over the next 236 years, several other venues were used to stage race meetings. Indeed, during one meeting in 1723, Ripon racegoers witnessed horseracing history, when they watched the first ever race exclusively for lady riders.

However, none of the historic venues had long-lasting success, and it took the opening of the current course on Boroughbridge Road, in 1900, to establish Ripon as a regular flat racing venue and it has been an important fixture on the racing scene ever since.

The very first meeting at the modern course was held on the sixth of August 1900 and, since that time, the racecourse has developed so well, it is now regarded as the sporting flagship of this medieval market town.

Well respected within the industry and a popular choice with Yorkshire based owners, Ripon earned the title of 'Best Small Racecourse in the North' as voted by the Racegoers Club in 2011, 2014 and 2015.

With total prize money well in excess of a million pounds, the fixture list at Ripon incorporates some outstanding races. In August alone, the course stages two major highlights. The William Hill Great St Wilfred Handicap is a six-furlong sprint which is named after the town's patron saint, and due to the large number of runners, and the vagaries of the draw, it quite often requires divine inspiration to select the winner. Later in the month, On August bank holiday Monday, Ripon stages its Listed EBF Champion Two-Year-Old Trophy which often attracts leading young horses from major stables.

Staging only flat racing, horses run right-handed over an undulating oval course measuring one mile five furlongs in circumference. There is a sharp bend into the home straight, and the straight is one of the longest in the country, being five furlongs in length. The last furlong of the run-in is noticeably uphill with undulations and on softer going stamina becomes very important. On firm or good going, statistically, at least, the sprint course favours low drawn horses.



started at the point where Wolverhampton was changing the course from a national hunt track to an all-weather one (which I think made it the third all-weather track in the country at the time). Nigel Thornton, Head Groundsman at the time, was offered the same position at Epsom Downs and, not long after he went there, he asked me to join him. I then spent fifteen years at Epsom, working in various positions - predominantly on the track, but I did spend four years with the ranger services. The racecourse is in the middle of the 'downs' alongside a golf course and training grounds. It was a good education base for me, and I learned a lot in my time there. Many of the other lads I worked with at the time have gone on to become Head Groundsmen at other racecourses around the country. I eventually realised I wanted to progress my career, so decided to go on a few management courses. This led me to apply for various head groundsman positions and, eventually, I was lucky enough to get the job here at Ripon - I'm now in my tenth season."

I asked Carl if he enjoys the job and

what are the challenges he faces. "Yes, I love my job. It's very varied and every day is different. What you find, at smaller racecourses, is the Head Groundsman position encompasses pretty much everything, so I'm responsible for the maintenance of the track, gardens, lawns, parade ground, the lake, car parks, maintenance on the buildings, and managing contractors ... the list goes on."

Helping Carl look after the racecourse is David White (64), Groundsman, with sixteen years' service; Martin Johnson (52), Groundsman - nine years' service; John Ireland (59), Groundsman - twelve years' service; David Dalton (60), Gardener - forty-four years' service and Ted Pyman (53), Cleaner - ten years' service. Carl also has around ten casual staff helping to put out the benches, bins and various other jobs before race day. This rises to thirty on a race day carrying out additional jobs such as treading back hoof marks on the track. The day after the race, he generally has around twenty casuals going around the track with soil and seed.





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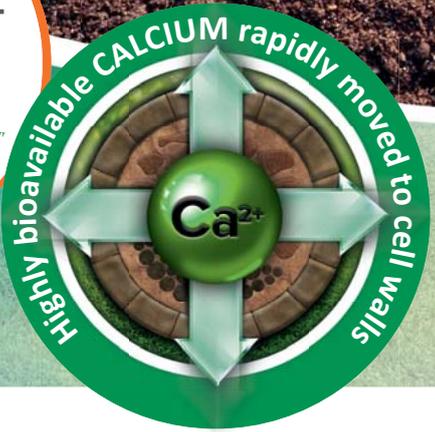
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Montalto Estate

Open for business

For many years, the distinct beauty of Montalto Estate in County Down was only admired by its private owners. However, the decision to open this beauty to the public has proved a roaring success as Chris McCullough discovered



Peter Harris

Dating back to the early 1600s, Montalto Estate - located near Ballynahinch in County Down - has quite an amazing history which is now being enjoyed by the public after the current private owners took the decision to fully open the estate in September 2018.

According to records, the estate went through a few different owners over the years, even being confiscated at one point in pre-plantation times due to its original owner, Patrick McCartan, being involved in the 1641 Rebellion.

Fast forward a few centuries and Montalto Estate is now privately owned by Gordon and June Wilson who purchased it back in

1994 as their family home.

Set in around 400 acres Montalto Estate, home to Montalto House, combines farmland with numerous trails and gardens offering visitors a chance to explore this historic demesne and reconnect with nature.

Montalto Estate was the family home of the Wilsons until 2009 when, with their family grown-up, they decided the time had come to start the next chapter in the estate's ongoing history.

At that point, Montalto was first opened up as a private-hire venue, accommodating weddings, high-end golf groups, and a wide range of social and corporate events.

After witnessing the success opening up Montalto House brought, the owners had a



new found confidence to create a larger offering. The result was The Carriage Rooms, which opened in 2012 as an exclusive and unique wedding venue.

Once this had been established and also became a success, the Wilsons began to formulate plans to transform the estate into a modern visitor attraction that could be enjoyed by everyone.

In opening up the estate to the public, the family wanted to preserve its heritage and natural beauty whilst, at the same time, inspiring and delighting visitors.

The result is a stunning tourist attraction that not only retains the estate's ancient heritage and history but also enables visitors to relax and reconnect with nature.

Since fully opening in September last year, the estate has welcomed over 80,000 people to its gardens, trails and cafe, which is a testament to the hard work put in by everyone involved there.

Ensuring the gardens are looking at their best falls to a team of gardeners headed up by Peter Harris who once worked in the finance industry but preferred to leave the hustle and bustle of office life for the great outdoors.

"I have worked at Montalto Estate for the past six years," said Peter. "I guess I got the taste for gardening after I worked in garden maintenance whilst studying at Queens University for my BSC Management degree."

"After this, I then worked in a number of



Montalto is an enchanting estate. We wanted to let the authenticity of the estate shine through instead of replicating experiences that visitors could find elsewhere



My grandfather lost his sight due to a late diagnosis of glaucoma, but was still able to maintain a small rose garden by touch alone. It's not without its risks but still amazes me to this day



finance roles, before returning to study horticulture full time as I enjoyed the outdoor work when studying for my degree. Before coming to Montalto I was a self-employed design and build landscaper.”

Peter studied horticulture at Greenmount College of Agriculture and Horticulture in Antrim and was inspired by his grandfather to work in gardens.

“My grandfather lost his sight due to a late diagnosis of glaucoma, but was still able to maintain a small rose garden by touch alone. It's not without its risks, but still amazes me to this day.”

Peter is in charge of the budgets and purchasing for the gardens and ancillary areas and reports to both the managing director and operations director.

“Montalto is an enchanting estate set in magnificent, natural surroundings, and opened its gates to the public in September 2018,” said Peter. “We wanted to let the authenticity of the estate shine through instead of replicating experiences that visitors could find elsewhere.”

“We were fortunate that this landscape is so full of heritage and culture and enabled us to do this. This visitor attraction is about letting people experience the true heart of Northern Ireland and offers captivating trails and gardens, a unique eating environment and a distinctive retail element, all of which work in unison to engage the visitor with a product that will both surprise and delight them.”

“There are many other features that

visitors enjoy, including a lake, boathouse, bespoke fairy tale style Witch's Cottage and an epic children's play area with towering tree-house. This has been designed to encourage exploration and learning through play,” he said.

“The most important thing for us is the reaction of visitors when they visit the estate for the first time. We feel that the estate offers many unexpected surprises and the entire visitor journey from our website, signage, car park, buildings, natural play area and trails is of the highest quality.”

Peter has eight staff working in the gardens and can outsource work to contractors or specialists when he needs to.

“We use an arboriculture consultant to help with our tree management plan, and





The only real climatic factor that hits us at the estate is high winds when the stormy season comes. We have a high wind policy with guidelines based on met office weather warnings

tree surgeons to deal with the resultant survey. They climb and we tidy. We also use N and E Ground Maintenance on an annual basis. They attend and alternate the use of a ground breaker and verti-draining on the grass areas. “

“We have 400 acres in total here, which is split into 40 acres of gardens, 125 acres of woodland and the remainder is farmland.”

“The only real climatic factor that hits us at the estate is high winds when the stormy season comes. We have a high wind policy

with guidelines based on met office weather warnings and meetings between the management team.”

“After high winds, our team survey the public areas of the estate before opening to ensure there are no safety issues. Should they identify broken branches, for example, this area becomes restricted until the issue is resolved.”

“We are a woodland garden so we also have some issues with shade. Parts of the garden are also enclosed and can suffer



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If people show ownership for an area or activity I am keen to let them run with it, as long as it benefits the garden and estate. We have areas of the garden that we are developing for the future and are at various stages of development

from poor airflow as well," he said.

With such a diversity of areas to look after, Peter and his team follow a detailed maintenance plan to keep them ahead and ensure the gardens look at their best in the different seasons.

Peter explained: "We have different areas with different daily, weekly and monthly requirements. As an example, we would aim to have all the grass cut at least once a week, depending on growth and conditions, and trim fence lines and edges once a fortnight. Spot spraying of beds and hard landscaped areas are continual tasks that always have to be done, weather permitting of course."

"We also have daily maintenance routines and safety checks for opening the trails and natural play area," he said.

Peter's staff are all fully trained to handle the variety of job demands at the estate, allowing him some flexibility when anyone is on holiday.

"We like to have staff that can deal with

various tasks so there is always cover if people are on annual leave or sick," he said. "As within all walks of life, some people are better at certain tasks than others or have a greater interest in certain fields."

"If people show ownership for an area or activity I am keen to let them run with it, as long as it benefits the garden and estate. We have areas of the garden that we are developing for the future and are at various stages of development."

"This will hopefully maintain people's interest in the garden and keep them coming back. There are also new trails in development, one of which is due to open later this summer."

Over the past two years, Peter and his team have been pretty much full time focused on getting the gardens ready for the estate opening up to the public.

"We were focused for the past eighteen months to two years on getting the gardens ready for opening to the public," said Peter. "This included ensuring all new paths and





trails were safe and having tree surveys carried out.”

“There was also work going on establishing large planting schemes, such as the winter garden, to ensure seasonal interest for regular visitors. For us, opening the estate has been our focus and this has resulted in many new projects having been undertaken.”

“The majority of this work has been done in-house. A contractor was brought in to build the trails around the gardens, but we have a skilled and passionate gardening

team which means we are in the lucky position to be able to manage almost all of the work ourselves,” he said.

Ongoing training for the staff is of vital importance to Peter and the Montalto management.

“We have been doing training courses like spraying and use of a telehandler with a local firm BSD training and chainsaw related courses with Arbortec from Ballycastle,” said Peter.

“I have discussed the use of apprentices with the managing director and it is

definitely something we would consider. There has been a government led trailblazer scheme introduced, but it has not filtered through to Northern Ireland as yet.”

“We have an external health and safety officer through Willis Employment Services and there is a first aider on the gardening team, and the front of house team also has a number of first aiders should they be required,” said Peter.

Pests and diseases can play havoc with the management of any sports ground and gardens but the team at Montalto try to stay






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We also protect, as much as possible, the wild flora on the estate. There are a few ancient woodland indicators on site like pignut. The team have different environmental policies for wildlife, including bats and tree management



Restaurant head chef David Earle picking the menu of the day.

one step ahead of any issues.

Peter said: “We have recently undertaken a biological pest management programme with Kopperts. They supply nematodes and parasitic wasps for the natural control of a range of pests. We use herbicides though to deal with more persistent weeds.”

“Rabbits are on the periphery of the estate but have not been an issue for us yet. The ranger will control these if required. The badgers can cause damage when looking for grubs or bulbs.”

“Our gardening team are forever on the look out for the signs of these pests and take appropriate action,” he said.

“We also protect, as much as possible, the wild flora on the estate. There are a few ancient woodland indicators on site like pignut. The team have different environmental policies for wildlife, including bats and tree management.”

“Those that need to be felled are left, where safe to do so, as living monoliths for natural decomposition by fauna and fungi. Our ranger, Wilson Johnston, has a number

of projects in place including encouraging wildlife to reside at the estate,” said Peter.

When it comes to choosing the machinery to be used at the estate, Peter and his team discuss the merits of any potential new equipment additions before deciding on exactly what to purchase.

“Obtaining new machinery, for us, as with most businesses, depends on cost and we would look at the requirement for each piece of machinery before deciding on the purchase of it,” said Peter.

“When buying machinery, we use a number of local dealers to see which one can give us the best deal. However, we are not dependent or loyal to just one dealer. We aim to get the best product solution for the task we require and, quite often, this means using different manufacturers.”

“There is, on some occasions, the necessity to use specialist help with machines we do not have. Digger work can be hired in, and ground breaker or verti-drain as well.”

“Our estate supervisor does the daily and



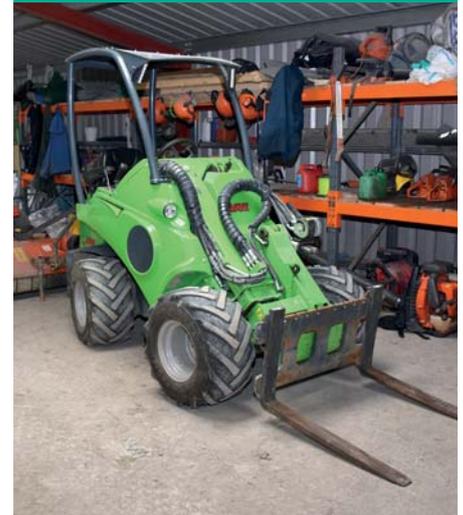
If there was a magic wand and we could wish for any machinery, I think I would definitely ask for more battery powered Husqvarna equipment such as chainsaws and hedgecutters. This would be very useful indeed for us here





What's in the shed?

- Kubota ST-30 tractor
- Kubota L5030 tractor
- Kubota F2560 ride on mower
- John Deere 8800 Terraintcut
- John Deere X950R ride on lawn tractor
- John Deere 4066R tractor
- Avant 640 wheel loader
- Ferris Hydrowalk DD commercial 48" mower
- Timberwolf 150H PTO wood chipper



weekly maintenance checks, and annually Darren Clarke of DC Tractors maintains the majority of the larger machinery."

"If there was a magic wand and we could wish for any machinery, I think I would definitely ask for more battery powered Husqvarna equipment such as chainsaws and hedgecutters. This would be very useful indeed for us here," said Peter.

And talking about reconnecting with nature, Montalto Estate runs a very successful restaurant on-site which serves

up some delicious home cooked and baked food, but also grows edible plants.

Restaurant head chef David Earle can be seen most days picking plants, including elderflower, to use in his dishes and all in the clear view of diners who can see the garden from the comforts of their restaurant chair.

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Sea buckthorn

The scourge of the links





Sea buckthorn (*Hippophae rhamnoides*) is a species of deciduous flowering shrub often found on links courses; it is native to only a few areas on the east coast of Britain but was widely planted at a time when concerns about stabilising dune systems were common

Sea buckthorn has stiff dense branches with silver grey lanceolate leaves and large aggressive thorns. The female plants produce abundant orange/red berries which remain on the plant for most of the winter months. The roots spread rapidly and extensively, providing non-leguminous nitrogen fixing within the soil.

It can grow between 2 and 4 metres in height and spreads rapidly within the ecosystem. The plant is dioecious meaning that the male and female flowers grow on different plants, fertilisation occurs by wind borne pollination.

The plants have very extensive deep roots that have a symbiotic relationship with nitrogen fixing Frankia bacteria. The bacteria convert atmospheric nitrogen into ammonia. Ammonia is used globally as a fertiliser and, in fact, nearly 90% of fertilisers produced worldwide use ammonia as their base.

This creates a situation that suits broadleaf weeds and grasses, nettle, Yorkshire fog and Timothy are often seen within or adjoining sea buckthorn stands as the enriched soil creates the perfect nitrogen rich ecosystem. In the golfing environment, this causes conflict between the fine grasses required for quality playing surfaces and the more aggressive



Gorse and water share the disadvantage that it is practically impossible to play out of them, and they are also the frequent cause of lost balls



Buckthorn removal at Burnham and Berrow Golf Club



Extensive rabbit damage and buckthorn suckers

Sea buckthorn has a range of negative impacts in dune systems, replacing diverse dune vegetation with a buckthorn monoculture, enriching the substrate and stabilising the dune system (a number of species in dunes depend on dunes being low nutrient, dynamic systems).

Natural England always seeks to remove buckthorn from dune systems where it is not native (or at least reduce to very low levels). They funded the club to do some buckthorn removal through a Conservation and Enhancement Scheme (CES) that ran from 2010-2015, and it was great to see some significant stands removed. Species-rich dune vegetation has colonised a number of these areas which is fantastic.

broadleaf weeds.

Sea buckthorn is incredibly robust and can grow in temperatures ranging from - 43°C to + 40°C and can withstand both drought and saline conditions making it one of the hardiest plants.

The plant is very invasive and can reproduce through both seed and vegetatively through suckers from the extensive root system. On dune systems the plant often grows laterally along the ground as the wind and sandy soil encourage instability and horizontal growth.

This creates a situation which allows the plant to colonise adjoining areas more rapidly, as with its aggressive thorns it ensures that mowers and green staff are kept away and a buffer area is produced on the edge of the stands. The buffer is then colonised with new plants which grow heliotropically (towards the sun) creating a new edge and the process continues, and the area of sea buckthorn increases rapidly.

Mowing does limit the spread to an extent but the plant is so hardy this often only results in the plant tillering, in fact I have even seen sea buckthorn growing on greens and surviving quite happily to the dismay

of the greenkeeper. Though not good for a smooth playing surface.

Sea buckthorn causes numerous problems with golf strategy. It creates impenetrable scrub areas that are impossible to play from, creating a very penal hazard similar to gorse.

“Gorse and water share the disadvantage that it is practically impossible to play out of them, and they are also the frequent cause of lost balls. It would appear, therefore, that they should not be used to any great extent as hazards.”

HS Colt 1920

Stands of buckthorn also create the perfect environment for rabbits. Rabbits rarely stray more than 200 metres from their burrows, therefore stands of buckthorn close to playing areas are particularly problematic. Male rabbits make scrapes to define their territory and seem to prefer short mown turf for the purpose, this often results in holes on green surrounds and on fairways. The holes have to be filled in for both golf and safety, however this is often futile as within hours the rabbits return to re-assert their territorial margins, leaving the greens staff frustrated





After removal



On a links golf course, the aim should be to reinstate the dune habitat, this means scraping off the enriched top soil that the sea buckthorn creates

in their efforts.

A female can have 1-14 offspring in a litter, starting at only six months old. Females can become pregnant within minutes after birth. As their gestation period is about one month, one female could hypothetically give birth 12 times in one year, though the mating season is typically the springtime.

So, given an average litter of 6 rabbits is achieved (3 male, 3 female), one mother rabbit x 3 female babies x 12 months = 36 female babies plus mother = 37. The population would increase as follows:

- Year Two: 1332
- Year Three: 49,284
- Year Four: 1,823,508
- Year Five: 67,420,512
- Year Six: 2,494,558,944
- Year Seven: 92,298,716,930

A very frightening prospect if you're a greenkeeper.

Controlling rabbits on a links course can be very difficult as gassing is not effective as the gas can dissipate in the sand, and

often the burrows are not accessible due to their dense form and sharp thorns of the sea buckthorn. The only real option is shooting or ferreting once the buckthorn is removed and access can be gained.

If buckthorn removal is taking place, then the opportunity to destroy the burrows and habitat that protects the colony should be taken. This benefits the long-term control of the rabbits as new burrows in open ground can be accessed. The exposed landscape allows predators such as foxes and birds of prey the opportunity of natural control.

The quality and amount of harbourage are major factors that can determine the number of rabbits in a particular area. Habitat management should therefore play an integral part of any successful rabbit control programme. Scrub and ground cover may need to be thinned sufficiently to give access to all burrows; this is essential where gassing is planned. Also, where practicable, burrow systems should be destroyed following control operations.

Article by John Nicholson
www.johnnicholsonassociates.co.uk

Technical Information

The best way to remove buckthorn is by using a forestry brush fork on a suitable excavator to remove the entire plant, including as much of the root system as possible. This is necessary as any vegetative material left in the soil will reproduce through suckers and a major control programme will be required to stop the recolonisation of the area.

The arisings should then, ideally, be burnt in a deep hole; the sand removed from the hole can then be used to recontour. The enriched top soil that has been produced by the sea buckthorn needs to be scraped off and buried in order to reduce fertility and create an ecosystem that favours the fine grasses desired for quality golf surfaces.

It is essential to bury the material at least 2 metres down to stop any regeneration. It is also necessary to monitor for regrowth and treat any suckering with an appropriate herbicide before it establishes. Undertaking the removal meticulously will save a lot of future management works.

Chipping the arisings is also a possible solution, though can be very difficult due to the contorted nature of the plant and the long sharp thorns that it possesses.

On a links golf course, the aim should be to reinstate the dune habitat, this means scraping off the enriched top soil that the sea buckthorn creates. The enriched soil can then be buried along with the arisings and then recontoured using the infertile sand from the excavation of the burial pit.

Ideally, two machines should work in tandem to make the operation efficient, one removing the thorns and the other burying and recontouring as they go.



Nettles commonly associated with sea buckthorn



Managing seed supply

Demand rises and yield falls

The summer of 2018 posed a challenge for turf managers throughout the UK and wider Europe. The prolonged dry and hot conditions, which went down as the joint hottest on record, caused damage and turf loss to surfaces up and down the country. However, the wider effects of this are still being felt as seed crops also fell victim to the unprecedented conditions.

Derek Smith, Amenity Sales & Marketing Manager of DLF Seeds explains how climatic conditions are a major headache in the planning of seed supply, as demand spiked and stocks fell

We live in an age now where we're used to having everything available at the click of a button. We have the luxury of logging online and ordering groceries, for them to turn up at our door the very same day. Here, it is well documented how some fruit and vegetables get from 'field to fork' in under 24 hours. For Turf Managers, they can contact their local rep or distributor and can often get bags of seed delivered the following day. However, to get the seed into the bag and out to the customer has been three years in the making!

The market availability of grass seed



Seed crops were damaged by the drought of 2018

is finite and is largely determined by the forecasting and planning that has taken place in the two years prior to harvest. To illustrate, during the summer of 2019 we are in the process of planning which crops to plant for harvest in 2021, which will eventually make it into mixtures in the spring of 2022 - that's no easy feat!

To try and predict future demands requires a lot of time, analysing markets by nation, seed variety, and right down to forecasting the various levels of quality that users will be looking for to ensure we plant the correct quantities of the necessary species to meet requirements. We will begin by analysing our starting inventory and

stock levels. Then it's looking at wider sales trends - are demands increasing and will this continue? Or is the market levelling off or likely to decline? Finally, it's looking at the market trends which is where we analyse in detail the species currently available, and any new cultivars or species which may need to be factored into the equation.

A classic example of this is the turf-type tetraploids DLF began harvesting five years ago. Having looked at the speed of establishment, cultivar qualities, tolerances, cost and environmental factors (such as the drive towards reduced water and nutritional input) we were optimistic of them becoming a core ingredient within our mixtures.

However, despite our best estimations, they became far more popular than expected which meant that for the first three years we were unable to harvest enough to keep up with demand. Having now adjusted the quantities planted, the crop cycle is catching up.

Equally, the introduction of new species also means working out which species will be reduced. The rise in the popularity of hybrid turf systems has seen a decline on the reliance of turf for stadia, and the number of re-surfaces taking place each year. This means that where varieties such as Smooth Stalked Meadow Grass (SSMG) were once a staple of turf producers due to



its dense, high-wearing and strong rooting system, its slower establishment means that it's no longer a popular choice for overseeding. While it has qualities desirable for certain niche markets, a percentage of the crops once dedicated for SSMG have been switched to cheaper, fast-establishing species like Perennial Ryegrass.

With the two-year crop planting cycle of the amenity grass seed market, unlike other areas of the industry, production cannot easily be increased or decreased depending on demand. A big spike for a mower company will see more resources put into manufacture to produce stock accordingly. Equally, chemical firms can source more of the ingredients required to make more product and hold any excess supplied for the next surge in demand. Grass seed is not a tap that can be turned off and on in the same way.

As a living organism, grass seed has a shelf life which will vary depending on conditions at harvest, drying, cleaning and storage. Adequate rainfall through the growing season followed by a dry few weeks ahead of harvest will see high yields

and healthy seeds. These will naturally have a higher viability and would generally maintain optimal viability for several years when kept in ideal storage conditions. In a poor season, this could be significantly reduced. As a general rule, the seed you're using this year is likely to be from the previous year's harvest.

While we can make our best estimations of trends and market activity, there are elements in the mix that we cannot control - the weather and resulting crop yields being the major one. During 2017, we started to see market demands return to levels achieved prior to the 2009 recession, which meant we entered 2018 with lower than expected inventory levels. We then fell victim to the 'Beast from the East' which was tough on the crops and then went straight into one of the biggest pan-European droughts we have experienced in recent years.

The extended period of very hot, very dry conditions hit seed producers hard. The European grass market totals an estimated 200,000 tons per year - approximately 80,000 tons is for the amenity market of

which roughly 12,500 tons is used here in the UK. It is well documented that certain species are better able to withstand challenging climatic conditions, however it is estimated that harvests in the summer of 2018 were down by 10% (8,000 tons) overall, with some species in particular dropping in yields by as much as 30%. The crops that did survive produced seed of varying quality.

Simultaneously, the burning up of turf across Europe caused a spike in demand that was impossible to predict. The autumn of 2018 saw a rise in consumption of 30% to 40% compared to expected levels as Turf Managers fought to renovate and repair, which meant seed suppliers were borrowing from future stock to cope with current demand. For many, the warm temperatures that were sustained late into the season caused this seed to fail. This in turn created a residual demand that has rolled through to the spring of 2019, as those that couldn't renovate last year now require seed to 'catch up', taking supply from already depleted spring stocks.

The same issues Turf Managers faced



It is vital that as industry suppliers we are looking for ways to deliver new products into the market to help them achieve their aims

Perennial ryegrasses have grown in popularity over other species such as smooth stalked meadow grass





UK trials



This year, yield forecasts are for some crops to be up to 50% down on average, meaning *Agrostis capillaris* will remain in relatively short supply

in getting seed to establish during the autumn also effected the newly planted crops for 2019 harvest. Grass seed is normally produced on a two-year cropping cycle. These can then be left for a third year when required, however the seed yield is usually significantly reduced. The weather experienced in 2018 led to the poor establishment of many first-year crops, which not only reduces yields in the first year, it can also mean a reduced second year crop. In the worst cases, some crops were ploughed out.

All of this culminates to the position the market finds itself in today - the lowest stock levels we have experienced in decades. In particular, Smooth Stalked Meadow Grass and Tall Fescue harvests are significantly reduced while there is currently very little rolling stock of Red Fescue and Bentgrass - the latter of which is a real concern for the UK market. The unavailability of certain cultivars has seen DLF remove a number

of mixtures from the market to ensure only those that meet our quality parameters remain on sale. However, that's not a tactic employed by all seed companies, so for those managing surfaces where quality is paramount, you should be aware that the seed in the bag may not always be the original catalogue specification, or the quality you normally expect.

Unfortunately, when seed supplies run short, high purity seed can be harder to source. From the harvest 'pot' you'll have a certain, finite percentage which can be considered as high purity. The smaller that pot is to begin with, the less of the high purity seed is available. We're all aware of the pressures Turf Managers face to achieve higher quality surfaces, while the tools at their disposal to achieve this are becoming increasingly limited. That's where, despite the challenges we face with things like the weather and wider economic factors, it is vital that as industry suppliers

we are looking for ways to deliver new products into the market to help them achieve their aims.

So, while we're facing historic highs in demand and lows in crop yield, for DLF it's not all doom and gloom! In early 2019, we launched 'DLF Select' - a new programme within our production chain to safeguard quality, ensuring that only the cleanest fields are used to produce the purest crops. It took major investment through all levels of planning, growing, harvesting, cleaning and logistics to secure the delivery of seed that far exceeds the baseline EU purity rules and standards.

To meet the targets for the DLF Select programme, and having already forecast an upturn in overall industry demand, we also began increasing our plot acreage in the main production markets. For the European Amenity industry approximately 50% of seed is grown and harvested in Denmark. Holland is another major production area,

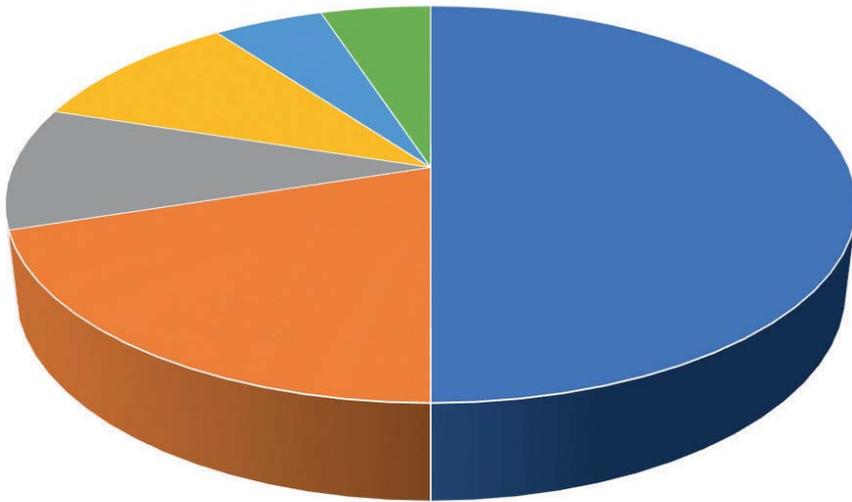


2019 has, so far, been ideal for crop growth

European Amenity Seed Supply



You should be aware that the seed in the bag may not always be the original catalogue specification, or the quality you normally expect



■ Denmark ■ Holland ■ USA ■ France ■ New Zealand ■ Other (Inc. UK)



contributing 20% into the pot, with the USA and France making up 10% each of the total yields. New Zealand is another, largely responsible for Bentgrass production, contributing a further 5% of the total market while other regions, including the UK, make up the remainder of supply. While sowings around the world were affected by the adverse weather experienced last year, we are now better positioned to ride the storm by securing a larger proportion of the available production acreage.

The Bentgrass market in New Zealand was one of those hardest hit. A combination of the adverse weather conditions and an increase in demand within the local market saw less seed available for export, making prices rise globally. This year, yield forecasts are for some crops to be up to 50% down on average, meaning *Agrostis capillaris* will remain in relatively short supply. While this is unlikely to cause any further hikes in the price of Bentgrasses, it does mean that

prices are unlikely to come down.

However, the really good news (and written with fingers crossed!) is that 2019 so far has provided almost perfect growing conditions since early February. We had a fair winter into a mild spring, with rain at the right times meaning that crops are universally looking better for this year's harvest. As demonstrated though, it really is a fine balance and it only takes one factor to change everything - another drought and there could be real problems.

In summary, the seed market as it stands is tight and is likely to remain this way until at least the spring of 2021. If the weather continues to play ball this year, a good harvest should restore us to some kind of equilibrium. It's important to remember, in the short-term, that despite the rather daunting statistics, there will always be seed available, it may just not be your first choice cultivar or quality. If you require particular mixtures, cultivars or quality parameters, bear in mind that they may be harder to source, so it is now more important than ever to plan ahead.





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Machinery training

It's a shared responsibility

In this article, **Neil Adams**, training and development manager at Reesink Turfcare, whose training is industry-leading and also one of the biggest on offer in the industry, says training is fast becoming a necessity, planned for in the annual budget



Today, the sharper legal focus on employee health and safety means the supplier and the employer share a responsibility to provide far more than this - providing a copy of the handbook is not a guarantee that operators will read and understand it before first operating the machine!

Health and safety in the turfcare industry will always be vitally important, but long gone are the days of delivering a handbook with the machine, and that being enough to tick the box.

Customers have realised that it's important, not only for the health and safety of the operator and those nearby, but that machines are a significant investment and, in order to ensure the best results from them and as long a working life as possible, then they need to be operated correctly. In fact, it's long been proven that, where machinery is correctly installed, there was a measurable reduction in damage during operation. Where this was followed by further formal operator training, the maintenance savings between trained and untrained were substantial.

Neil Adams comments: "There is no season for training and we never have 'down-time' or flat periods. It's busy all year round because people buy machinery all year round for various applications. Customers appreciate that, in order to maximise their investment in their machinery, staff need to have the correct training on how to use them to their best advantage."

Effective installation should set the scene for what is to follow. It should place clear emphasis on safe and correct operation, which is then followed by continuing with training to ensure the basics are consolidated into every day work as a matter of course.

There can sometimes be some confusion between installation and operator training and it's important to draw a clear distinction.



Installation

Historically, many new machines have been ‘installed’ simply by leaving the manufacturer’s handbook on the seat when the machine has been delivered by the dealer. Today, the sharper legal focus on employee health and safety means the supplier and the employer share a responsibility to provide far more than this - providing a copy of the handbook is not a guarantee that operators will read and understand it before first operating the machine!

Installation is about the handover of new and used machinery to the course manager or head groundsman and should highlight the information about safe and correct operation contained in the manufacturer’s handbook. It is normally the responsibility of the supplier and is largely about communicating important information face-to-face to all operators - even if many are already experienced.

‘Installation’ should cover the safe systems of work, details of the principal operating systems and controls with particular reference to safety guards, interlocks, signs and warning signals; safe starting and stopping and routine maintenance.

Although the supplier is responsible for installation, the process also requires the co-operation of the course manager to ensure that the right operators are made available to learn about the new machine and that the timing and location are suitable.

So where does the installation stop and operator training begin?

Operator training

Operator training is, as the name suggests, about competence to operate the machine correctly under different conditions and in different applications and, although safety is a key concern, the yardstick is performance.

It’s the responsibility of the employer to develop the skills of employees with limited experience of a particular type of machine. In practice, there are many crossovers with the content of turf machinery training courses. For example, health and safety, daily maintenance and use of the controls will often be the same, but things can change, not only in machinery model upgrades but also in legislation.

The past few years have seen an increase in operator training courses. This has come about in part, due to the health and safety executive reviewing the use of machines in the agricultural/groundscare industry and

the possible introduction of a mandatory licence for all operators.

Some dealers have seen this structured training as an opportunity to contribute to the safety of the industry and improve customer care and after-sales satisfaction. Manufacturer’s training or accredited training through LANTRA and/or the City & Guilds, is generally available from manufacturers, training providers, local dealers, or distributors such as Reesink Turfcare.

We have not yet seen the introduction of a mandatory operator’s licence but, casting an eye towards the construction industry with its introduction of the CITB licence for machinery operators, I believe it’s only a matter of time before we see something similar in our industry.

Installation is NOT a substitute for operator training. Getting the best from the latest turfcare machinery and equipment takes a considerable amount of skill and knowledge. Skills develop over time with practice. What operators learn and how well they perform is the responsibility of their managers.

Correct manufacturer’s training will ensure you receive the latest updates, user tips and uncover the advanced features of the



Skills develop over time with practice. What operators learn and how well they perform is the responsibility of their managers

Performance: Correct operation means customers profit from promised machine performance, expertly maintaining their turf, adding value to the relationship with their customers and the supplier.

Maintenance: Machine support costs, including warranty claims to the manufacturer, should be reduced as a result of correct operation. What's more, additional emphasis can be placed on areas of potential misuse that subsequently reduce the need for maintenance, which, in turn, saves money.

Relationships: Strong customer relationships are very important. The extra care taken over installation and professional training is likely to be repaid in stronger customer relationships.

Activity Insight: The installer has a unique opportunity to spend up to two hours with the customer, answering operator questions about the new machine and also learning more about how the course manager/head groundsman/employer intends to use it, tailoring advice as necessary.

machinery ensuring that the club gets the all-round benefits and usability of the equipment.

A journey of 1000 miles starts with a single step

In the words of the Chinese proverb: a journey of 1000 miles starts with a single step - and that's where Reesink can help. For some years now, we've been on a pathway to make more training available at competitive prices making it accessible to all.

One way to do that is by making training as convenient and accessible as possible. We have made sure dates are flexible and that there's the option of training delivered on customers' premises. Some find training in a familiar environment, with their own equipment, makes it even easier to develop or invest in their skills; others prefer offsite individual or group-based training, so we cater for all.

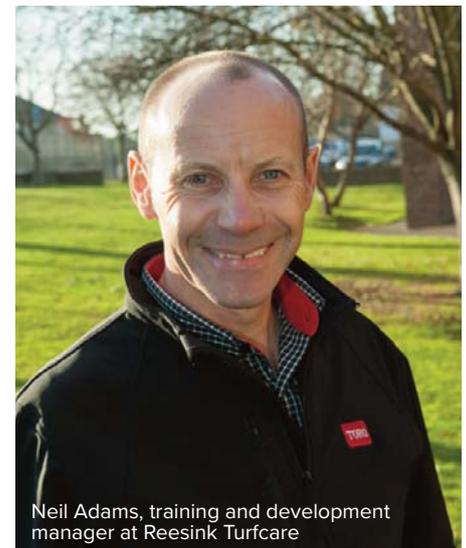
We have a dedicated team and, in partnership with Toro, have created and developed the biggest range of vocational training for land-based disciplines in the industry.

To date, we have eleven courses for turfcare professionals providing all levels of training that cater to not just the novice, but

the more experienced, too. We are continually looking and listening to customers about how we can further improve our offering. This set-up means it could not be easier for customers to develop and invest in their employees.

We have also developed a Master Service Technician programme to provide a strategic career pathway for technicians within the dealer, service centre and Reesink workshop locations. The programme demonstrates the company's investment in the people who ultimately deal with the customer, ensuring the best possible training service.

For further information on Reesink's training call 01480 226800 or browse through the range which includes Machine Operator Training for greenkeepers and groundsmen to Compact Tractor Driving Award and Turfcare Mechanic Training online at www.reesinkturfcare.co.uk. Booking can be done through the website and is best done during the initial installation.



Neil Adams, training and development manager at Reesink Turfcare



Frank Newberry

Grounds Training Tutor **Frank Newberry** believes that most people want to work for an organisation that values their efforts. In this article, Frank suggests nine ways supervisors and managers can deliver values-based leadership



Do you feel valued?

Value seems to be central to people's motivation

As mentioned before on these pages, the issue of 'value' seems to be central to people's motivation to work harder and be better at their work.

Many employees will sooner or later ask themselves:

1. Is the work I do valued by my employer?
2. Do I feel valued as a person?
3. Is my work team valued?

If the answer to these questions about perceived value is 'yes' then employees will be more motivated than if the answer is 'no'.

Beneficial to Workforce Engagement and Morale

As supervisors and managers at the sharp end, we can and should explore and develop a values-based approach to improving performance across the board.

This values approach can be particularly beneficial to workforce engagement and morale. For example, an individual's attitude and disposition (positive, cheerful etc.) - and perhaps the team's work habits (punctuality, safe working practices etc) - might well benefit from this approach.

Managers and supervisors (young and old) can be caught out by their staff's apparent negative or indifferent attitude to work, often forgetting that they themselves are in management because of their 'better' attitude and more highly developed sense of duty and responsibility.

Responsibility Lies with the Supervisor/Manager

Just as well - given that the responsibility for staff engagement and performance rests with the supervisor and/or manager!

There are nine specific messages in three categories that managers and supervisors will need to get across to individuals and teams if the values-based approach is to succeed.

Many years ago, Professor John Adair (born 1935) indicated that we need to say and do the things that give our people confidence in:

- The value of their job
- Their value as individuals
- Their value as a team

Confidence in the Value of the Job

Adair indicated that we need to:

1. Explain the **CONTEXT** of their work and people will know where it fits into the organisation's important work objectives, no matter how simple or basic the task or elements of the task might be
2. Set a good, positive **EXAMPLE** of hard work, and perhaps cheerfulness, and people will adopt a more positive approach to their work
3. Outline the **IMPORTANCE** of their work and people will know they are valued by the organisation, their team leader and the rest of the team

Confidence in the Value of the Team

Adair also indicated that we need to:

4. Give **SUPPORT** and **PROTECTION** and people will feel like a team. This may involve us protecting them from unfair criticism or accusation. The team may well look to us to protect them from each other when, for example, banter in the team becomes bullying
5. Brief everybody **COLLECTIVELY** and they will think like a team. People do not like to feel 'left out' and will value you taking the time to include them when you have key information to share
6. Inspire the idea of **HELPING** each other out and they will work like a team. Again, a good example really helps. An example in which we can be seen regularly helping out, or offering to help people out when time permits, and praising others for helping people out

Confidence in the Value of the Individual

Finally, Adair suggests that we need to:

7. Provide **CHALLENGE** and people will feel involved and work to their potential. In my experience most, but not all, people like to feel (as time goes by) that they are getting better at what they do. Most of them, when

they are competent, like to feel that they will be moved onto more complex, more challenging work

8. Give **PRAISE** and they will feel appreciated for making an effort at work. It has been said in these pages that many people work best when they get regular praise and recognition. Others though would be suspicious and might suspect praise for 'just doing my job'. We need to be clear which of our people like a little praise and which of them work best with more frequent recognition
9. Show **CONCERN** for people and they will show concern for their work. This is where our ability to show that we care for people, and not just the work that they do, is put to the test. We need to make it clear that we have concern not just for individuals, but also for the way team members pull together to support everyone in the team

I wish you all the best with the nine messages above. May you always feel valued at work and may you be able to help others feel valued for their efforts.

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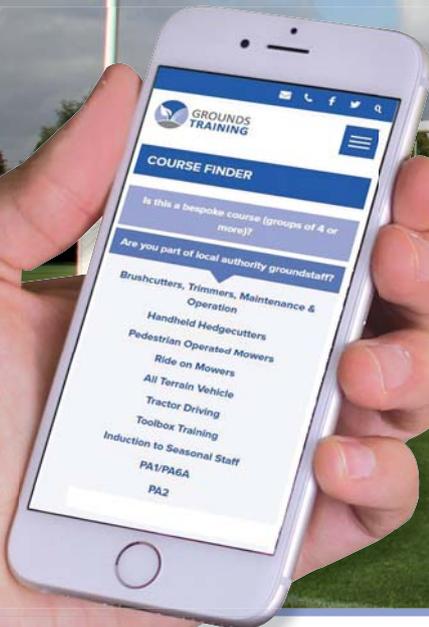
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GREENS AERATION

What Matters Most

Andy Brown of The Toro Company says that successful aeration requires a balance between the turf's health and the players needs

Aeration is one of the most important turf management practices that can be implemented on a golf course. However, players don't always understand the value of aeration when it interferes with play on the course. The key is finding the right balance between the two things that matter most: turf health and course operations.

From the agronomy side, a well-designed aeration programme ensures the most efficient movement of water, nutrients and air through the soil profile to encourage deep, dense rooting for a firm, consistent playing surface. From the operational side, it's critical to get that playing surface back in operation as quickly as possible with minimal disruption to play - and therefore revenues.

The Agronomy Side

"Though the need for aeration is extremely difficult to justify when the greens are looking great, if neglected, the resulting problems will slowly increase and the greens will start to deteriorate," says greenkeeping industry agronomist, Bruce Jamieson.

Fortunately, the need for aeration and the way in which it is done have evolved to a point where both are now better understood and more effective. There are basically two types of aeration:

- **Core or deep-tine aeration** involves pulling larger plugs out of the soil, followed by topdressing. This practice is recommended during periods of vigorous growth. It can be somewhat disruptive to operations because it does require some recovery time, but the benefits are worth the time invested.
- **Needle or solid-tine aeration** involves punching very small holes in the turf and dusting in a small amount of sand. This practice opens the soil without removing a core to increase gas exchange and drainage at the rootzone during periods of high stress. Disruption is minimal because you can play straight after it's been done. In addition, with regular solid-tine aeration, you may not need to do deep-tine aeration as often.



Before aerating the greens, course management must assess the course and decide what problems need to be addressed and/or what goals need to be achieved. For example, compacted soil with very limited thatch will require a different solution than soil with a thicker layer of thatch.

Done correctly, aeration offers many benefits (see sidebar), but it must be implemented regularly throughout the year at varying depths to deliver all of the benefits listed here. That's why it's so important to choose the right solution for your course conditions and take steps to minimise the time required to complete the aeration process.

The Operational Side

There's no question that healthier turf ultimately benefits players by providing a quality surface on which to play. The challenge comes when aeration disrupts your operations, from playability to corporate events.

Some disruption and recovery time is inevitable at times when core aeration is the best course of action. But there are ways to minimise the impact on operations.

Equipment such as the Toro ProCore 648 pedestrian aerator can aerate eighteen greens in about seven hours, thanks to its efficient 122cm coring swath. The unique design puts the wheels in front of the aeration head so operators can make pass after pass without running over cores or freshly aerated turf. This prevents damage to the turf and the fresh holes, and makes cleanup easier. RotaLink™ geometry also ensures tines remain vertical to cut precise holes rather than tearing through turf, which helps shorten recovery time.

Together, these advantages add up to increased productivity to return the course to playing condition as quickly as possible.

"The Pro Core 648 is an integral part of most of our venues," says Eddie Adams, Senior Tournament Agronomy Consultant for the European Tour. "It has provided turf professionals across the globe with an aeration machine that is both reliable and flexible, allowing this essential part of turf management to be carried out on a regular basis with minimal surface disruption."

The Benefits of Aeration

- Reduces compaction
- Improves surface/subsurface drainage
- Breaks down thatch
- Reduces Black Layer
- Increases root development
- Improves drought resistance
- Reduces dry patch
- Allows topdressing to be incorporated without layering
- Increases overall turf health

"The 648 is a cornerstone of any golf course machinery fleet," Adams adds. "Combined with other recognised turf management practices, it provides a solid foundation that allows us and the host venue to present firm, true and consistent putting surfaces for a Tour event."

Communicate About Your Aeration Plan

In addition to balancing turf health and operations, it's important for the general manager, head greenkeeper and director of golf/PGA professional to communicate with each other regularly in order to deliver a consistent message to members and players.

Be proactive and make sure players understand why aeration is necessary, how it will benefit them and what is being done to return the course to play as quickly as possible. By keeping them informed, you can manage expectations and keep their experience as positive as possible.

Article written by Andy Brown, Senior Sales Manager, Commercial Equipment, Golf Irrigation and Corporate Accounts, EMEA, at The Toro Company. Special thanks to golf industry agronomist Bruce Jamieson for contributing information about aeration.



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MACHINERY AND VEHICLE WASH-OFF

Environmental Sustainability and Pollution Prevention

Much has been said over recent years about the merits of water recycling wash systems to prevent pollution and conserve water. Here, Bill Whittingham reports on recent developments

Having visited many golf and sports facilities I've learned and seen how machinery wash-off is handled. I've also heard the thoughts of those responsible for wash-off. It is quite clear that virtually all know of the legislation relating to pollution prevention and the fines that can be imposed; much of which is regularly regurgitated in the trade press.

All those I met are also aware of the growing need for water conservation, and many have taken action to address both matters. What is apparent, and somewhat surprising, however, is that despite this knowledge and concern, there are many establishments still with wash-off facilities that are, quite frankly illegal, causing pollution and wasting vast quantities of water.

The Groundwater (England and Wales) Regulations 2009 and The Water Environment (Groundwater and Priority Substances) (Scotland) Regulations 2009 were enshrined in law in 2009 (10 years ago!) and, more recently, the EU Water Framework Directive has been implemented. Incidentally, whether or not Brexit is achieved matters not, as the requirements have been made law in the UK.

So why the complacency and inaction? The ideal way to achieve legislative compliance and save water is to install an approved water recycling system, i.e. WTL certified. Despite the best endeavours of the leading manufacturers, such a system is not considered cheap and, apart from the water savings, does not contribute to "the bottom line"! So, some take the attitude that they'll take their chances and hope they are not inspected. To my mind, this is not sensible thinking.

Articles have appeared in the industry press reporting just that; a golf club being visited by the EA and told they suspected pollution from the club's washpad. The club in question responded rapidly, recognising its environmental responsibilities, and installed a below ground washpad water recycling system, satisfying all requirements.

If cost is an issue, there are options offered by the main suppliers of recycling wash systems to help; spreading payments, retro-fitting or, in the case of ClearWater, carrying out a self-install, with each and every UK made system delivered new, direct to site from the factory. One company, not offering self-install, does offer above ground refurbished units however.

So, which way do you go; above ground or below ground? The choice is yours, but there are distinct differences between, what most consider to be, the two leading contenders. Both do the same job: treat contaminated water by biological treatment producing clean recycled water. One system offers simple, effective engineering with



Brookmans Park Golf Club's Nick Billington demonstrates their new self-installed system

few moving parts (less to go wrong!) and gravity feed to the system. The other system relies on more elaborate engineering and the pumping of washwater into the system.

Press coverage of late appears to have focused on an above ground system, so it seems only reasonable, to redress the balance and look at the merits of a below ground one. One point that is raised frequently and that some, including myself, have difficulty understanding is the statement regarding a certain above ground system: "... you can see what's going on" The inference supposedly being that below ground is not to be preferred.

Now, unless I've been missing something for many years, I understood that, in the main, waste water treatment is carried out below ground and is in surely the safest location? How many separators, septic tanks and sewage plants do you see above ground? However, if you really want to see "what's going on" you can, in a ClearWater system for example, simply open the turret covers and take a look. You can actually witness exactly what's going on; effective treatment!

So what advantages does this particular system have? Being below ground means that it is unobtrusive; away from prying eyes and vandalism. It is also safe being encased in concrete (no worries about leaks!) and operating at a temperature of 14.5 - 16.5°C. This is important as a stable operating environment means that the unique micro-organisms perform better and also allays fears of Legionella and other harmful bacteria forming. The threshold for Legionella to form and survive is stated as 20°C. Above ground systems can endure much higher internal temperatures than this in the sun! Below ground means water flows into the system by gravity via a simple grass trap, so no complicated sumps, pumps and chutes. Valuable washpad space is not required either to site the system and a key decision maker seems to be that it's not unsightly but looks good; with just four modest green turret tops sited at ground level, that's all anyone sees; impressive!

Self-install certainly does seem to be popular (over 70% of ClearWater's customers take this cost-effective route). Full and detailed installation instructions are issued and I've seen some splendid installations that installers are justifiably proud of.

Take a recent installation of an underground system at Brookmans Park Golf Club for example. Asset & Equipment Manager Nick Billington, not happy with the above ground system and repeated maintenance issues, removed that system and used the concrete plinth to good effect; he installed his diesel tank on it and created a pollution prevention area! Installing the system was easy and straightforward he says and further cost savings were made by modifications to the existing

washpad. Nick is pleased with the team's work and the new system.

Buying a washpad water recycling system is a worthwhile investment and will ensure that the costly kit you have invested in will be washed so much more effectively. (This system would cost less than 20% of the price of a typical fairway mower by the way!) However, to ensure you spend wisely, do research the systems thoroughly, see them in action and talk to users. To help you to make comparisons and reach an informed decision, here are a few questions to ask prospective suppliers:

1. Is what is being offered a WTL approved full biological system, as not all washpad solutions actually recycle and/or have biological treatment? (Incidentally, a WTL approved system means tax savings on the ECA scheme!)
2. What is the cost of the system and installation? Is the system brand new or refurbished?
3. What is the water capacity? The larger the capacity, the greater the time for treatment
4. How much is a year's supply of micro-organisms and are they general purpose or designed to treat turf machinery wash water and capable of handling small grass clippings?
5. What time do I need to spend on daily/weekly maintenance and what are maintenance costs?
6. Does the system have an oil warning alarm and an auto shut-off valve to prevent an oil spill contaminating already treated water?
7. Are there separate pumps for each hose and is a proper trigger wash gun provided with each?
8. What pressure do the water hose pumps produce?
9. What moving parts are fitted that may need replacing? Is this something I can do or is an engineer's visit necessary? (Swapping the small compressor and water pumps of the system can be carried out by users in minutes, saving costly call out fees and down time!)
10. Would the system be exposed to the elements and, if so, not be affected by high temperatures and UV rays?

So, below ground or above? The choice is yours; make it an informed one!

We all need to take our environmental responsibilities seriously and ensure sustainability. Preserving valuable water by recycling on the washpad and preventing groundwater pollution is one definite way we can contribute.

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PEARLWORT (*Sagina procumbens*)

The precious weed

Pearlwort is a perennial mat-forming plant with narrow leaves and tiny white flowers. It can be problematic when allowed to establish in fine turf areas, especially on links courses



Pearlwort can become a troublesome weed when allowed to spread and establish in turf. This weed can populate most soil conditions very quickly by seed.

Pearlwort is a good indicator of moist/wet conditions and is often mistaken for moss in lawns. Swards that are maintained at low mowing heights below 6mm (golf and bowling greens) are susceptible to invasion from this weed.

Pearlwort easily develops rooting structures from its stem nodes, producing fine roots that can invade most soil conditions.

Flowers are white, small and inconspicuous and flower from April to September. They are generally found on long stems near the tips of the branches.

Leaves are very narrow and thin, having quite a thick cuticle, which enables Pearlwort to be resistant to weed control. The upper leaf surface is mostly smooth. Leaves are opposite and may appear whorled around the stem.

Pearlwort produces an incredible number of small seeds which can be spread by mowing and foot traffic. It also spreads as foliage grows across the soil surface, re-rooting at the internodes. Seedlings emerge from soil with foliage that looks identical to mature plants.

Pearlwort is commonly found in coastal areas and in areas of moist, frequently irrigated turf. It can form prostrate to mounding clumps 5cm in height and has been sold as ground covering plant material for landscaping.
PearlwortHead.jpg

Keep the sward dense and healthy to prevent Pearlwort establishing. It is best to eradicate it as quickly as you can, as this weed can prove difficult to control once established. Appropriate cultural management of the turf, aeration, feeding and regular mowing will ensure that the sward remains dense, reducing the opportunity of bare soil becoming a seed bed.

Spray with a systemic weed control that is absorbed through the leaves of the plant, the active ingredient makes its way through the cells of the plant down to the root. It kills these first and then the foliage starts to die off. Pearlwort is a persistent weed and may need further applications of weed control, often repeat spraying after 6-8 weeks. Apply selective broadleaf herbicides when plant growth is active.

There are a number of products available for controlling broad leaf weeds in established turf. These herbicides are best used when the weeds are actively growing, usually between April-October:

There are a number of Plant Protection Products available for application within the UK, which are authorised for the control of broadleaved weeds in turf.

These herbicides are usually applied as a liquid using watering cans, knapsack sprayers and vehicle mounted sprayers.

A range of selective herbicides are available in the Pitchcare Shop. For further information, speak to one of our technical advisors on 01902 440250



Allowed to establish, Pearlwort can form large patches

Case study

Graeme Taylor, Course Manager - New & Jubilee Courses, St Andrews Links Trust

Managing fine turf is a constant battle with nature. From poor weather to fungal diseases, weeds, disorders and compaction - we face these challenges head on to try and produce the best surfaces possible.

One such challenge, particularly prevalent to links turf, is the perennial weed; pearlwort (*sagina procumbens*).

We find this weed all over the golf course, but is most problematic when established on a putting surface. Looking at the picture you may ask why? It certainly looks like an area of very dense, green grass, so what's the problem?

Firstly, at certain periods of the year it can produce tiny, white, pearl-shaped flowers (hence the 'precious weed' nickname) at which time the colour of the weed will change. This results visually in a very uneven greens surface. The firmness of the green is also affected due to the patch of pearlwort being softer than the fine turf. If left uncontrolled, it can quickly establish into large patches.

Control of this weed is tricky. It tolerates close mowing and can handle vertical mowing and scarification. One method is to keep the turf vigorously growing with increased nutrient applications. This allows the turf to out-compete the weed. We can't overfeed, however, as this would result in slower greens with higher organic matter and the long term ingress of the weed grass; poa annua.

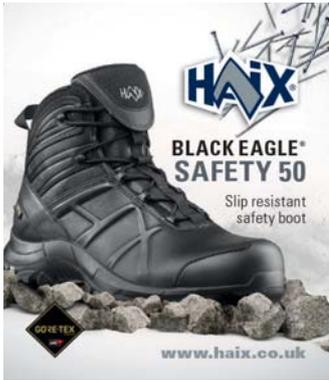
Chemical control is possible with a selective herbicide containing the chemicals dicamba, mecoprop-p and MCPA. When applied, this product slowly kills the weed plant and leaves the fine turf untouched, apart from a slight loss of colour.

As the weed slowly dies, grass will recolonise the patches. This process can be helped along by first vertically mowing the area. This rips out the dying weed leaves and creates space for the new grass to grow. This can then be followed by an overseed with fine grass species such as festuca or agrostis (fescue or bent) and finally a light feed with a liquid fertiliser.



Pearlwort dying off after herbicide application

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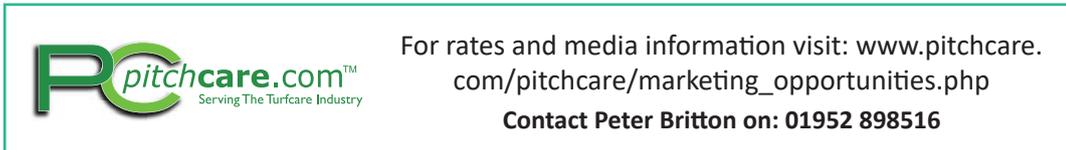
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GIANT HOGWEED

Invasion repelled?

Farmers and community tackle Giant Hogweed in East Lothian - with help from Monsanto

Bayer is supporting a community project in Scotland to tackle Giant Hogweed, with equipment and labour supplied free of charge by local farmers.

Giant Hogweed (*Heracleum mantegazzianum*) hits the headlines each summer as members of the public are injured by its poisonous sap, which can cause painful blisters and severe skin irritation, when enjoying the great outdoors, but it is also an invasive plant which has a serious impact on the biodiversity of the riparian and aquatic environment.

Managed by the East Lothian Countryside Volunteers (ELCV), the project is based at Haddington, East Lothian, at the centre of an area through which the River Tyne flows, with Giant Hogweed growing on its banks.

Local farmers have joined forces to combat the weed, using the highly effective glyphosate herbicide Roundup, some of which has been donated to the project by manufacturer Bayer.

Spraying started in March, with fifty qualified farmer operators using knapsack sprayers to apply Roundup alongside the river, with help from an online dynamic map created by the ELCV which pinpoints the worst affected areas, using reports from volunteer spotters, and allows them to be ticked off as they are treated.

Local farmer James Wyllie was asked to co-ordinate the initiative, having previously led a campaign to control Giant Hogweed on an eight mile stretch of the Biel and Whittingehame Water in East Lothian.

He explained: "The original proposal was for ten miles of the River Tyne, but there was such a high level of support from the landowners to participate in a project where all the riparian owners were acting together that it has expanded way beyond the original plan. It now covers about forty-eight miles of the River Tyne from the A68 to the sea and includes two major tributaries - Birns Water and Colstoun Water - in



Project Co-ordinator James Wyllie with last year's Giant Hogweed stems

an area with around seventy-five riparian landowners participating."

Whilst the main focus is on Giant Hogweed, Japanese Knotweed and Himalayan Balsam are also being targeted by operators as they spray.

Mr Wyllie added: "It's going to take five years to see a real difference, due to Hogweed seeds which are embedded in the soil and will germinate in future years. We aim that no plant should be allowed to flower, as each can produce 10,000 seeds, and any flower heads that are produced need to be removed and disposed of safely."

"The open access dynamic map is key because farmers can see exactly where plants have been observed along the river and when overlaid on a satellite map helps to pinpoint areas to inspect. Later in the season, where there are no flowering plants left, it is marked with a green tick."

In small areas of non-agricultural land, removal of any odd Giant Hogweed plants are tackled by the ELCV volunteers to ensure that there are no gaps.

Roundup Technical Development Manager Barrie Hunt explained: "This is a unique project in that it attempts to treat an almost complete river catchment area, which gives the best chance of tackling the weed. Where only part of

the catchment is treated, there is always the risk of plant material being washed down river and Giant Hogweed re-establishing itself. We have been pleased to work with the ELCV and Mr Wyllie on such a worthwhile operation."

As the growing season drew to a close at the end of July, Mr Wyllie commented that he has been overwhelmed with the positive response to the project. "Every farmer approached has offered to support the work - labour contributed by farmers free of charge will be worth around £100,000 over a 10 year period - and we are very grateful for the sponsorship from Bayer and backing from Scottish Natural Heritage."

He added that Roundup has been key to the success of the project.

"I've used it for twenty-five years, and it is one of very few products that is approved for aquatic use; there are no ground residues and it works by contact onto the leaves only. It's also very effective on Japanese Knotweed and Himalayan Balsam."

"This is a long term project on a large scale, which demonstrates East Lothian farmers and the local community working together to achieve a common goal."

Roundup is available from the Pitchcare shop. For further information, speak to one of our technical advisors on 01902 440250



The River Tyne in East Lothian, where a community project has seen local farmers work together to remove Giant Hogweed from the bank



Giant Hogweed pre-flowering - project volunteers aim to tackle the weed before it gets chance to flower

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Machinery and Supplies

Product Update

A round-up of the latest product news announced in recent weeks



The SPSS, a self-propelled pedestrian sprayer from Techneat Engineering, is now available in a wider range of tank size and boom width options.

Tank options now include 80, 120 and 150L capacities and the company has recently launched a new 5m boom machine alongside the 3 and 4m options already available to professional ground staff.

The new 5m machine will still have the same folding boom option as the 3 and 4m machines, offering easier access via narrow entrances, and all booms have now been improved to increase their overall stability when the SPSS is moving with booms folded..

Recent specification upgrades to the SPSS also include a new pressure compensation control system designed to ensure that there is no pressure change on nozzle output, even when some sections on the boom may be closed off individually.

To improve application efficiency a handle mounted speedometer is now available as an optional extra on all machines.

Techneat sprayers are available from the Pitchcare shop



The new ISEKI SF224 mower offers the most economical way to cut grass commercially with high productivity, plus the added benefit of the new 22.5hp engine, enabling customers to save on fuel costs and initial purchasing costs of their machinery.

Offering a range of decks to suit the various sites and cutting cycles, customers can choose from the tried and tested Wessex, ISEKI and Muthing flail decks, or the new ISEKI outfront rotary deck. These options allow the machine to be highly versatile in this competitive market.

The new ISEKI 60" (1525 mm) outfront rotary deck with three blades ensures that no grass is left uncut, even when undertaking tight turns. The cutting height can be adjusted from 25mm to 125mm (1-5") in 12.5mm (0.5") increments as required. A mulching kit is available to order if required.

With the SF224, operators can be more effective and productive with their time, taking all the equipment with them in the large storage bed on the back of the mower, keeping items safe with the operator, eliminating the need to keep going back to the van to empty bins or change tools

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Reesink Turfcare has extended its Toro Parts range with Toro Reels+ and EdgeSeries Reels+, and with this introduction comes multiple plus points for machinery maintenance.

With Toro Reels+ and EdgeSeries Reels+, everything you need for replacing your cylinders is included and comes pre-assembled. You get the cylinder plus all the necessary bearings, flock seals and spacers, plus the benefit of having all the parts professionally assembled at the factory.

This means that all the bearings are already pressed on with the required low-drag flock seals and spacers. Therefore, there's no need to install all the parts separately which results in a huge reduction in assembly time.

With the integration of the cylinder and all its components, the guesswork for technicians is removed, ensuring the recommended bearings are utilised which increases the product life of your cutting units. Less time on maintenance, and a longer life span means there's more time to focus on providing the best turf care possible.

Using Toro Reels+ and EdgeSeries Reels+ reduces installation time by approximately 15-20 minutes per cylinder which brings yet another plus point - less time and labour means your mowers are back in action faster, saving money and resources.

www.reesinkturfcare.co.uk



Bayer has announced it plans to invest about \$5.6 billion of its research and development budget on alternatives to its glyphosate weed killer over the next decade, according to an article by Bloomberg.

The German company, with U.S. headquarters in Whippany, New Jersey, acquired Monsanto, St. Louis, the maker of Roundup, for \$63 billion last June. Roundup was the first glyphosate-based weed killer but is no longer patent-protected and many other versions are now available.

This announcement comes as the company faces more than 13,000 lawsuits claiming its herbicide causes cancer. In May, Bayer lost its third straight trial over claims that exposure to Roundup caused cancer.

The \$5.6 billion (5 billion euros) in spending on new herbicides over the next decade is part of Bayer's existing 2.5 billion-euro annual budget for crop science research and development.

STIHL has launched the new MSA 220 C-B, the most powerful cordless chainsaw into its range.

Designed with a high chain speed, the powerful MSA 220 C-B makes quick work of any task and guarantees consistently high-quality cutting performance, regardless of the battery charge level. The new PRO cordless chainsaw is ideally suited for felling, thinning work, construction and wood carving.

The new MSA 220 C-B comes as standard with the STIHL exclusive 3/8" Picco Super 3 (PS3) full chisel saw chain with a guide bar length of 35cm/14". This chain has a high cutting performance and a low kick-back.

As part of STIHL's PRO cordless range, the

MSA 220 C-B is powered by a 36 V Lithium-Ion battery. The new AP 300 S battery is recommended to ensure the best possible cutting performance, and is also compatible with all other tools within the STIHL PRO Cordless system.

The sturdy MSA 220 C-B is suitable for use in any type of weather and also enables cutting work in confined areas, making it the ideal tool for professionals working in horticulture and perfect for use when wood carving. The quiet-running and easy to operate chainsaw is a high quality alternative for many tasks including agriculture, forestry and contract work that does not compromise on performance.

www.stihl.co.uk



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OFFSIDE

The not so serious side
of the industry

Brechin City FC's incredible pitch design

The home of the Scottish League One side, Glebe Park, may have opened in 1919 but the 4,083 capacity stadium remains one of the most pristine pitches in Scotland.

I reckon Brechin's ground staff deserve the Ballon d'Or equivalent for this masterpiece.



"Is Glebe Park the most stunning ground in Scottish football? That's not for us to say... But yes." wrote the official @BrechinCityFC account earlier.

The new look design is seriously on par with most Premier League grounds. Another club once renowned for their extravagant pitch designs were Leicester City, but the Premier League announced in August 2017 that they would no longer be permitted.

The decision was slammed as many enjoyed groundsman John Ledwidge's work on the pitch.

Cricket not a recognised sport

Russia's sports ministry has refused to include cricket on its register of officially recognised sports.

The order was issued on 15 July - the day after England's dramatic Cricket World Cup final win over New Zealand.

Exclusion from the official list does not amount to a ban, but does mean cricket will not be eligible for support from the sports ministry.

"Cricket is regularly watched by two billion people - it is the most popular sport in India,



Pakistan and other parts of the former British Empire. Therefore, they are a little afraid of this Anglo-Saxon game in Russia," joked popular Twitter account Yekhidniye Tvity (Sarcastic Tweets).

Reversible course uses goats for caddies

Silvies Valley Ranch is home to a reversible golf course and several caddies that literally work for peanuts.



The course, situated in eastern Oregon, also has a cattle and goat ranch. A lucky few, get to don specially made backpacks and are employed as caddies on the 7-hole challenge course called McVeigh's Gauntlet.

The concept originated because of the course's unique terrain. "The Gauntlet is so steep up and down, so we figured out how someone could haul their clubs around," says Colby Marshall, General Manager at Silvies.

The course has been working with goat caddies for a year and a half ... insert jokes about who you would use as your goat!

As seen on social media ...

IF YOU SEE
A FAIRY RING

If you see a fairy ring
In a field of grass,
Very lightly step around,
Tiptoe as you pass;
Last night fairies frolicked there,
And they're sleeping somewhere near.
If you see a tiny fay
Lying fast asleep,
Shut your eyes and run away,
Do not stay or peep;
And be sure you never tell,
Or you'll break a fairy spell.

WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE

Should have gone to ...



If you spot anything you think might give readers a chuckle send it to:
kerry.haywood@pitchcare.com

DIARY DATES

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)

OCTOBER

3rd: Rugby Union - World Cup, Ireland v Russia, Kobe (englandrugby.com)

5th: Rugby Union - World Cup, England v Argentina, Tokyo (englandrugby.com)

9th: Rugby Union - World Cup, Scotland v Russia, Shizuoka Prefecture; Wales v Fiji, Oita Prefecture (englandrugby.com)

10th: Football - Euro 2020 qualifying, Netherlands v Northern Ireland; Slovakia v Wales; Russia v Scotland (uefa.com)

11th: Football - Euro 2020 qualifying, Czech Republic v England (uefa.com)

12th: Rugby Union - World Cup, England v France, Yokohama; Ireland v Samoa, Fukuoka (englandrugby.com)

12th: Football - Euro 2020 qualifying, Georgia v Republic of Ireland (uefa.com)

12th: Rugby League - Super League Grand Final, Old Trafford (rugby-league.com)

13th: Rugby Union - World Cup, Wales v Uruguay, Kumamoto; Japan v Scotland, Yokohama (englandrugby.com)

13th: Football - Euro 2020 qualifying, Wales v Croatia; Scotland v San Marino (uefa.com)

14th: Football - Euro 2020 qualifying, Bulgaria v England (uefa.com)

15th: Football - Euro 2020 qualifying, Switzerland v Republic of Ireland (uefa.com)

19th-20th: Rugby Union - World Cup quarter-finals, Japan (englandrugby.com)

19th: Horseracing - British Champions Day, Ascot (ascot.co.uk)

26th: Rugby League - Great Britain v Tonga, Hamilton (rugby-league.com)

26-27th: Rugby Union - World Cup semi-finals, Yokohama (englandrugby.com)

NOVEMBER

2nd: Rugby Union - World Cup final, Yokohama (englandrugby.com)

9th: Football - Women's friendly, England v Germany, Wembley Stadium (thefa.com/england)

14th: Football - Euro 2020 qualifying, England v Montenegro, Wembley Stadium (uefa.com)

15th: Rugby Union - European Champions Cup starts (englandrugby.com)

16th: Rugby League - Great Britain v Papua New Guinea, Port Moresby (rugby-league.com)

16th: Football - Euro 2020 qualifying, Northern Ireland v Netherlands; Azerbaijan v Wales; Cyprus v Scotland (uefa.com)

17th: Football - Euro 2020 qualifying, Kosovo v England (uefa.com)

18th: Football - Euro 2020 qualifying, Republic of Ireland v Denmark (uefa.com)

19th: Football - Euro 2020 qualifying, Germany v Northern Ireland; Wales v Hungary; Scotland v Kazakhstan (uefa.com)

QUOTE ME HAPPY

"England have two major problems; Brexit and Steve Smith. I am not sure what is the greatest." **Rodney Hogg, former Aussie bowler.**

"Part of the job of Root and the coaches between now and the start of the second Test is convincing the rest that Smith is not a creature from outer space who cannot be bowled to." **The BBC's Jonathan Agnew on Test Match Special.**

"Yeah, look, it's changed my life a little bit. I'm definitely more recognised now, and it makes you feel more comfortable. That's the way I feel, anyway. They're not calling me Beef or J.B. Holmes out there. That's a plus." **Shane Lowry's hilarious response to how his life has changed since his Open Championship win.**

"A few of the bigger blokes could lose a bit of fat up here. With the altitude, you burn more calories, so it's a bonus," **Welsh prop Tomas Francis sees the benefits of altitude training in the Alps - for some of his teammates.**



Shane Lowry

"People think that players from other clubs, other countries, are better than the players we have here but without really having the proof, because those players haven't played here, or whatever else." **Jurgen Klopp trying to convince everyone his Liverpool squad is looking strong ahead of the season.**

"The players, squad and coaches we have at the moment need to be a little bit more confident and arrogant about how good they can actually be going into this World Cup." **Shane Williams urges Wales' World Cup hopefuls going into the tournament in Japan.**

"In some ways it was reminiscent of the emergence of a teenage Severiano Ballesteros when he finished second at the 1976 Open at Royal Birkdale. Here was someone different, playing the game through the force of their personality." **The media reaction to Hinako Shibuno's extraordinary victory at the Women's British Open.**

"We don't have any real stars. Players used to winning are going to have to deal with losing two, three or four games on the spin. That's a big challenge." **Sheffield United's Chief Executive Officer, Stephen Bettis on being back in the Premier League.**

To have your event included in this magazine diary section, please email details to kerry@pitchcare.com

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