

# PITCHCARE

The turfcare magazine from [pitchcare.com](http://pitchcare.com)

December/January 2021

Issue 94 | £5.95

## DON'T MISS

**How was it for you?**  
We talk to grassroots groundsmen and greenkeepers to find out how they met the challenges of Covid-19



## WINGING IT!

Taking over the course manager's role at Noordwijkse Golf Club in Holland recently has been Richard Wing. In this question and answer session, he charts his career journey thus far and highlights some of the pitfalls and pleasures of working abroad

## A whole lot of games

It doesn't take much working out that one hundred and fifty-two goalmouths are quite a lot for any team to maintain. Kerry Haywood met with Grounds Maintenance Officers at Derby City Council to discuss how they manage the vast number of sites and the challenges they face



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WELCOME TO

# PITCHCARE

## The year of tiers and tears

**Ordinarily at this time of year, when the turkey has all been consumed and we start to look forward to 2021, our thoughts turn to BTME and our industry coming together. This will be sorely missed by many, not only in terms of conducting business, but the missed opportunities to catch up with colleagues and friends from across the country and beyond.**

I think we have all found new ways of doing business this year and adapted in our own environments, but there is no denying that job losses and struggles within grassroots sports clubs will have a lasting impact on the industry. It was obviously encouraging to see the £50m rescue package agreed by the EFL and Premier League to protect lower league clubs, but is it all too late?

It's clear from our Grassroots roundtable discussion (page 12) that both volunteers and funding have been lost and the general opinion is that things won't return to normal for a good couple of years. Despite this, each of our panel said that this year has encouraged them to work hard and do more for their facility - this strength and commitment should be commended!

Ongoing training and development shouldn't be forgotten throughout this time of restrictions and the GMA has recently launched its online 'Grounds Management Toolkit', a training resource aimed to support volunteers maintaining football, cricket, rugby league and rugby union pitches. In addition, BIGGA's popular Continue to

Learn programme will take place entirely online in January and Grounds Training have just announced their 2021 open course programme.

It goes without saying that this year has been a challenge for everyone, both professionally and personally, and my thoughts are with anyone who has lost loved ones during the pandemic and, of course, anyone struggling with mental health or personal issues.

As the year draws to a close, I cling on with optimism that the new year will see the speedy circulation of the vaccine, fewer tiers and tears whilst sport across ALL levels returns to atmospheric stadiums/venues with a roar of a crowd everywhere. I accept it's a big ask, but we have to at least try to be positive.

Happy new year - stay safe.

**Kerry Haywood**  
Editor



## SAY THAT AGAIN!

*"I offered to work for free during lockdown; to maintain the facilities and ensure things would be ready for when we were given the green light to return to play"*

Paul Clarke, Enville Cricket Club

*"I restrict alcohol, eat a healthy diet and focus on exercise to keep everything else in a good shape, making the mental state easier to deal with it"*

Richard Wing, Noordwijkse Golf Club

*"There are all kinds of grass species in there. It is horrible. All different colours; it is not a pretty sight"*

Michael Merriman, Mansfield Town FC

*"The lack of competitive sport can result in a lack of motivation for the ground staff, who particularly enjoy preparing the rugby pitches for fixtures"*

James Munn, Dean Close School

*"People who underperform at work or let you down in your life will be a particular challenge. Getting angry, and then judging and condemning others, will be extremely easy things for us to do"*

Frank Newberry, Training Advisor

*"I consider my mental health good and healthy. Being involved in the maintenance of pitches is great for the mind; through both exercise and being outdoors. I now offer the opportunity to young people in school to come and taste what it is like to be a groundsperson."*

John Thornton, Farsley Celtic FC

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**Issue 94 December/January 2021**

Richard Wing, Noordwijkse Golf Club

## COVER STORY: Winging it!

Taking over the course manager's role at Noordwijkse Golf Club in Holland recently has been Richard Wing. In this question and answer session, he charts his career journey thus far and highlights some of the pitfalls and pleasures of working abroad. **P22**

## INDUSTRY

### How was it for you?

2020 has been an unprecedented year. The effects of Covid-19 will still be being felt in years to come, with the general economy struggling to return to something like normal. Unemployment is likely to rise and the way people work will, no doubt, change substantially. Through all this mayhem, and indeed considerable fear and anxiety, sport has been able to return after a period of lockdown. **P12**

## GOLF

### Following the paper trail

Ingrebourne Links is situated in Rainham, Essex, just twenty minutes from Central London. Its futuristic clubhouse - more akin to a 'Grand Designs' construction - boasts more glass than is perhaps sensible at a golf course, yet offers visitors and members a striking welcome and stunning facilities. Lee Williams visited this new club to meet Course Manager Ben Adams to discover how the final work is progressing. **P32**

### A strange time!

Since March 2020, the phrase 'a strange time' has been used constantly to describe the world we are all currently living in. However, for Thorpeness Golf Club and Hotel's new Course Manager, Wallace Wilson, those three words could not ring more true. **P40**

## PUBLIC PLACES

### A leisure and golfing feast

One of those much-visited jewels in the crown of historic country properties is Hever Castle in a corner of west Kent. It is best known as the home of Anne Boleyn, whose marriage to Henry VIII was a fulcrum moment in our history. There is much more that brings thousands of visitors there year after year and Neville Johnson looks at why its gardens and golf courses add hugely to the estate's appeal. **P42**

### A whole lot of games

It doesn't take much working out that one hundred and fifty-two goalmouths are quite a lot for any team to maintain. Kerry Haywood met with Grounds Maintenance Officers; Andy Plant, David Wharrier and Karl Smith at Derby City Council to discuss how they manage the vast number of sites and the challenges they face. **P54**

## GAELIC FOOTBALL

### A chance to breathe...

Covid-19 has certainly played havoc with sporting fixtures and the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) in Northern Ireland is also affected. With various lockdown regulations governing sporting venue closures, some heavily used pitches got a chance to breathe. Chris McCullough travelled to Liatroim Fontenoys GAC to view its newest pitch. **P62**

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## WINTER SPORTS

### Tights on nights!

Mansfield Town Football Club was formed in 1897 and, since the end of the First World War, have played their football at the 9,186 capacity Field Mill Stadium. Nicknamed 'The Stags' (after the old borough's coat of arms) the team compete in League Two of the English Football League and, at the time of writing, were languishing close to the relegation zone. Lee Williams caught up with Head Groundsman Michael Merriman over the phone to chart his twenty-two years' service. **P70**

## SUMMER SPORTS

### A history of lawn tennis

Founded in 1860, Edgbaston Archery and Lawn Tennis Society (EA&LTS) is the oldest lawn tennis club in the world. It is a friendly, social club situated next to the picturesque setting of the Botanical Gardens, Birmingham. Robert Holland (Bob) is currently a Trustee and Historian, but has held numerous other titles during his time. We spoke over the phone to gain an insight into the rich history of the club and lawn tennis itself. **P78**

### Lording it over Ilkley!

Head Groundsman, Richard Lord has served Ilkley Lawn Tennis & Squash Club for many years. He is not only responsible for making sure the various playing surfaces are in tip-top condition throughout the year, but he also doubles up as the maintenance man. Lee Williams met up with him to have a socially distanced chat about the challenges he faces. **P84**



Richard Lord, Ilkley Lawn Tennis Club

## SCHOOLS & COLLEGES

### The feel good factor returns

'The New Normal' - one of this year's buzz phrases that has been worn out by overuse. Yet, for school groundsman, sports coaches and pupils, it describes how they are making school sports work and providing the physical and mental boost needed in such a difficult year. Grounds Manager James Munn talks to Jane Carley about life in lockdown and beyond. **P92**

## TECHNICAL

### What to consider when buying

In the last article, Reesink Turfcare discussed how to control spending and avoid surprise costs, allocating maintenance budget in an uncertain economy and how to manage this cost component over time. In this article, Alastair Rowell, UK sales manager - turfcare equipment at Reesink Turfcare, takes a closer look at buying used machinery, the benefits of doing so and what to look out for when purchasing a preowned machine. **P100**

## TRAINING & EDUCATION

### Mind your language

Training Advisor Frank Newberry looks at the way we speak to people. He suggests that our choice of words and tone of voice can profoundly affect our relationships with others - not just our friends and family, but work colleagues, bosses and team members **P104**



Wes Matthews, Cranfield United FC



Neil Miller, Hever Castle



James Munn, Dean Close School



Michael Merriman, Mansfield Town FC

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# The power of the pitch

Football Foundation Interim Chief Executive, Robert Sullivan, shares his thoughts on the publication of the first ever nationwide local football facilities plans



**English football has announced a collective plan for its investment into grassroots facilities. After two years of hard work, every Local Authority has an agreed list of specific pitches and clubhouses to build or improve in their area. These Local Football Facility Plans are the roadmap to a transformation in how every player enjoys our national game.**

In developing the plans, the Football Foundation spoke to over 2,000 local clubs, more than 300 local authorities and a range of other stakeholders to identify an excellent pipeline of projects. Each plan is a short, well-defined document that captures current football facilities and identifies investment priorities where the needs are greatest.

Across the country, over 5,000 individual projects have been identified, from improving grass-pitches, new artificial pitches, redeveloping clubhouses and building new small sided multi-use games areas.

"The challenge is significant," says Football Foundation Interim CEO Robert Sullivan, "and, of course, we need great playing facilities now more than ever."

"Covid-19 is the biggest public health challenge we have faced in generations," he continues, "but, at the Football Foundation, we believe passionately in the power of playing football to transform lives by improving physical and mental health, empowering young people and strengthening communities. Delivering these plans across England will be a vital cog in how we bounce back as a fit and healthy nation. But having the plan, the roadmap, is only the beginning."

"Our next challenge is to work together - as a team at the local and national level - to secure the necessary funding and deliver these projects."

"This will not be easy. We understand the huge pressure local authorities are under right now. They are making difficult financial decisions about how to meet the short term needs created by Covid-19, whilst still delivering against longer term strategies. We believe investing in local community football facilities can help by delivering valuable health, social and economic outcomes; and we will work hard to make that case."

"The encouraging news is that, increasingly, local authorities are looking to integrate physical activity into more proactive public health policies. Local health and wellbeing strategies across England consistently highlight physical inactivity as a major challenge. Investing in local football facilities and increasing participation is an effective way to tackle this."

"We see it every day. Victoria French, Assistant Director for Culture and Events at Sunderland City Council, explained that the Council had seen huge increases in football participation at their new hub sites in the city. Moreover, the combination of football facilities with a rugby pitch, gym and community and education facilities has brought people together from across the local community."

"But it's not just the personal health and community benefits. We know that investing in great facilities has a real hard economic benefit too. Research by CEBR shows that for every £1million of capital we invest in community facilities, £5.5 million of output is supported in the wider economy."

"At the national level, through the Football Foundation, the Premier League, The FA and Government have committed funds to deliver our ambitious plans and we are ready to work with local authorities and local communities, as a team, to make them a reality."

Mr Sullivan conclude: "By working as a team we will unleash the power of the pitch."

## Dave leaves school

**Head groundsman Dave Bradshaw is retiring from his role after 41 years' service to Merchant Taylors' Boys' School.**

Having joined the school on 5 March 1979, Dave has worked diligently for four decades to maintain the school estate and prepare the playing fields and other sports facilities for use by our children and visiting teams.

His final day at work was marked with a socially-distanced celebration with his friends and colleagues, who presented him with a number of gifts to mark his departure.



## Grounds Training open courses programme announced

**Grounds Training has announced the first dates and venues for its 2021 open course programme.**

Held regionally according to demand, open courses provide individuals with access to independently accredited turf industry training and qualifications.

Attendees include newly appointed members of staff, volunteers at community clubs, keen amateurs with an interest in turf maintenance, and contractors looking to expand their range of services.

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3rd - 5th March - Allscott, Telford

15th- 17th March - Ferndown, Dorset (around water also available on request)

**Basic Tree Survey & Inspection**

10th February - Ferndown, Dorset

**Initial Sports Line Marking**

11th February - Rhydyfelin, Mid Glamorgan

18th March - Melksham, Wiltshire

22nd March - Ferndown, Dorset

Date TBC - East Midlands

**Winter Sports Pitch Maintenance**

24th February - Rhydyfelin, Mid Glamorgan

Date TBC - East Midlands

**Lawn Care**

23rd March - Ferndown, Dorset

TBC - East Midlands

Further dates and venues will be published at [www.groundstraining.com](http://www.groundstraining.com) soon.

For further information or to book, visit the website or call 01865 509 510. If you are interested in a course not listed, email your name, contact number, location and the course details to [info@groundstraining.com](mailto:info@groundstraining.com).



# SAGE advice!

The Sports & Grounds Expo: All new Outdoor Trade Show looks to be massive for 2021

Set for 27-29 July 2021, industry buzz is building around trade show newcomer the Sports and Grounds Expo (SAGE).

Set in the stunning surrounds of the Three Counties Showground at the foot of the Malvern Hills, the show has a clear focus on hands-on demonstrations and experiences, offering visitors the chance to see and test out the latest products and ideas within the industry, whilst maintaining a safe environment.

The target of SAGE is to bring together grounds personnel from a broad range of sectors and provide an engaging and well-resourced environment. Many companies are looking to improve efficiency and cost effectiveness and this is a key area, which SAGE is focusing on; exploring and showcasing the products that allow this to actually happen across the industry.

"Our motivation is to give visitors a hands-on experience as much as possible, without compromising on safety, whilst it has always been the case, the pandemic has created extra pressure for many companies that are looking to streamline operations and ensure cost efficiency," says Event Manager Vicky Panniers

"With our industry adapting at pace, SAGE provides the perfect environment for everyone



Three Counties Showground

to be able to experience the latest innovations on the market," she continues.

Already signed to exhibit are a diverse range of companies across the industry, with many market leaders such as Campey Turf Care Systems, KIOTI UK, TRIMAX, Charterhouse Machinery and Fleet Line Markers to name a few already preparing for SAGE next summer!

The renowned outdoor venue provides reassurances to both visitor and exhibitor alike. Visitors will be impressed by the abundance of space and the diversity of products on show, whilst exhibitors will be astounded at the value for money on offer!

Keep up to date with all the SAGE news on Twitter & Facebook.

The Sports & Grounds Expo will be the highlight of the industry calendar next summer,

offering a safe and proactive environment for those operating across all sectors of the sports and grounds maintenance industry.

Visitor registration is now open - Go to [www.sportsandgrounds.co.uk](http://www.sportsandgrounds.co.uk) to register and to be kept up to date with what's to come in July 2021!

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



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# BIGGA partner RSPB and R&A

## BIGGA teams up with RSPB and The R&A to support biodiversity on the UK's golf courses

**The British & International Golf Greenkeepers Association has established a formal relationship with the RSPB and The R&A's partnership that will see the association explore collaborative opportunities to increase awareness and support for biodiversity conservation on golf courses.**

BIGGA's relationship with the RSPB and The R&A will help facilitate mainstream wildlife conservation on golf courses, by promoting best practice and providing inspiration for greenkeeping teams who would like to promote biodiversity at their golf facilities. RSPB Business Conservation Advisor Dr Marie Athorn will present at BIGGA educational events, including its flagship event Continue to Learn, and offer help and advice for greenkeeping teams to make the most of the opportunities for the promotion of ecology on their golf courses.

The relationship and the BIGGA platform will also be used to raise awareness and encourage participation in partnership case studies and research, such as trialling management of nature-based solutions. BIGGA will also support the RSPB and The R&A in achieving the partnership's goals by providing support whenever possible, such as by hosting guidance notes on the BIGGA website.

James Hutchinson, BIGGA's Membership Services Manager for Ecology and Sustainability, said: "We consider this relationship to be of tremendous importance as BIGGA, The R&A and the rest of the golf industry seeks to alter the perception of those who believe golf courses as detrimental to the environment. Golf courses constitute large areas of mixed habitats, from areas of trees,



Short-eared Owl at Montrose Golf Club

heathland, wildflower meadows, wetland habitat and even bunkers and, as such, they play a hugely important role in preserving the UK's under threat wildlife species."

"Turf professionals everywhere have an awareness of their role as stewards of the wider landscape and we're looking forward to working closely with The R&A and RSPB to promote best practice and, in turn, provide more habitats for Britain's wildlife to enjoy alongside the nation's golfers."

Dr Marie Athorn, RSPB Business Conservation Officer, said: "It is great that BIGGA are giving their full support to the partnership between the RSPB and The R&A. The partnership, funded by The R&A, has a fantastic opportunity to encourage and facilitate nature conservation on golf courses. With the support of organisations like BIGGA the partnership can reach the passionate and knowledgeable greenkeepers across the UK to showcase the amazing work they are already doing for nature and provide the expertise to those who want to start on their journey to helping nature on their golf course."

"With over 3,000 golf courses in the UK, the golf industry is in an amazing position to support nature conservation on a landscape scale. With many golf courses being located in

close proximity to densely populated areas, golf courses, if well managed for nature, can provide connectivity across an increasingly urban landscape. Regional BIGGA networks provide an exciting opportunity for golf courses and their greenkeepers to work together to support nature, whether that be a particular species in decline or to restore habitat that supports common and rare species alike."

Steve Isaac, The R&A's Director - Sustainability, said: "The partnership between The R&A and the RSPB has set out a number of key work areas that will contribute towards the protection of habitats and wildlife on golf courses across the UK. The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the health benefits golfers and other users of golf courses gain from enjoying recreation surrounded by the sights and sounds of nature. However, the aims of the partnership will only prove successful and enhance the natural value of golf courses if they are delivered on the ground. Greenkeepers will, obviously, play a vital role in this and the relationship between the partnership and BIGGA provides exciting opportunities we all have for golf and nature. We are delighted that BIGGA has joined this initiative and feel that this reflects the values that many greenkeepers put into practice as the custodians of wildlife on our golf courses."

## Boris Johnson pledges his support for £70m Cheshire Vision project

**Prime Minister Boris Johnson has pledged his support for plans to build a £70m world class football facility in Northwich, Cheshire.**

Driven by Cheshire Football Association, the proposals - called Vision 2020 - include a new 3,000-capacity stadium, two outdoor 3G pitches, one indoor 3G pitch, a medical facility, an outdoor activity centre, a hotel and spa.

Set to be located at the former Knights Grange Golf Club in Winsford, the "football village" is also set to become a leading centre for the provision of women and girls football.

Speaking in parliament, answering a question from Eddisbury MP Edward Timpson - who has been championing the development - PM Johnson said: "This is a very exciting project and I welcome Cheshire FA's commitment to providing a new world class facility for women's and girl's football and I look forward

to the proposed opening of the centre in Winsford."

Dave Edmunds, chair of Cheshire FA, said: "This proposal will see Cheshire at the forefront of County FA Football Development at every level of the game."

"Our aim is to provide a fantastic facility that will significantly increase opportunities and experiences for all participants within the game, be they individuals or clubs."

"At a time when the Football Association is targeting the doubling of participation in the women's game, this will also give Cheshire and our partners the chance to lead the way, and create a lasting legacy not only for women's and girl's football, but the whole game throughout the County of Cheshire."

According to Louise Gear, head of women's



football participation at The Football Association, the project will transform the women's game in the region. "This is an innovative proposal and great news for aspiring female footballers across Cheshire," she said.

"Excellent facilities mean more opportunities, better players, and more enjoyment. Centres like this can only aid our aspiration of doubling participation in the women's game by 2020."

# SALTEX Survey results

SALTEX surveys offer encouraging feedback according to GMA

**The Grounds Management Association (GMA) has revealed its feedback from both the recent visitor and exhibitor surveys that influenced the decision to move SALTEX to November 2021.**

In October, the GMA issued two surveys; one to every exhibitor that had signed-up to the 2020 event and one to every visitor - past and present. The aim was to gather industry feedback which could help plan for and shape the future of SALTEX.

When asked which type of show visitors would like to attend, respondents confirmed that, despite the rise in virtual events, nothing can quite replace human interaction as an indoor show proved to be the most popular choice for both 2021 and 2022.

#### Preferences for 2021

- Indoor show - 86%
- Outdoor show - 27%
- Virtual show - 18%



#### Preferences for 2022

- Indoor - 91%
- Outdoor - 33%
- Virtual - 9%

A key question in the survey asked the best time of year to attend a trade show; November was the first option - followed by October.

- November - 47%
- October - 32%
- February - 30%
- September - 25%

Despite the pandemic, it is clear that there remains an appetite for trade shows. Respondents were asked how confident they were on a scale of 0-10 (0 not likely at all, 10 extremely likely) in attending trade shows in the future. An overwhelming 73% voted 7 or above.

Commenting on the results, Geoff Webb, CEO of the GMA said: "Crucially, we wanted to listen to the industry and give them an opportunity to shape a show that is totally about them, and their needs. It also hugely supported our motivation to reschedule."

"We felt really encouraged by the research which pointed to a continuing demand for an indoor trade exhibition and it was also promising to see November as the preferred date."

SALTEX is appealing more to the younger generation in the industry too, which is further supported by the GMA's wider range of activities. There was an increase of 6% in visitors aged between 16-30 at SALTEX 2019.

Other notable increases have seen a rise in landscapers, local authorities and those working in junior, assistant and deputy positions.

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**PELLENC**

# £300m emergency cash for major spectator sports

Government announces huge 'Winter Survival Package' for sports



**Major spectator sports in England will receive a combined £300m emergency cash injection to protect their immediate futures over the winter period.**

The Sports Winter Survival Package will support sports organisations - from national governing bodies through to clubs - which continue to be impacted by COVID-19 restrictions.

The funding will be largely composed of loans and will focus on eight sports - rugby union, football (women's football and the lower tiers of the men's National League), rugby league, tennis, netball, basketball, ice hockey and badminton. Other activities, such as horse racing, motorsport and greyhound racing will also benefit.

Rugby union is the largest recipient of funding, with a total of £135m spread across the sport. This will include a £44m cash boost for the RFU, a £59m handout to Premiership Rugby clubs, £9m for Championship clubs and a further £23m for community clubs.

Football has been given £28m (of which £3m is earmarked for the women's game), rugby league £12m, tennis £5m, netball £4m,

basketball £4m, ice hockey £2m and badminton £2m.

According to the government, each sport's allocation has been made on a needs-based assessment process, reflecting submissions made by the individual sport.

The funding process will be overseen by an independent decision-making board and supported by Sport England.

Tim Hollingsworth, CEO of Sport England, said: "These are unprecedented times for our sector, and those sports and leagues that rely so heavily on spectators for their income that have been especially impacted by the pandemic."

"The role they play in their local communities is vital and this package of support from Government will be hugely welcomed."

"Alongside our wider support for grassroots and community sport, Sport England is working very closely with Government colleagues on the design of this fund and we look forward to playing a key role in its successful and swift delivery."

Howard Storey retires after 35 years with John Deere



**John Deere has announced the retirement of Howard Storey, Manager, Market Development for John Deere Golf after 35 years of service with John Deere and 45 years in the industry.**

Manny Gan, Director, Global Golf and Sports Turf said, "I would like to take this opportunity to thank Howard for his loyalty and dedication to the company and for the contributions he has made over his many years of service. We wish him and his family all the best in the future."

Howard said, "Friends, it's time to lift up the cutting units and return the machine to the shed. It has been a 35 year and 9 months rollercoaster ride with some amazing highs and, luckily for me, very few lows. I have had the pleasure of working with and doing business with some fantastic people from around the world."

"I look back to the early days of joining the company as the Agricultural Demonstrator/Instructor for the UK and Ireland demonstrating some of the biggest toys you could buy, to living and working in Ireland and Germany. I then became part of the golf group from its earliest beginnings to Deere growing to become a major player in that business segment. I have been fortunate to travel the globe more than once or twice and gain life experiences I will always treasure."

## Correction

In our last issue, we published an article entitled 'Most weather pitches' which was taken from the Pitchcare archives.

This article was attributed to Nick Harris but was, in fact authored by Emma Coulson at Technical Services.

We apologise for this inaccuracy.

# 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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# Deere's Solheim partners

John Deere Partners with LPGA, LET for Long-Term Agreement



**The Ladies Professional Golf Association (LPGA) has announced a new three-year official marketing partnership with John Deere. With the agreement, John Deere becomes the LPGA Tour's Official Golf Course Equipment Supplier and will support the LPGA Foundation's efforts to introduce more girls to the game of golf. Additionally, the Ladies European Tour (LET) announced a three-year extension to its longstanding partnership with John Deere, which began in 2007.**

"We're excited to welcome John Deere into the LPGA family as our Official Golf Course Equipment Supplier," said Kelly Hyne, Chief Sales Officer for the LPGA. "We look forward to building upon John Deere's strong history with the LET and Solheim Cup, bringing experience across both Tours and growing participation in the game of golf."

Emma Allerton, LET Commercial Director,

added, "We too are delighted to be extending our successful partnership with John Deere, continuing to work together towards shared goals and enhancing opportunities across women's golf."

John Deere has also signed on as the Official Golf Course Equipment Supplier of the 2021 Solheim Cup at Inverness Club in Toledo, Ohio. John Deere will work closely with agronomists for both Tours, with the goal of producing exceptional playing conditions across multiple continents.

The 2021 Solheim Cup will take place on 4th-6th September at the Inverness Club in Toledo, Ohio, with USA Captain Pat Hurst and European Captain Catriona Matthew leading their teams of the best professional female golfers in the United States and Europe.



## Liverpool submit paused Anfield expansion plans



**Liverpool Football Club submit a planning application to Liverpool City Council for the proposed expansion of the Anfield Road stand.**

The submission of the planning application was paused in spring this year due to the uncertainty surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic. The plans would see the capacity of the Anfield Road stand increase by around 7,000 seats, taking the stadium's overall capacity to more than 61,000.

As part of the application, the club is also seeking permanent permission to hold concerts and major events at the stadium.

The plans for the Anfield Road stand have been the subject of two stages of public consultation with local residents, businesses, fans and stakeholders.

The first stage launched 12 months ago, included the permanent closure of a small section of Anfield Road, in line with the original planning permission granted in 2014. After listening to feedback on this option, the club made changes to the plans.

A second stage of consultation was held in February 2020, during which the club presented new and updated plans. This included plans to keep Anfield Road open, with the road realigned around the footprint of the proposed expanded stand.

More than 700 responses were received to the consultation and the revised plans were well received, with the vast majority of respondents expressing support.

The planning application will shortly be submitted to Liverpool City Council and is expected to be decided in spring 2021.

## Popular Amenity Forum updating events to be run online

**At the start of each year the Amenity Forum run a series of free updating events for all involved or with an interest in amenity management.**

These normally take place at venues across the UK and have been very well received. Given the current restrictions, opportunity to run these in the traditional way has been lost, but the Forum are going ahead with them but online. The same technology will be used as for the Forum's very successful conference held in October.

The format will be very similar to normal, with the programme starting at 10.15am and concluding by 12.30pm. There will be opportunity for questions and all the current issues will be covered. 2021 sees the UK fully depart from the EU bringing with it new regulations on plant protection products. The

UK is also issuing a new national action plan relating to amenity management in 2021. Just these two items present challenges and opportunities. The events also give opportunity to catch up on new developments and innovations and what is required to meet the Amenity Standard, set to become a requirement in future.

Whilst the content of each event will be broadly the same, each will have a particular nation focus. The dates are given below, and each event is free to attend but pre-registration is required. If you would like to register or receive further information, please contact [admin@amenityforum.net](mailto:admin@amenityforum.net). Full programmes for each event will be available early in 2021.

**February 9th - England**

**February 11th - Wales**

**February 23rd - England**

**February 25th - Northern Ireland**

**March 4th - Scotland**

Professor John Moverley OBE, Independent Chairman of the Forum, said; "As I often say, what happens in amenity management impacts upon every UK citizen every day seeking to provide safe and healthy spaces fit for purpose. The importance of this has never been more apparent in the last year. Our Updating events are always popular and relevant, but this year is set to be more than ever. There is much change around and how we address this will be vital."

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Grassroots roundtable

# How was it for you?

2020 has been an unprecedented year. The effects of Covid-19 will still be being felt in years to come, with the general economy struggling to return to something like normal. Unemployment is likely to rise and the way people work will, no doubt, change substantially.

Through all this mayhem, and indeed considerable fear and anxiety, sport has been able to return after a period of lockdown.





Elstow Cricket Club

How did 'lockdown' affect the grassroots sports venues? In this 'virtual roundtable discussion', we seek the opinions of those struggling at the coalface of the industry. Here's our panel:

**Wes Matthews**  
Cranfield United Football Club



I am forty-two years old, I run my own business and I have been volunteering as a groundsman for five years.

**Matt Stevens**  
Elstow Cricket Club



I am forty-nine years old and have been a volunteer groundsman for four years, with limited experience but learning all the time.

**John Thornton**  
Farsley Celtic Football Club



I am forty-six, married with three children. I coach an under 14's boys' team but have no previous experience of pitch maintenance.

**Paul Clarke - Enville Cricket Club & Enville Athletic FC**



Thirty-seven years old, full time postman and part time groundsman. Did my cricket IOG qualifications back in early 2000's but started taking it more seriously when I left my previous employment as a Civil Servant. Spent a season working at Ombersley CC before moving to Enville.

**Philip Harper-Scott**  
Cambridge Bowls Club



I have just turned fifty-six. I started playing outdoor bowls two weeks before my 14th birthday and I have played in the Bowls National Championships three times. So, in my time I have played on a lot of good greens and some interesting greens.

I also work at Cambridge United FC; first in the Club shop, then on the turnstiles before becoming a steward. I have also worked on the pitch at the Abbey Stadium with Ian Darler.



Cranfield United FC

### Are you a volunteer or paid staff?

Wes Matthews (WM): Volunteer.

Matt Stevens (MS): Volunteer, committee member and reluctant player.

John Thornton (JT): I am a volunteer.

Paul Clarke (PC): I'm a part-time groundsman.

Philip Harper-Scott (PHS): I am currently being paid to look after three greens; two on a full-time contract, whilst the other one - the club undertake the cutting during the playing season, but I still do all other work on the green.

### If on the payroll, were you furloughed at any stage?

PC: I offered to work for free during lockdown; to maintain the facilities and ensure things would be ready for when we were given the green light to return to play.

PHS: Covid did not have any effect on my workload, except for the green I lost.

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

PC: I was fortunate, as I still had my full-time Royal Mail job during lockdown. The cricket ground is based on the Enville Estate, who were keen to limit numbers during lockdown. I was one of only two people allowed from the club onsite, whilst attempting to ensure we were ready to go.

PHS: The only real effect was that the greens did not get played on enough and I only played six times myself.

### Were you able to continue working on your pitches/facility, even if it was just basic 'grass cutting'?

WM: We were able to work both on the pitch and in the clubhouse. As a volunteer groundsman, I wasn't furloughed by the club, although I was furloughed from my full-time work. Personally it effected me as I run my own business, so the uncertainty was a worry. Being able to get onto my pitch with the mower and cut the grass once or twice a week helped me stay positive.

MS: Yes. My full-time job allowed me to work from home, so I managed to find time to regularly attend the venue - in an attempt to

keep on top of things during lockdown.

PC: Yes, but I didn't have the usual volunteers from the club to assist.

PHS: After communications from Bowls England and the clubs wanting to commence play, things just carried on as normal. I ensured that I was the only person at the club when I was up there working.

### Other than the governmental restrictions in place at the time, did your club/facility place additional restrictions on you?

WM: The gate was to be shut/padlocked whilst people were onsite.

MS: None. Although, some of the other helpers are generally older members of the playing field committee and were reluctant to attend during the early weeks of lockdown. This meant that I took on responsibility for the whole playing field including hedges, boundaries and our children's play areas, as well as the cricket pitches.

JT: None.



**I want to gain more knowledge to improve the pitches I care for. I have a strong passion to do this as a full-time job**



Enville Cricket Club



Cambridge Bowls Club



**I actually enjoyed the time; the weather was good and I had no interruptions, so I could work to my own time with no sport or other events to work around**

PC: No restrictions as such; though managing budget and limiting end of season work were discussed. That was until the grant money came through.

PHS: The only 'different' thing was that I wore gloves when visiting the club at all times and made sure I wiped things down that I touched. Every time I went to Trumpington, I had to inform them that I had been there so that they could inform the secretary. The Club belongs to the Council

and all their buildings were closed down.

**Did club members/players offer any assistance?**

WM: Some committee members and players offered assistance but, with social distancing, it was difficult to involve everyone.

MS: Yes a bit. It's a lot of work just to keep on top of the surrounding grounds, although I prefer to do the pitches on my own.

JT: I was offered help by a couple of the club officials and volunteers.

PC: Some of them would but, due to the location of the ground, the Estate were keen to limit numbers onsite.

PHS: The clubs just left me to get on with things as normal.

**Were you able to keep on top of things?**

WM: Yes.

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**One minute football's back, then the next minute football's off again. Highs and lows all round I think**



Cambridge Bowls Club - autumn renovations



Cranfield United FC

**MS:** Just about. I actually enjoyed the time; the weather was good and I had no interruptions, so I could work to my own time with no sport or other events to work around. The playing field and playground were shut to the public, so I could come and go as I pleased.

**JT:** It was difficult, but working part-time enabled me to put more hours in voluntarily to keep things under control.

**PC:** Yes, the ground was ready to go when the ECB gave the green light in the summer that play could commence.

**PHS:** Despite what was going on in my private life, during summer, I managed to keep on top of things.

**What condition was your ground in once you were able to return full-time?**

**MS:** Pretty good. The pitches could have done with a bit more pre-season rolling, but that is such a time consuming exercise that the lack of helpers meant that we didn't get as much done as usual. Also, with the

uncertainty of knowing when we would start, it made it difficult to plan for the games.

**PC:** It was ready to go, though some of the extra rolling that is usually put into the square had probably been missed.

**PHS:** I never walked away from the playing surfaces, because of Covid, so they were kept in a good state.

**Have any projects been put on hold as a result of reduced income to your club/facility?**

**WM:** Yes, new pitch side barriers and laying of artificial grass in front of the dugouts. The pitch was in good condition (as the season finished earlier than normal) and I was able to cut and brush the pitch once/twice a week.

**MS:** The cost to maintain our equipment and for end of season renovation is circa £5,000. Currently, we are hoping to get a small grant from the ECB to help with some of these costs, as they will use up all of our money. We had planned our bi-annual fundraiser



**Through collaboration and social media, I have made friends with local professional grounds people**



Enville Cricket Club



Cranfield United FC

- which usually brings in this sort of money to keep the club running. Obviously, it was cancelled, hence we will almost definitely have a shortfall this season.

JT: We are struggling for funds because of Covid; no visitors being the main issue. We have managed to Verti-drain our pitches and a local company donated fertiliser. Our main machinery is old, but we cannot invest at the current time.

PC: No.

PHS: The only thing that was put on hold was the green I lost due to Covid, but they are saying that I might get it back at the beginning of May 2021.

**Were you able to carry out end of season renovations (summer sports)?**

MS: Yes. Thankfully, we have a very good treasurer and she has some reserves for a rainy day, so we were able to do a full renovation as normal.

JT: Verti-draining, overseeding and fertiliser application.

PC: Yes; full renovations completed to the usual standard. Once the funding came through from ECB/Sport England, the club were more than happy to proceed.

PHS: All three greens I currently maintain had their autumn renovation completed by the end of September.

**Are you still planning a full renovation at the end of the season (winter sports)?**

MS: We are hoping to do more renovation of the winter pitches in April/May 2021, but again it is subject to costs. We have a fairly new team on the football side but, with some additional resources now in place, we should be able to do more on the winter sports than we have ever done before.

JT: Covid and fans not allowed into the ground have meant our year has been disrupted and seen a reduction in cash flow, therefore a full renovation will not be undertaken.

PC: Currently in discussion with the football club as to what we can do.



**If we are lucky enough to have a full season of fixtures next year, I will need some additional help, as the volunteers seem to have disappeared**

PHS: I am still visiting the greens two or three times a month.

**Have you still been able to purchase sundries such as fertiliser, topdressing, hire in machinery/contractors etc.?**

MS: Yes. All equipment and contractors purchased and paid for the 2020-2021 cricket square. We just need to get our machinery serviced over winter.

JT: We have been able to hire in a Verti-drain and our fertiliser was donated. The maintenance and upkeep is done by me.

PC: Yes, no problems - but it would have been a different conversation without the grant money coming through.

PHS: I have still managed to get everything I want to complete the work. The only trouble I have had is to pay the invoices.

**Do your members/players understand the difficulties that Covid-19 has presented?**

WM: Yes. All players and staff are aware of the situation; changing rooms/showers are



Elstow Cricket Club



Enville Athletic FC



Elstow Cricket Club

not used, social distancing and table service in the clubhouse. We were able to do mini reservations when lockdown was over and we got hold of topdressing materials and seed.

MS: Yes.

JT: In general, I believe the vast majority of the club's staff, volunteers, parents, players and coaches do understand the difficulties associated with Covid in making the pitches playable.

PC: Some do yes, but to a lot of people, I just cut the grass and they don't understand the effort that goes into maintaining the facility.

PHS: Some members have understood things have not been the same on the greens this year, whilst other people have said that their green has not played so well. However, some of this is down to the greens not getting played on so much.

**Are you a member of your industry association?**

WM: Yes the GMA.

MS: No, but I'm hoping to join as I am planning on doing some online learning over the next couple of years.

JT: Yes. The GMA.

PC: I have previously been a member of the GMA but, this year, I didn't renew my membership, with everything that was going on with the pandemic.

PHS: The GMA.

**If so, have you called on them for help during this time?**

WM: They gave us very good guidance on how to operate during lockdown.

MS: Yes. I have been in touch with Phil Jeggo who was very helpful.

JT: Yes; through the GMA and a BBC Sport article, we highlighted the problems volunteers have at the lower level of sport.

PHS: No, I have not called on them, but I have spoken to Ian Darler BEM, from Cambridge United Football Club who has

pointed me in the right direction and given me advice on several occasions.

**Do you feel they could they have done more?**

WM: No, not really.

MS: No.

JT: No.

**What are your thoughts about Trade Shows over the next twelve months?**

WM: I feel it's right for them not to go ahead! When we are able to, I'm sure they will be bigger and better.

MS: As a volunteer, with a small budget, shows are probably not something high on my priority list, albeit I do look at things online a lot.

JT: As things are, I believe no gatherings including trade shows can go ahead.

PC: I was looking forward to Saltex, but this has now been moved back further. Always good to catch up with people, but everyone's health comes first.



**I offered to work for free during lockdown; to maintain the facilities and ensure things would be ready for when we were given the green light to return to play**



Cranfield United FC



Farsley Celtic Football Club



**Personally it effected me. Being able to get onto my pitch with the mower and cut the grass once or twice a week helped me stay positive**

PHS: At this moment in time, I don't think I will be going to the Saltex show.

**Have there been any positives arising from the current situation?**

WM: People are beginning to realise how important volunteers are to sports facilities.

MS: Not that I can think of. Other than I got some quality time at the cricket pitch all on my own and there is no better place I would rather be.

JT: I started wanting to help my local club where I coach an under 14's boys' team - the pitches were of poor quality and needed improving. Through collaboration and social media, I have made friends with local professional grounds people including Kiel Barrett at Leeds United, sports pitch contractor Nick Hatfield and Ryan Golding at Leeds Rhinos. They have all offered advice and help whenever they can. These people need mentioning, as they are

sharing their experience and knowledge for the sake of good.

PC: I had a lot more time to spend with my kids at home.

**Has your mental health suffered?**

WM: Yes, I have questioned my mental health more.

MS: No; if anything it helped. I work for a large construction company and do long

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hours; sometimes spending three to four hours in the car each day on my commute. Working from home was a huge relief from this and the time then spent at the club was really relaxing and allowed me to refresh. It took all the normal pressure of work/home/club balance away.

JT: I consider my mental health good and healthy. Being involved in the maintenance of pitches is great for the mind; through both exercise and being outdoors. I now offer the opportunity to young people in school to come and taste what it is like to be a grounds person.

PC: No.

PHS: My health has suffered only slightly, whereas it had a major effect on my ex-partner, who I was living with.

**How do you see the future panning out?**

WM: My glass is always half full, so I would like to think that, once this is all over, we can get back to how things used to be (or as close as possible).

MS: Difficult to say, but I don't see things getting back to normal for a good couple of years. If we are lucky enough to have a full season of fixtures next year, I will need some additional help, as the volunteers seem to have disappeared. We run four adult sides, one ladies team and five youth teams; some of these teams have fixtures or training almost every day, so fitting in ground works can be tricky.

JT: I want to gain more knowledge to improve the pitches I care for. I have a strong passion to do this as a full-time job.

PC: The requirement to return to playing sport is key for all clubs survival. The longer the restrictions stay in place, the greater the negative impact will be on available funds to spend on facilities.

PHS: I cannot see bowls being back to any sort of normal until the summer of 2022. I predict that people will be back on the green, but reduced numbers.

**Has this year deflated or encouraged you?**

WM: One minute football's back, then the next minute football's off again. Highs and lows all round I think.

MS: Encouraged. I love the work I do. We have some new equipment and I can't wait for the spring.

JT: Encouraged me to continue and do more.

PC: Encouraged; the facilities were ready to go without any impact.

PHS: It's just encouraged me to knuckle down and get on with things.



**I believe the vast majority of the club's staff, volunteers, parents, players and coaches do understand the difficulties**





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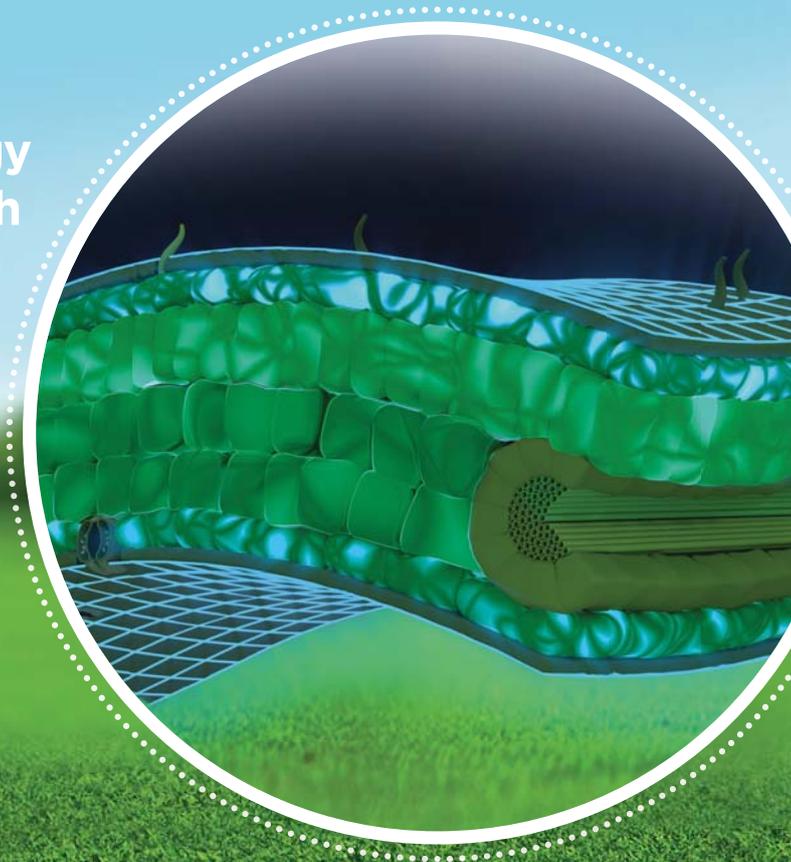
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TM

## Noordwijkse Golf Club

# Winging it!

Taking over the course manager's role at Noordwijkse Golf Club in Holland recently has been **Richard Wing**. In this question and answer session, he charts his career journey thus far and highlights some of the pitfalls and pleasures of working abroad





**As a lover of the Irish people, their way of life and Guinness from previous trips, there was no decision to be made. I packed up my car and drove my life from Ostend to Dublin**



**F**ounded in 1913, Noordwijkse Golf Club in the town of the same name in Holland, lies on the coast a few miles west of Amsterdam's Schiphol Airport. It suffered from German occupation during the second world war and moved to its present sixty hectare location in 1969.

In this question and answer session, new Course Manager Richard Wing talks about his varied career to date and how he came to be working at this bracing North Sea links venue.

#### **Pitchcare: How did you get into the industry?**

Richard Wing: I have to blame my mum for getting me into the industry. She was the Office Manager at Abbeydale Golf Club, Sheffield (where it all began). I started with a summer job before and after my university study to become an engineer. After the second summer, I called an end to my engineering path and followed my new passion, turf. I was extremely lucky to have stumbled across such a wonderful industry and to find my 'calling' at a young age, knowing that many people go through life never finding their true passion.

#### **What training and education did you undertake?**

I completed a 3-year full-time BSc in Sportsturf Science & Management at Myerscough College, in combination with other industry training and qualifications. During my study, I was selected to become part of the R&A Scholarship programme, something that offers great benefits to help financially, but since has offered constant education and experience opportunities. I urge all student greenkeepers to pursue the scholarship and appreciate what it stands for in the industry.

Mind you, my career has been one constant training programme that has landed me in my current role. I am grateful

to the excellent mentors that I have worked under and with, Warwick Manning, Dave Edmondson, Gordon Irvine and Richard Windows to name a few of the important ones.

#### **Was there one person who inspired you?**

In the initial stages of my career, it was more the freedom of a job working outside within sport and the opportunities to travel that inspired me to pursue turf management. However, this changed when I had the pleasure of working with Gordon Irvine. His passion for traditional greenkeeping and managing surfaces to promote the finer grasses completely changed my outlook on turf management, from then on this has been a driving factor in my career. Although I have not had the opportunity to work with Gordon since, we still remain good friends and I have volunteered to work out at Askernish Golf Club, one of his major projects (worth reading about).

#### **Where did you work prior to your current position at Noordwijkse?**

I worked at Abbeydale Golf Club, Sheffield during holidays and any breaks in my study. It was a great experience for a young greenkeeper working within a highly skilled and experienced team that were all willing to share their knowledge in all elements of course maintenance. I decided to work for one club, over short-term placements at elite clubs. I felt I would learn a lot more in a smaller team where I couldn't hide. There were not only opportunities but a requirement for me to perform a wide variety of tasks and learn quickly.

After my degree, I looked into the Ohio State programme and other opportunities, eventually deciding on a student summer job in Belgium at Royal Ostend Golf Club; a great experience and my first working with a team of different languages and skill levels. Within a matter of weeks at the club, I was offered the role as Deputy Head

Greenkeeper, an opportunity I'm not sure would have happened so fast if I hadn't made the move abroad.

October 21st (my birthday) I was offered two jobs inside four hours, the Head Greenkeeper role in Ostend or to become Assistant Links Superintendent at The Island Golf Club, Dublin. As a lover of the Irish people, their way of life and Guinness from previous trips, there was no decision to be made. I packed up my car and drove my life from Ostend to Dublin. It turned into a great move for my personal life and also placed me working with Dave Edmondson, who has been a great tutor to my development.

In 2016, I was offered a role as an agronomic consultant for STRI, a role that, for years, had been my dream job and the inspiration to my career and education choices. It was an unbelievable experience, working at world renowned venues with some of the leading faces of the agronomy and greenkeeping world... the dream job, it appeared.

But, as I progressed into the role, the reality soon hit, many hours sat behind a steering wheel, many nights away in hotels and many days sat at a laptop in motorway service stations furiously typing up reports. The job that I had held on a pedestal for years was not how I pictured it. It started to badly affect my mental well-being and have a large impact on my life. Eighteen months ago, I took the decision to end my time with STRI and take a break from the industry completely.

Earlier this year I returned, so to speak, with a short stint at Leicester City Football Club, helping with the initial business plans and setup for their new Sports Turf Academy, a project that will have a tremendous positive impact on the industry.

Then Noordwijkse came up, almost twelve months after the initial application process started (due to Covid-19). I thought to myself how often will the chance to manage an elite



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**I think it's important for anyone looking at moving away for work to understand that it can be extremely tough, but also extremely rewarding**

links course arise. So here we are, on my travels again on the Dutch coast about thirty-five minutes from Amsterdam.

**You have obviously moved around the UK and abroad on several occasions but what is your overriding thoughts on the experiences?**

I think it's important for anyone looking at

moving away for work to understand that it can be extremely tough, but also extremely rewarding. I don't think I would be the same person I am now had I not made those moves. I consider myself very fortunate to have worked with some great people and made the best friends in many different locations.

**What were the reactions you got from friends and family when you decided to move?**

I'm sure that the people around me were nervous when I first decided to move to Belgium, but I'm thankful that my friends and family have always supported me in the moves I have made. Yes, relationships

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**The first port of call is when an emotion such as loneliness comes up, it is important to understand it and not hide away from it. Realise the cause of the feeling and what you can do to help it in the future. I always look to sport to build myself into a new area and this has been my way of dealing with the cause**

change when you are no longer in the same place, but you find new ways of staying in touch with people from afar.

**Having spent many years away from your home, how does it make you feel going home?**

One thing everyone should know is that once you leave, the idea of home is never really the same again. You're now split across two worlds or three/four in my case. There's more than one place where you understand how things work and there's more than one place with things to miss.

It's also true that you don't know what you've got until it's gone. When you move abroad and start settling into a new area, you soon start to appreciate things at home that were part of normal life at that time.

**What is the main thing working in different countries has taught you?**

The biggest lesson has been to never forget the people you meet. The people that are around you in both life and work are the most important thing, no matter where you are.

We could all learn a lot more by experiencing the ways that different cultures approach work. Even across the short span of area that I have travelled, there are some huge differences. Each of these have both positives and negatives, for me it's about pulling the positives from all of them.

Ultimately, you learn that we are all human, we all go about our daily lives in much the same ways with meals, work and circles of friends. Sure, there are cultural differences but, beneath it all, we're all human.

**What is the hardest thing about living abroad?**

Even though you can make it into one long, grand adventure, living abroad is not a permanent vacation. You still have to do those things you did at home, like work and having a social life, except you're in another country. It's hard to truly travel solo because it's so easy to make friends on the road, but let me tell you, it's harder to move abroad solo; it can be lonely.

The major positive to all this is, you'll learn how to cope better with your emotions and let some things go. I don't believe the idea of moving abroad to find yourself. You might just learn more about yourself, faster. You'll learn that you're not the same person to everyone you meet, and there are different sides of your personality that emerge in different situations.

You'll also learn how you personally cope with different situations and, if you don't like it, you'll be able to work on changing it. You don't grow when you're in your comfort zone and moving abroad for me is one of the hardest tests.

**Do you have any specific things that you implement?**

I think everyone has different triggers, but there are plenty that are common amongst us all. It has been a learning curve and I continue to learn about what triggers my emotions and how to accept them and deal with them.

The first port of call is when an emotion such as loneliness comes up, it is important to understand it and not hide away from it.





**I restrict alcohol, eat a healthy diet and focus on exercise to keep everything else in a good shape, making the mental state easier to deal with it**

Realise the cause of the feeling and what you can do to help it in the future. Generally, loneliness is from a lack of social activities; we are social animals. I always look to sport to build myself into a new area and this has been my way of dealing with the cause.

There are plenty of things you can do to help make friends when you move abroad, but it means finding the confidence to put yourself out there. The easiest way to

combat loneliness is to find other expats, because outsiders like to stick together. Just don't let that be the only people you try and connect with. Having to put myself out there has had a tremendous impact on my confidence in work and general life.

Next, would be to learn to be the master of that feeling when it arises, learn what makes it worse and what helps you. When I have been through these emotions, I

recognise my lifestyle has normally shifted to unhealthy habits. I restrict alcohol, eat a healthy diet and focus on exercise to keep everything else in a good shape, making the mental state easier to deal with it.

**What would you say are the major positives from being an expat greenkeeper?**

There's so many, I've already spoken about



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the people you meet and they are by far the highlight of working abroad. I now consider several places home that I can return to whenever and feel part of the community.

It's a lot of fun... when I look at things that I have experienced that would have never happened, had I not packed my bags aged eighteen. I've partied in several European cities, attended many leading sports events and eaten a whole array of different foods. Everywhere I have lived, I now have the opportunity to experience them totally as a tourist or as a local.

**And, what about in the workplace; how do you find that?**

Greenkeeping teams are similar the world over. People work hard, they are committed to the job but also find time to get plenty of enjoyment out of the day.

The language can be entertaining, non-more so than when I started in Ireland, working with a guy from Drogheda. Yes, he spoke English, but I'd say it took me a week to understand a word that was said. The language barrier brings about some very entertaining moments, certain words can be mis-translated quite easily with several strange looks. One tip coming to The Netherlands, "Neuken in de keuken" does not mean "How are you?".

**You've spoken about both good and bad parts of moving abroad and looking after both your body and mind when you have certain emotions, earlier you told us about leaving your role in consultancy? How did that come about?**

Looking back at that period in my career, brings up different thoughts now to what I had eighteen months ago. I'm grateful that I was given the opportunity to achieve a

career goal much earlier than expected. I've accepted that actually not everything works out as planned and that's okay.

Working in consultancy, and I'm sure the same can be said for other technical roles within the industry, it's certainly not for everyone. Experiencing these roles from the inside has given me the upmost respect for the individuals that work within the commercial side of our industry.

Ultimately, the combination of an isolated job and living away from homes (I consider both Sheffield and Dublin to be home now) just wasn't right for me. As the dynamic of the company and the role changed, I recognised the effects on my life that the role was having. I made a decision to walk away from my dream because it wasn't working for me and I'm happy with my decision.

I learnt a lot with STRI technically from my colleagues and clients, and also a lot about myself. My dad always said to me "you only regret what you don't do because there are always positive lessons to learn from doing things, even when it doesn't work out" and it is so true. I'm happy I experienced it and found it not be the right path.

**How did you come to the decision to walk away from STRI and the industry, when you were in what you thought was a dream job, with a mortgage to pay?**

I have to be conscious that everybody reading this will be in totally different situations in their lives. Yes, I had a mortgage to pay, but my situation was helpful; I was single with no dependants. People have said to me "that's easy for you" but I believe, by making the decision that was right for me, it has had a positive impact on my relationships with the important

people around me.

I suppose, to some degree, you can be inspired to action or you can get to such a desperate position you have to take action. So that change was from one of a desperate position. I'm thankful to the people that offered support to me through that time.

When we listen to our hearts, it tells us how we truly feel. By finding my quiet space (mine happens to be with my trainers on running), it allows us to clear the head and listen to the gut instinct in the heart. It's only when the head comes back in that it will give us a hundred reason why not to do something. Follow the heart.

**What happened during the time of resigning from STRI to now with you here in The Netherlands?**

My change wasn't made the moment I left the role, it was made when I realised it wasn't the right path. In my limited spare time, I did education in different avenues, one being property. That way, when I finished work, I had something to support myself, I was invested in a property renovation. A change doesn't start when you make the action, it starts when you change your mindset.

My break had begun and well, I needed it. I spent a lot of time evaluating my life, I learnt on some of my learnings to guide the process. I continued to read numerous mindset/psychology books, something I've tried to do since I was younger, and pick out things that were relevant to me.

One task I found beneficial was looking back at your younger self and asking are you being true to what 10-year-old me wanted? I was a child who loved playing team sports - cricket, football, rounders - you name it, I probably tried it.

Also, my career highlight, working at the 2018 Open at Carnoustie as part of the championship agronomy team, played a vital role in my life evaluations. It really highlighted to me that I am happiest when working as part of a team, something 10-year-old me would be ecstatic about.

I focused my attention on education that would get me back to within a team, that was both operational and project management. Then things happened that were on my path, the opportunity to work for Leicester City arose and, now I'm here, Noordwijkske Golf Club, excited for the next chapter in my life.

**It must be a lot, moving to a new country, a new role and a new language. How do you keep a clear mind?**

It can be, but I try to implement everything I have spoken about already. I find getting my trainers on and running is my place to clear my mind. I come up with some of my best ideas and make the clearest decisions when I run. I usually have to slow down for a few minutes to take notes about my thoughts mid run, because they are

gone when I'm home and showered.

**You seem very happy in your current role at Noordwijkse. How is it settling in again, how is the language difference and are you learning Dutch?**

Yes, I am happy here in Noordwijkse. The team here have been excellent, very welcoming, helpful and hard working. Likewise, the membership and other staff have welcomed me with open arms (not literally) and I am excited to see what we can do in the future.

When moving abroad, it's not like what people say... you don't just "pick up" the language and you don't just settle-in. I learnt that from my time in Belgium. Yes, I'm trying to learn Dutch, but it takes more than just hearing it. If you really want somewhere to feel like home, you need to put in the effort to learn the language. That means going out of your way to practice what you do know (difficult at the moment), and actively try and learn more.

Same goes for settling in, you need to put effort in. Covid is having a restriction on that at the moment but it won't be forever, and it just means I need to be creative in ways of getting to know people.



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# Getting Personal

## Richard Wing - anyone for tennis ... or perhaps a Jaegerbomb or two?

**Who are you?** Richard Wing, Course Manager, Noordwijkse Golf Club.

**Family status?** Just me.

**What's been the highlight of your grounds career so far?** Working as part of the Agronomy team for The Open in 2018 at Carnoustie.

**If your younger self saw you now, what would they think?** He'd probably think I didn't see that coming.

**Which famous people wind you up?** I try not to let anyone wind me up so I really couldn't say. When you live abroad, you soon lose track of who's famous.

**What job would you love, other than your own?** I'm not sure I'd choose another job but maybe if I could move a links course to somewhere slightly warmer in the winter, southern Spain maybe.

**What was the most embarrassing moment in your life?** I'm not sure I can publish it here ... but it goes along the lines of a video of me on a nightclub stage with little/no clothes on being brought to the attention of my grandma. Her face was a picture. Students do some crazy things after a few Jaegerbombs!

**What is your favourite film?** The Full Monty. There's a trend, I know, but it reminds me of home.

**What scares you?** Being in confined spaces. It comes from being trapped in a slide when I was young.

**What would your autobiography be called... and who would play you in the film?** I think it would depend who you were asking for name ideas. I usually get told I have a look of Jamie Dornan, so that'd be ok with me.

**What is your favourite sport?** Cricket.

**What would you cast into Room 101?** The Stimpmeter.

**Which historical time and place would you most like to visit?** Growing up listening to the stories of the 70s, not too historical but I'd love to have experienced it.

**Do you have a lifetime ambition?** I achieved my lifetime ambition and it wasn't what I thought, so I've had to re-write the book on this one. I'd like to experience tournament golf from a Course Managers perspective now. Other than that, live a happy and healthy life and help others do the same.



**Which three people, living or dead, would you invite to a dinner party?** Tiger Woods, Jim Arthur and Maria Sharapova (teenage crush).

**What's the best advice you have ever been given?** The best decision to make is the right decision, the second best decision is the wrong decision and the worst decision is to not make a decision at all.

**What's your favourite piece of trivia?** The speed of a computer mouse is measured in Mickeys.

**What's your favourite smell?** Bacon after a weekend setup.

**Which three albums would you take to a desert island?** A couple of chilled house music albums for the beach and Arctic Monkeys - Whatever People Say I Am, That's What I'm Not... for when I'm feeling like a bit of home.

**What's the daftest work-related question you have ever been asked?** I think everyone has a few but my favourite was "Do you cut the grass at different heights to create those stripes?"

**What's your favourite piece of kit?** Tough one, to see in operation Toro ProCore 648 but to use personally a Toro 1000.

**What three words would you use to describe yourself?** I never really see it as something for me to judge but hopefully, personable, motivated and logical.

**What is the single most useful thing you could tell a 16-year-old groundsperson/greenkeeper?** Travel, go and experience life and work in other cultures, it will make you a far more well-rounded person and greenkeeper in the long run. Also, opportunities are more readily available when you are willing to throw yourself into a new adventure.

**What talent would you like to have?** As I'm currently battling with my driver, the ability to consistently hit a nice draw off the tee.

**What law/legislation would you like to see introduced?** I would love to see the UK follow suit with most of the EU in severely restricting pesticide use. I think it would force a lot to move towards more sustainable management.

## Is COVID-19 having a big impact over in The Netherlands?

In the current climate, everyone in our industry is going through a tough period and my thoughts go out to everyone that is suffering due to closures, cuts and furlough etc. We are lucky that, since the end of the first lockdown, golf has been allowed throughout with slight restrictions to 2-balls at times.

It has affected how the team here operates. Firstly, everyone was split into shift patterns but thankfully this has now returned to normal. We have three different bubbles with guys in two canteens and my office. That way, if we have a positive test, the whole team is not in isolation.

## Did you ever feel undervalued or that the industry is undervalued?

On a personal level, I've never felt undervalued or that the turf industry is undervalued in the slightest. I think we are valued to the output that we provide to our employers and customers. I'm grateful to work in an industry full of good people with very different characters.

## How would you raise our profile as an industry?

I think that an improvement the industry should make even more proactively is the education of business and management. Turf managers now need to be able to produce business cases and reports to guide the decisions made by our employers, be that members of committees or business owners. Once you can provide a detailed rationale to your proposals and suggestions, you can be happy with whichever decision is made and not take it personally. You haven't offered your opinion, you have given a business case supported by facts.

By improving this part of education, we may begin to raise our profile amongst the competition of other industries.

## Finally, what's the biggest thing you miss about home?

The guys here will tell you, not Yorkshire Tea as there are 400 bags sat next to the kettle. Obviously, friends and family, but outside of that it has to be the food. A full Sunday roast with Yorkshire puddings, gravy and lashings of Henderson's Relish (if you know, you'll know what I mean). It's the first thing my nose is attracted to when I'm ever back in Sheffield.

## And finally ...

I want to finish by saying I hope some of my experiences are helpful to others in the industry who may be going through tough times. We have to look out for each other. If anyone ever wants to chat about any other struggles, feel free to drop me a message. Or, if you want some tips on becoming an expat greenkeeper, my Twitter handle is: @dickie\_wing. Mind you, my advice will always be "make the move; it's the best thing I ever did!"



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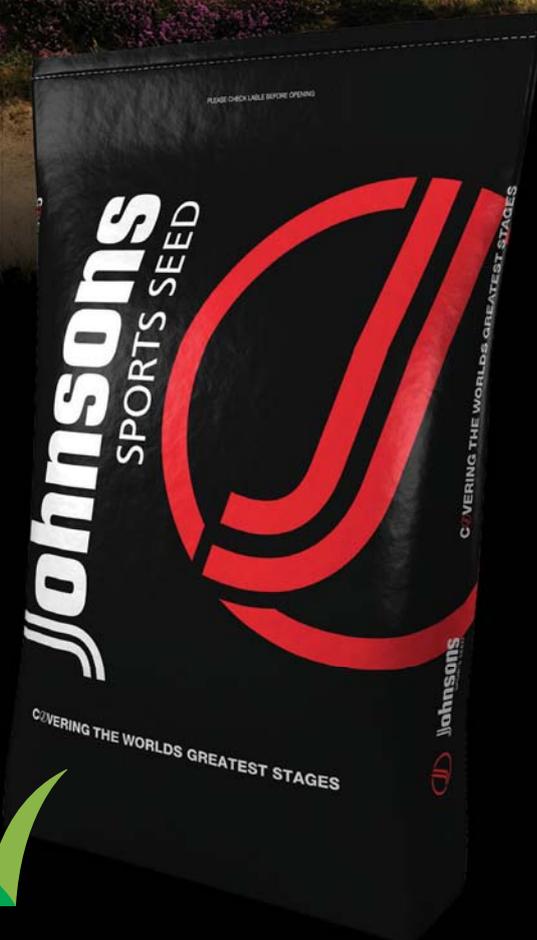


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## Ingrebourne Links Golf and Country Club

# Following the paper trail

Ingrebourne Links is situated in Rainham, Essex, just twenty minutes from Central London. Its futuristic clubhouse - more akin to a 'Grand Designs' construction - boasts more glass than is perhaps sensible at a golf course, yet offers visitors and members a striking welcome and stunning facilities. Lee Williams visited this new club to meet Course Manager **Ben Adams** to discover how the final work is progressing

Ingrebourne Links boasts twenty-seven holes of championship golf, made up of three loops of nine holes: The unique "Inland Links" style of the championship course offers a very different challenge to the traditional parkland courses in the local area. As any golfing purist would know, a "Links Course" is normally close to the sea, but the rolling fairways, sleeper faced bunkers, gorse and large undulating greens at Ingrebourne really provide a 'feel' of playing golf by the coast!

Before carving out a career in the sports turf industry, thirty-six-year-old Ben Adams' first job after leaving school was

as a quality assurance controller at a paper manufacturing plant. This was not the job for him, so he decided to seek out something new. Whilst reading the local paper, he saw an advert for a job as a trainee greenkeeper at the London Golf Club in Kent.

"I started there as a trainee in June 2003 at the age of eighteen," begins Ben. "I worked there as a greenkeeper until November 2006, before moving to Kings Hill Golf Club for a year, but I was asked to return to the London Club as their first assistant. Then, in 2012, I was promoted to head greenkeeper at the age of twenty-eight, a position I held until 2017 before

moving to Ingrebourne."

So, how did he get the position at Ingrebourne Links and was there no more room for progression at the London Club? "I was first asked to take a look around by David Whitaker, who worked for ALS (now Agrovista Amenity). He was the consultant here for three months helping out with the development of the site. For various reasons, the Head Greenkeeper had moved on and David came on board to assist in getting the first nine holes opened. They were looking to appoint a replacement and David contacted me, asked if I would be interested and offered me the position."



**I have been able to put my experience across on how it works for the greenkeeper when it comes to maintenance. There has also been an improving rapport with the architect and, therefore, we are seeing the benefits in the final construction**



“I was head greenkeeper at the London Club and still had that last step to become the course manager. When the then course manager, Peter Todd, left in June 2017 to grow in Royal Norwich, I took over for an interim period until they appointed someone else, who they had already been lined up. I was disappointed I was not considered for that role, but it turned into a positive. I suppose I was headhunted,” he notes, with a smile. “I had never been involved in a new build and saw it as a great opportunity to learn new skills and be involved in an exciting new project.”

Ben’s education includes an NVQ Level

Two in Sportsturf Management, HNC in Golf Course Turf Management and a BASIS Foundation which he took at BTME in Harrogate. Over the years, he has also attended the BIGGA Continue to Learn courses, which he has found very helpful. He has been the past chairman of the Kent section of BIGGA, and despite still living in Kent but working in Essex, he is still involved with the committee.”

The unique site first received planning permission back in 2007, and the infill started in 2010; this was when things really started to take shape. In 2013, Ingrebourne opened the Par 3 Mini-Links course and the



**We have employed environmental consultants and the course has been designed with ecology being a significant factor**



driving range. Once course construction is complete there will be three championship nine-hole courses. The first to open to play was the North nine in 2017. The East nine opened gradually in 2019/2020. Ben explained how this was managed. “Basically, we played nine holes on the North course, and we opened four more holes on the East course, so this gave the members more holes to play, and they played part of it

again to complete eighteen holes. Then, in July this year, we opened the final five holes, so we now have eighteen holes for the members and guests to play. That leaves nine more holes to construct - the South course - which we hope to open in 2023.”

I was interested to know the reasoning behind the club classifying the course as an inland links rather than parkland. “The course architect, Alan Walker, was

asked to create a golf course that could accommodate inert landfill on a large scale, but would end up as a golf course with unique character and different to anything in the vicinity. As the site was void of any substantial trees, and that a new landscape would be created from scratch, he proposed a links ‘style’ and ‘feel’ to the design with all the characteristics of playing golf by the coast. Each hole has an individual landscape, and other holes are not seen whilst you play. The fairways are rolling landforms similar to a true links and, in dry conditions, reward groundstrokes. Bunkers are either revetted or timber faced to emulate the classic links designs. Greens are large with mainly gentle undulations, but again test the golfer adequately.”

“The site is quite elevated and has uninterrupted views over east London, Canary Wharf and, to the west, the QE2 bridge crossing and the county of Kent. The site is also quite windy with no natural surrounding developments to break up these elements, so a links-style course fitted the design criteria.”

Course Manager Ben Adams



**With the ongoing pandemic, I have not been able to apply as much topdressing as I usually would. But I would actually say that my greens have not been any worse for not topdressing**



**I had never been involved in a new build and saw it as a great opportunity to learn new skills and be involved in an exciting new project**

Ben was not directly involved in the construction of the course. “Alan has been involved from the beginning, then I got involved when the North nine opened in September 2017. I have not had a hand in the construction, but I am involved with the growing in. Our owners have a construction team, irrigation team and consultants on board. The construction team oversee the fairways, then we take over from there, overseeding the tees and greens.”

“Our relationship has grown over the years with other teams, and I have been a bit more involved in the final finishing. I have been able to put my experience across on how it works for the greenkeeper when it comes to maintenance. There has also been an improving rapport with the architect and, therefore, we are seeing the benefits in the final construction.”

The large site covers three-hundred and eighty acres; this contains the Mini-Links and

driving range which cover thirty-five acres. Each nine-hole course covers approximately eighty acres and there’s a massive irrigation lake that takes up ten acres. Additional to this is a bowling green, clubhouse and health and fitness centre. “There is still potential to expand on this, and we have been looking at putting a running track through the site to incorporate it into the health and fitness side of the business.”

Ben believes they have one of the longest

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par 5's in Essex, measuring six hundred and thirty-four yards off the backmarkers. It predominantly plays into the prevailing wind, making it a pretty tough hole.

The course is built upon quite inert clay soil, so they have made sure to build their tees and greens to USGA specifications. "Something I have changed, and I feel has been successful, is that we were predominantly sown-in with fescue on the North Course but, with how wet the winters have been, the fescue on the greens just wasn't surviving. So, I decided to introduce some bent grass, and we seemed to get some okay results to be honest, but it is quite a problematic grass species to establish on an open golf course. In 2019, I made the decision to go with a dwarf ryegrass mix from Barenbrug and have had some great results with it. So much so, we have introduced the ryegrass to the first four greens on the East course along with the North. But, since then, I have overseeded any new greens with a dwarf ryegrass and fescue mix. Ten years ago, if I had said I was introducing dwarf ryegrass to the greens, I would have been laughed

at, but the new species are really good. It seems to be working well for us, although we are still learning with that species as they tend to be a little more hungry; mind you, they are a lot more resilient to wear and disease. I have only applied one fungicide so far this year, which is excellent, and we had a little bit of anthracnose, which has just gone, but it seemed to only attack the Poa when the greens were a little bit leaner. We are also seeing a reduction in the amount of Poa, and that is something we will keep our eye on."

The courses have a wall to wall Toro irrigation system on the tees, fairways, approaches and greens. This is fed by the main lake which holds 120,000 cubic metres of water, and they have another lake that primarily feeds the par-three Mini-Links course and the driving range. "We really benefitted from the system last year with all the drought conditions we had, and we were able to keep one hundred percent grass cover. It does have its teething problems with the soil moving, but we will work through that this winter to resolve those issues. Looking around at other golf



**Another factor I have to consider when choosing products is the cost as we have a large area of greens but, at the same time, we want the best products available to us**





courses in the area we definitely benefitted by having the irrigation. We harvest all of our water through the drainage on the course, which runs into the lakes, and we are almost full now in October, which is great, especially when you consider how much we have used.”

Ben talks me through his seasonal maintenance regime for the courses. “In summer, we will cut the greens at 4mm, lifting that to 5mm in the winter months. If we have a tournament, such as the PGA Order of Merit event, we will drop down to 3.5mm; we will try and cut using the John Deere hand mowers during the week and use the Toro 3400 Triflex triple at the weekend; it all depends on the workload and the staff available. We have two TruTurf rollers, so we will roll the greens

when we don’t cut.”

“With the ongoing pandemic, I have not been able to apply as much topdressing as I usually would. But I would actually say that my greens have not been any worse for not topdressing; if anything, they seem to be a bit healthier. I would attribute this to the fact that, when we put the sand down and brush it in, it can be very abrasive which weakens the plant, plus we avoid damage to the cutting cylinders keeping them sharper for longer, thereby giving a cleaner cut. It may be that, next year, I’ll consider not applying as much topdressing, especially if we are getting the results we want with trueness and suchlike.”

Ben does not feel the need for a scarifying schedule for the greens with them being relatively young and the thatch levels not

being too bad. That said, they are not where he wants them to be. “In the past, at the London Club, I ultra-groomed, verti-cut and scarified. I think, from a maintenance point of view in the future, maybe next year, we may look at verti-cutting and then use that opportunity to topdress. At this moment in time, I do not see what the benefits would be, if that makes sense.”

“I like to try and verti-drain the greens at least once a month at a depth of seven inches with them being relatively new greens. Then we have a Toro ProCore 648 which we will use through the summer at least once a month at a depth of two to three inch using a star tine, so there is not as much disruption. This seems to be enough not to disturb the golfers but enough for us to get the results we require.”





Working with Mark Raynor and David Whitaker from Agrovista Amenity, Ben will put a fertiliser programme together using a variety of different products, aimed at improving the sward and soil biology throughout the year. "We will come up with a plan for the year, covering all surfaces, then break that down into spring, summer, autumn and winter. This makes it easier to tweak the programme depending on the weather and various other factors. I aim to spray greens every other week and that ties in with applying a wetting agent once a month. That ties in once a month with the wetting agent programme. The aim is to try and avoid any peaks and troughs, so the plant stays healthy and helps maintain consistent green speeds. Another factor I have to consider when choosing products is the cost as we have a large area of greens

but, at the same time, we want the best products available to us."

When the course was first opened, the greenkeepers were working out of a container using second-hand machinery with it being a grow-in site. Things have moved on since then, and they now have a big shed, but the greenkeepers department is still being developed, and this will tie in with the completion of the South Course nine where their site is situated.

As the site continues to grow, Ben has had to increase his fleet of machinery. "We now have machinery that is a mix of second-hand, purchased outright and on a lease agreement - and of different brands. Since joining the club, I have purchased four John Deere Gator utility vehicles as I love them; they do a great job, especially with the conditions on this site. There is no

## What's in the shed

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 John Deere 220SL x 4  
 Toro Greensmaster 3400 TriFlex  
 John Deere 8900S  
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 Toro SandPro 3040  
 Toro Procore 648  
 Wiedenmann Terra Spike GSI  
 John Deere 1500 aerator  
 Turfco CR-10  
 Dakota Turf Tender  
 John Deere TH Gator CE x 4  
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 Stihl FS 70 RC brushcutter  
 Husqvarna GCV160 Flymo x 4





Impressive Clubhouse



**Ten years ago, if I had said I was introducing dwarf ryegrass to the greens, I would have been laughed at, but the new species are really good**

one definitive brand or supplier we go with at the moment, but I think the long-term plan is to decide on making a deal with a sole supplier. This would give us access to the latest and best machinery every five years, plus flexibility and, most importantly, reliability enabling us to provide a consistent product out there.”

Ben hopes to have a designated workshop area in the shed, including grinders, so that maintenance can be carried

out in-house and, to that end, he would look to employ a full-time mechanic.

As the project has developed and areas of maintenance have increased, the greenkeeping team has also had to increase to maintain high standards. “I currently have a great team of eight (including myself). I am looking to enrol at least two more next year and then review staff numbers again, as the final nine holes are completed.”

The club has an ecology advisor who has

been involved since the planning. They also worked closely with the Environmental Agency post-construction. “Our owning company have stringent environmental policies in place, and these are replicated throughout the golf course. We have employed environmental consultants not only for our site but for our other sites as well. The course has been designed with ecology being a significant factor.”



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## Thorpeness Golf Club

# A strange time!

Since March 2020, the phrase 'a strange time' has been used constantly to describe the world we are all currently living in. However, for Thorpeness Golf Club and Hotel's new Course Manager, **Wallace Wilson**, those three words could not ring more true

**W**allace Wilson's position before Thorpeness was at Milngavie Golf Club where he was only the third Head Greenkeeper in their history. As a rule, those who had the job stayed for life but, after eighteen years, the time was right for Wallace to seek a new challenge, something that is a theme throughout his career.

At twenty-one years old, on the advice of his boss at Clydebank & District Golf Club - Wallace's local club where he was born in the hospital that used to overlook the 18th fairway - he moved to Royal Ashdown Forest as one of two Head Greenkeepers, serving

under a Course Manager, before seeking grow-in and construction experience at the nearby Sweetwoods Park Golf Club.

After nine years and with his parents and children getting older, he decided to head home to Scotland and Milngavie was his destination. Project-based jobs have been a characteristic of Wallace's course choices, be it learning, gaining grow-in and construction experience or undoing the issues caused by the enthusiasm of Grow a Tree in '73 and plant some more in '74 at Milngavie.

The experienced Scotsman arrived on the Suffolk Coast on 3rd February 2020 to begin work on his latest project, with

heather regeneration at the forefront. What should have been a time of getting to know the course and staff was stopped in an instant, and Wallace was faced with a situation unlike anything he'd experienced in his thirty-six-year career

"I remember the day when we closed, it was just me here, and that was a pretty surreal kind of time going around and taking all the flags out and thinking this is us closing our doors, what's next? Literally, what is next? Are we ever going to open again?" Wallace explains.

"Obviously, all these things are going through your head. Am I going to have a job? I've only been here a few weeks. I



could have been in my previous job for the rest of my life if I wanted, like the guys before me. That never really crossed my mind in terms of have I done the right thing, that didn't really come into it because you make decisions based on what is in front of you at the time, and that was what I felt was the right decision. I didn't really beat myself up or anything like that, but it did cross my mind. But obviously, you do think what does the future hold, as everyone was and maybe still is. Being in a new job, you're also thinking it's a lot easier to get rid of someone that's only been there a few weeks, no matter how well they might think of you, which they do, and I appreciate that.

The club and the company backed me really well during that time and were in constant dialogue, and they showed appreciation for what I was doing when it was me on my own."

"So it was never a worry as such, but there was a general worry for everyone. But, as I said, it was strange for everyone. My house is down at the bottom of the practice ground, and you're looking out thinking what's going on. You can see the 'House in the Clouds' and eighteenth hole from the house, and you look out and see loads of dog walkers and people having picnics. Every day I'd go around and make sure everything was okay for my walk, and there

would be four or five picnics and days out going on and kids playing in bunkers and things like that, it was an absolute bizarre time. We actually had a picnic going on in front of one of the greens when we'd only been open for two days, and they were still doing it even though golfers were out playing."

"I started working on 3rd February, and we were working on things, machinery deals and projects were moving forward, but it all died within five weeks of being here."

"The only people I knew were the guys here, and I hadn't had a chance to meet anyone. I actually picked up my dog, Arnie, just before lockdown, so it was him and me



**We actually had a picnic going on in front of one of the greens when we'd only been open for two days, and they were still doing it even though golfers were out playing!**



from then on. Everyone was furloughed straight away. It was a really difficult period, and we managed to get people back gradually as lockdown progressed, but it was really tough to try and keep the place viable over those few weeks.”

With all the team furloughed, Thorpeness essentially lost an entire spring. Dry weather helped by slowing the growth of grass but, as a consequence, wetting agent and other programmes fell behind. Despite the course reopening on 13th May, the greenkeeping team wasn't back to its full complement of eight until towards the end of July.

This meant a massive effort from the guys on the course to get it to as good as it could be, but circumstances were made more difficult with failing machinery that itself almost brought work to a halt.

“Initially, there were only two of us back, so me and one other for two or three weeks, and then we gradually got back to our full staff of eight. The guys who were here have obviously done amazing work, and we were back to as good as we could expect to be by mid-June, after opening on May 13th, so around a month from then. At that point, we had four back full-time, so things were getting easier; we were still in the process of getting our machinery package back on the go. We had some old bits of kit that wasn't exactly doing us any favours, but Ernest Doe are great, and they lent us quite a few bits and pieces, and that helped us out a lot.”

“We had kit which was broken down that we couldn't get away to get fixed at that

point. So it was a case of, at one stage, we were down to one machine for a little while. Nothing could get fixed, and other kit was unreliable, and it felt like there was no way out of it. We had a moment of that, and when I was speaking to the management at that point, I was explaining we were literally one machine away from us being able to do nothing. That's how close to the wind we were from being totally redundant in that sense.”

“We would have been doing stuff by hand, and that would have been it. We never quite got there thankfully and, again, Ernest Doe stepped in and gave us a couple of machines, but in terms of taking stuff away and getting it serviced, it was never going to happen during that period. To be on a much better footing in that way inspires confidence because, if the worst came to the worst and there was another lockdown, at least we've got what we need. We've also been in discussions, and we've been making sure we have materials in for projects through the winter now, so we don't have to buy anymore, and we've got everything we need and I guess everybody has been doing things like that. That's a comfort for me because it's good to know we're not going to be in a bad situation with machinery or materials, if we were to be locked down again.”

Like a lot of courses, Thorpeness hosted their fair share of golf during the first lockdown. In July, they had record-breaking green fees by the 21st of the month which,



**I was speaking to the management at that point, I was explaining we were literally one machine away from us being able to do nothing. That's how close to the wind we were from being totally redundant in that sense**

whilst fantastic for the club and those who were able to spend some much needed time outside, meant almost no time for Wallace and his team to carry out necessary maintenance. This was to the point that there were genuine celebrations when a forty-minute gap appeared one afternoon in early October for work to be done - the first gap since mid-May.

Now the catching up is done, Wallace's attention has turned back to improvements and long-term projects. The addition of a new Jacobsen fleet of mowers, Wiedemann aeration machinery, and heather management equipment to come, have set a solid foundation to build on from where they left off in March. Simply by listening to Wallace talk, you can tell his

passion for the project and eagerness to make progress. Even before his interview, he walked the course to see where he could make an immediate impact and how he would implement the club's landscape management plan. From those early stages, he started to shape a vision for the course and now, after a longer than expected time, he's finally getting to start his latest project.

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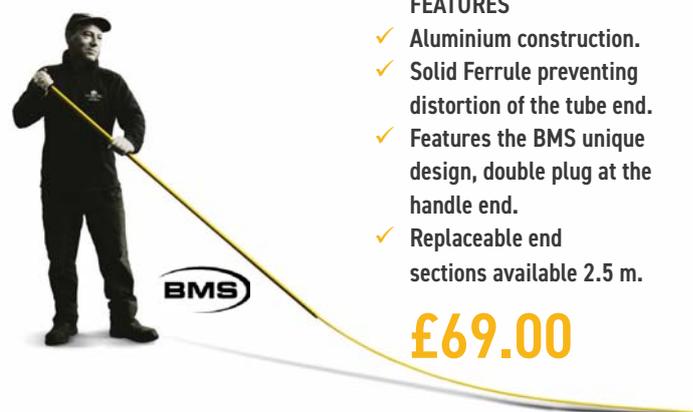
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**I was taking notes in terms of a long-term project that I already had in my mind but, to be honest, it never really lasted that long, it lasted about a day!**



Wallace explains: “I had a meeting with all the boys, individually and collectively, when I came here and said I’d have a little bit of a watching brief to see how they work because they were doing a good job. I was taking notes in terms of a long-term project that I already had in my mind but, to be honest, it never really lasted that long, it lasted about a day!”

“We needed to change a few things straightaway, not in a derogatory way to them at all, but things didn’t fit into how I saw the vision of what we were doing. From there, everything started to change, and we quickly went back to square one and back to basics. We were trying to get ourselves open and playable again. Almost, I guess, like my days at Sweetwoods Park which I suppose unconsciously sort of helped, from taking somewhere from nothing coming back to being playable. Obviously, it was different, but there were still a lot of the elements that were sort of the same within that. And really, they were quite exciting days opening up again and putting the

course furniture out because it had been so long.”

“Most of the landscape management plan the club sent me is based on the heather regeneration side, so there wasn’t much in there on the actual golf course side. That has been left to me. What I gathered from the early days, and what I could see straight away, is that there’s a lot less fescues out there than there should be. It’s essentially a links golf course, primarily because it’s heathy and linky and because this side of the golf course is almost in the sea and its pure sand. It gets a bit different on the back nine of the course, that’s where there’s more heather.”

“The heather management is huge and, if we get the equipment for that, it’s going to push on really quite quickly and we’ll see a big difference. We won’t see a lot this winter because we did a lot of pure clearance and we’ll do some more of that this year again, but heather takes a long time to get going. You’ve got to create the exact environment for it, otherwise it just won’t work. It is a big



**Having more linky characteristics one side of the road and more true heathland on the other side, with a bit of a mix in places, is almost like having two different golf courses**





**The heather management is huge and, if we get the equipment for that, it's going to push on really quite quickly and we'll see a big difference in that**

interest of mine, and I've done a lot of projects like it before, and the one at Royal Ashdown, in particular, was very successful. It's something that really interests me, getting places back to heathland. I guess this isn't a unique mix, but having more linky characteristics one side of the road and more true heathland on the other side, with a bit of a mix in places, is almost like having two different golf courses."

"Two completely different areas, but both uniquely exciting and aesthetically nice.

You've got the House in the Clouds on this side whilst, on the other side, you'd think you were in the middle of nowhere. So our main focus is to try and tip the balance towards fescue domination in fairways and rough, and that's a big long-term change. It is playable three-hundred and sixty-five days a year, but it needs to be more than playable; we want people to enjoy the experience and, in the last couple of winters, that has been happening. I wouldn't have been happy to present it like it was, so that's

our long-term goal."

"What's happened over the years is there's been ingress of ryegrass. There's been overseeding, I suspect, of ryegrass, which has diluted a lot of the characteristics of what should have been here, and what I think should be here now, which is more fescue dominated. The place droughts very quickly and the only thing that will survive that is decent fescue. So, we've been overseeding, but we'll probably stop now because it's getting a bit too late, but we'll

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## The House in the Clouds

The House in the Clouds is a water tower at Thorpeness, Suffolk. It was built in 1923 to receive water pumped from Thorpeness Windmill and was designed to improve the looks of the water tower, disguising its tank with the appearance of a weatherboarded building more in keeping with Thorpeness's mock-Tudor and Jacobean style, except seeming to float above the trees.

The original capacity of the water tank was 50,000 imperial gallons (230,000 litres) but, during the Second World War, the House in the Clouds was hit by gunfire from anti-aircraft guns based at Thorpeness. The water tank was repaired using its own steel, which resulted in a reduced capacity of 30,000 imperial gallons (140,000 litres).

In 1977, the water tower was made redundant by a mains water supply to the village, and additional living space was created. In 1979, the main water tank was removed to fully convert the building into a house. The building currently has five bedrooms and three bathrooms; it contains a total of eighty-five steps from top to bottom and is around seventy feet high.

It has been a Grade II Listed Building since 1995.



be looking at that again in the spring.

There's going to be a lot of overseeding in terms of trying to get more fescues back in, particularly to fairways, the greens are bent fescue mixed and are probably going to stay in that vein; we aren't going to try and change them too much because they're decent."

"Aeration has been lacking quite seriously in the greens, so again that's something I started looking at straight away. But again that's really from pressures of trying to get as many rounds of golf as we can and not upsetting anybody by doing aeration work. But the club is on board with it, and we need to do it, and it got to a stage last year where the greens were on the edge. When I saw them during my interview, to me it was a bit of a wow moment and something I thought we needed to change really quickly. Again, everyone is on board with that and the two new Wiedenmann machines we've got will help us there."

"There will be a lot more of that, which will help create the right environment for the fescues and bents, which we want to encourage more of. That's going to be a bit more of a long-term project, and it depends on how much we spend on overseeding as well. That's all to try and get back to what it should have been and would have been before I started. It's heavily played, so we've got to factor that in as well, it's got to be wear tolerant, but it's a great golf course, and it deserves to be put back to what it was in that term."

"I think there is so much here that can evolve and so much that can change. There's a lot of good here, a real lot of good, and the potential is huge. You'll always be limited with potential wherever you go, but the potential here is pretty big. Obviously, they got into the Top 100 in 2018, and there's a ceiling there you can get to anyway because there are venues that you're never going to get above, but we've got so much scope."

"If we get the right backing, and if the team stays together and we keep going the way we've gone, then it should be quite stratospheric the difference we can make. It's exciting to think of that, and I think that can last five years easily. I think it can last quite a lot more than that, if I'm being honest. I think there are five years of huge improvement and probably another five years of pretty big improvement at least, so I think I'll have plenty of time here."



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## Hever Castle

# A leisure and golfing feast

One of those much-visited jewels in the crown of historic country properties is Hever Castle in a corner of west Kent. It is best known as the home of Anne Boleyn, whose marriage to Henry VIII was a fulcrum moment in our history. There is much more that brings thousands of visitors there year after year and **Neville Johnson** looks at why its gardens and golf courses add hugely to the estate's appeal



Head Gardener Neil Miller



**T**he small village of Hever is just thirty miles south of London. Its castle, first built in the late 13th century, boasts the oldest working original portcullis in England, but it has always really been a country house rather than a fortification. The Boleyn (aka Bullen) family owned it from 1462 until Henry VIII 'gave' it to his fourth wife Anne of Cleves as part of their divorce settlement in 1539. Just fourteen years earlier, Henry had first ridden down from Hampton Court to Hever to woo a young Anne Boleyn. The rest is history.

Over the centuries, possession of Hever Castle passed through several wealthy English families until, in 1903, it was bought by the American millionaire William Waldorf

Astor, who restored it and gave it much of the magnificent wider appeal it has today. Since 1983, it has been in the hands of Broadlands Properties Limited, which runs it as an immensely popular tourist attraction. Its CV shows that, over nearly 600 years, there have been no fewer than thirty-seven owners from thirteen different families.

It was in the first years of the Astor family ownership, between 1904 and 1908, that the gardens that draw so many there now were laid out. It was a huge project, turning what was essentially marshland into a lasting variety of horticultural styles and delights. Previously, only a modest garden had existed around the Castle walls.

The work of the Astor garden project was labour-intensive on a grand scale. Over 1,000



Aerial view of Hever Castle showing Astor's yew maze

men worked on the construction of 125 acres of natural and classical landscapes. It took 800 just to dig out the 38-acre lake, now such a feature of the Castle setting.

The planting of a challenging and visually impressive yew maze was another major feature of their work.

One of the most striking achievements was the creation of the Italian Garden, designed to show off Astor's collection of Italian sculptures. Other features that countless visitors enjoy include a Tudor garden with giant chess set in golden yew topiary, and a walled garden with over 4,000 rose bushes. Even in winter, it's a feast of lawns, eye-catching greenery and borders.

The gardens at Hever, and trees planted over a hundred years ago, are only now

reaching full maturity, providing wonderful colour and interest around the calendar.

The man in charge of all of this is Head Gardener Neil Miller who, getting on for thirty years ago, switched from the world of insurance brokerage to professional gardening. He first ran his own horticultural business, then, by chance, in 2002 landed a job on the Hever gardening team. In 2006, he was appointed to the top post and leads a team of experienced professionals and trainees responsible for maintaining all of the gardens.

In November, Hever Castle and its gardens featured in the first episode of ITV's Paul O'Grady's Great British Escape, a 6-part series exploring the scenery and history of Kent. On camera in the Tudor garden, Neil



**Waldorf Astor was a keen golfer and, in the 1920s, he had a private 9-hole course constructed for his own personal use. This survived until the Second World War, when it was abandoned**



Hever Castle, the home of Anne Boleyn and now a major tourist attraction

Miller gave Paul a quick teach-in on topiary trimming.

When lockdown and Covid restrictions are behind us, Neil will no doubt resume conducting guided tours of the gardens. Meanwhile, continuing to be available to all visitors to Hever and online is Astor's Garden Legacy, an interactive exhibition, which traces the development and restoration of the gardens from Tudor times to the present day.

Moving away from the Castle and its immediate surrounds, the Hever estate has forged a notable place on the golfing map.

Waldorf Astor was a keen golfer and, in the 1920s, he had a private 9-hole course constructed for his own personal use. This survived until the Second World War, when it was abandoned.

Very much a part of the Hever estate and, like the Castle facilities under Broadlands' ownership, is Hever Golf Club, founded in 1992. Extending over 250 acres are twenty-seven parkland holes, many in sight of the historic castle and with views across the Weald of Kent.

For members and guest players, the club offers a variety of layouts to test all abilities.

The club's 18-hole, 7000-yard Championship Course, comprising the Kings and Queens nines, was constructed for its opening. In its short existence, it has developed a reputation as one of the toughest yet enjoyable parkland courses in Kent. It has hosted the county's Amateur

Championship, Euro Pro Tour events, and the Kent PGA Championships. The course's 17th, a 644-yard par 5, is one of the longest holes in Britain.

The Hever Championship Course was followed in 1998 by the opening of the Princes 9-hole course, regarded as the best 9-holer in the South East. This 2784-yard course, when combined with the Kings nine of the Championship course forms what is called the Boleyn Course, an alternative 18-hole tester.

Added to all of this is the recently opened Express course, which lies within the Princes course and provides an elementary, yet both fun and challenging, 9-hole layout for all

standards of golfer.

Looking after this delightful complexity of courses is Head Greenkeeper Rob Peers, who took up the reins back in 2017 after a spell as deputy and a number of years spent as part of the Hever greenkeeping team. He had switched professions, much like Head Gardener Neil Miller, moving into greenkeeping after training to be a quantity surveyor. His early turf care studies brought him a City and Guilds NVQ in Amenity Horticulture and Sports Turf Maintenance, followed by a BIGGA Diploma. He has since acquired a Lantra Certificate in tree surgery and he is also an AV1 Assessor, enabling him to teach and train others. He's very definitely



Celebrated feature of Hever's Tudor Garden, the topiary chess pieces



The Hever Club's 'Amen Corner', the 6th hole on the Championship Course



**It is not surprising that Hever Golf Club has the English Golf Environment Award under its belt in recognition of its commitment to ecological good practice**

at the top of his game.

Since taking over, Rob has done much to enhance the courses' surroundings environmentally. In particular, the grand scale introduction of meadow flower seed mixes has extended the appeal of colour beyond the Castle gardens to cover the whole of the Hever estate. Areas previously dominated by bramble and nettle were given a massive biodegradable uplift, giving changing colourful appearance through the seasons as well as attracting bees and butterflies.

There are nine wildflower meadow areas

around the Hever courses and each one has an explanatory information board describing what can be seen. In all, over 5,000 square metres are wildflower seeded.

Rob extends his enthusiasm for biodiversity and environmental care to the upkeep of the club's greens. He firmly believes in stepping up aeration and using more sand rather than turning to chemical props. Judging by their uniform appearance, this approach works well.

Rob and his 8-strong team of greenkeepers spend about eighty percent of

their time maintaining the courses: the remainder on areas that border the courses, but are beyond the remit of Neil Miller's gardening team. The whole Hever estate effort is aimed at visual joy for visitors and, even in this most frustrating of years, this is spectacularly achieved. It is not surprising, therefore, that Hever Golf Club has the English Golf Environment Award under its belt, in recognition of its commitment to ecological good practice.

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**Rob keeps club members updated with course maintenance information by means of regular blogs and videos, even to the extent of aerial footage by drone**



Drone view of Hever's parkland course landscape



Head Greenkeeper Rob Peers amongst the wildflower plantings

environment include having a bio-mass heating system for the clubhouse and a natural reed-bed filtration and cleansing waste water treatment system. Other recent improvements are the creation of an off-line irrigation storage pond to harvest winter water, which helps demand in times of need and at the same time provide additional wildlife habitat.

The club's course signage has also been refreshed with each hole renamed to reflect historical links to the Castle.

Like all golf clubs, it has been a stop-start year at Hever. Its courses were reopened to members and guests in mid-May, but the second spell of lockdown stretching into December frustratingly curtailed a summer and part autumn of play. Furloughing had again trimmed Rob's team to a skeleton crew to keep the lid on maintenance.

In his time as Head Greenkeeper, Rob keeps club members updated with course maintenance information by means of regular blogs and videos, even to the extent of aerial footage by drone. This is a channel of communication that has been especially valued during this year of uncertainty.

The club is pretty much self-sufficient in

terms of machinery. Earlier this autumn, Rob 'took' members into his equipment shed by video to tell them how he would be going about the refurbishment and reseeding of two of the fairways. He explained that the club's Vertidrain 7456 would be going down a couple of inches, with 18mm tines, to break up the surface sufficiently for seed application and root development, and its Speedseed 1200 would be applying the thirty or so bags of Barenbrug seed in waiting.

During the weeks of no play last spring, Rob and his much reduced crew adopted what he called a 'robust plan' to keep on top of things and protect the grass plants everywhere by regular irrigation and a slightly higher cut mowing regime. At the time, Rob described the courses as 'not perhaps in top technical condition, but absolutely healthy and in readiness to return to playing conditions in quick time.'

Rob describes the year as 'a crazy one, but not too bad all things considered.' His annual STRI audit in September showed a pretty much clean bill of health, which was pleasing given the unusually trying conditions in terms of weather and manpower.

As we go to press, Hever's beautiful gardens remain open to visitors from Wednesday to Sunday, but under strict Covid 19 restrictions, though the Castle itself is closed until the second lockdown is lifted. Play is not yet possible at Hever Golf Club, but it will be more than ready when the time comes.

Come rain, shine or pandemic this winter, both Neil and Rob will continue to see that this historic landscape continues to be a thing of beauty.



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# 76 pitches and a whole lot of games



It doesn't take much working out that one hundred and fifty-two goalmouths are quite a lot for any team to maintain. Kerry Haywood met with Grounds Maintenance Officers; **Andy Plant, David Wharrier** and **Karl Smith** at Derby City Council to discuss how they manage the vast number of sites and the challenges they face

It's no secret that lower league and grassroots football have suffered this year at the hands of the pandemic and I was interested to find out how my local council have coped under such adversity. Service Manager, Charles Edwards was really enthusiastic to tell me about the team and the amazing work they do.

"Councils across the country are delivering good quality football (all sports) pitches, but here at Derby City Council we have some very talented leaders and operatives who respond to a variety of pressing needs from the public. Budgets are tight with the total cost of annual maintenance at approximately £145,000, which works out at an average of £1,800 per

pitch per year!"

"Over the past nine months, the team have coped incredibly well and have been willing to adapt to new ways of working, amended maintenance regimes and remained positive throughout - which is testament to each and every one of the thirty strong team. Their commitment and hard work mean we're in a good position to move forward."

To tell me more, I sat down with Andy, David and Karl who, between them, have over one hundred years' experience and service within a council environment and have worked their way through qualifications and ranks to where they are today - which is to manage seventy-six pitches in total and ten park sites. To put this into context, the



**It's hard to deal with the pressure from players and coaches who expect a higher level of presentation these days. They watch TV and can see how Premier League clubs look, but it's a different ball game - excuse the pun!**



New starter Steve



Karl Smith (left) with Andy Plant



**Selection of the correct machinery plant is crucial - second only to the correct selection of staff. We're only as good as the workforce we work alongside**

team cover 28,000 metres of linemarking every week, for about thirty-three weeks of the year ... that's 560 miles of linemarking!

It is no mean feat in terms of challenges the team face. David commented: "Obviously, the vast number of our sites are open access and, therefore, accessible to the public twenty-four hours a day. You can just imagine the kind of challenges this poses. On the pitches there is a lot of non-regulated play; you put up a set of goal posts and people will play in them - which, in a way is good, as more than ever we want the public to enjoy open spaces, but obviously that means the pitches are getting far more wear than we budget for. There is a lot to cope with to be able to bring them to a playable standard and we have to deal with a vast amount of dog fouling, littering and even cars driving over the surfaces too."

Karl added: "Another big problem we face is that many of the parks were established

decades ago and football wouldn't have been a consideration at that time. This means they haven't had proper construction, no drainage and are mostly a clay-based profile, so we really are battling against the ground conditions all year round."

"To top it all off," Andy interjected, "our budgets have gradually been cut over the years, which means we have to spread funds very thinly over all the sites. It's crazy that big clubs have a budget for one pitch, similar to what we have to maintain seventy-six pitches!"

"It's hard to deal with the pressure from players and coaches who expect a higher level of presentation these days. They watch TV and can see how Premier League clubs look, but it's a different ball game - excuse the pun! We don't have drainage or endless budgets and we come up against quite a lot of criticism on a regular basis. Teams get very protective of their pitch and expect us





**As a grounds maintenance facility we have to be everything; grounds and horticulture, right through to emptying bins etc.**

to maintain it beyond our means and some of it is outside of our control. For instance, if I see recreational play, I have approached players to ask if they could play across the pitch, rather than using the goalmouths, but understandably I guess, they want to shoot at the goal.”

I was interested to know if Covid-19 will play a positive role in recognising that these outdoor spaces are more important than ever. Andy commented: “Nationally,

we currently face the issue that grassroots football hasn't got the value it deserves. It needs funding injected from above to be able to improve all these pitches around the country, in which thousands of youngsters play on each week - which, in turn, helps obesity, mental health, etc.”

“Not only that, but we saw a huge increase in the general public using our open spaces. Throughout the year, we went from emptying bins on a weekly basis to

daily, but this has a knock-on effect from taking staff away from maintaining the pitches - so something has to be done!”

“As time went on throughout the pandemic, we had to fight to start mowing the pitches and sites again. We could see the ground was dry underneath, the grass was getting beyond control and it could have caused a fire hazard. Also, when elderly people are utilising the parks for exercise, long grass isn't good if they are

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Racecourse Playing Fields



a little unstable underfoot and people with dogs tend not to pick up the poo when grass is longer.”

David continued: “In previous years, pitches were cut once fortnightly using the Trimax Pegasus rotary gang mower - which is our workhorse. However, this year, due to having so many complaints about the length of grass on the pitches, we have stopped mowing certain areas to be able to cut once per week. We would love to use cylinder mowers, but these wouldn’t be suitable for the general park areas.”

“We can’t afford to put drainage into any of the pitches, so we are trying to improve the surfaces by undertaking deep tine aeration work and we are looking to purchase our own machine in the near future. We’re hoping that moving to a new machine will reduce the process time from three hours to two hours per pitch, which will further enhance our resources. This will also help free up a tractor for more time, as we only have four across the whole city to perform all procedures. From

September onwards, one of those will be out hedgecutting, so that’s one tractor and operator tied up, two guys out mowing which leaves one tractor to perform all the other duties.”

“We often get asked what cultivars we use to oversee” Karl continued. “That’s irrelevant to us as there is so much footfall and usage that, without irrigation (we have a 1000 litre bowser), it’s impossible to get any establishment. Having said that, we have to be realistic in terms of what we are trying to achieve. We are in a municipal environment, therefore budgets and the nature of the setting means they are never going to be stadium pitches.”

“The other issue we have is that the season break window is becoming increasingly shorter. We are expected to take down the goalposts at the end of the season but, by the time we have got around to all the sites, they want them back up for friendlies. We designed a goalpost handler in conjunction with a local firm, Kilworth machinery, which has been very beneficial



**The team cover 28,000 metres of linemarking every week, for about thirty-three weeks of the year ... that’s 560 miles of linemarking!**



Transfer wheel marker



**The vast number of our sites are open access and, therefore, accessible to the public twenty-four hours a day. You can just imagine the kind of challenges this poses**

to us and reduced manual handling issues.”

“At the end of the season, we reinstate the goalmouths and overseed all pitches with three different types of ryegrass. Then, the goals are put back in and we start linemarking with a transfer wheel. Due to the number of pitches we have, this process would usually start four weeks before season kick off, to have any hope of getting an initial mark on all sites, followed by weekly mowing and overmarking.”

“We’re currently looking to explore how robotics can help us work more efficiently. The amount of time a robotic linemarker will save would be incredible; tasks which would take two staff a day and a half to complete, would take the robotic machine two hours. Not only that, but the cost savings on paint would also be enormous and it would greatly improve our resources.”

“We are in a fortunate position that we won’t always have the cheapest machinery, but more so what’s best for each operation. Value has to come into that, but we can take time to research all options and go for what performs across our sites.”

“Five years ago, we did a big exercise to determine what tractors were on the market. This was important to ensure that our carrying capacities are correct at all times, as we are obviously out on public highways a lot.”

Andy added: “Selection of the correct machinery plant is crucial - second only to the correct selection of staff. We’re only as good as the workforce we work alongside and it’s becoming increasingly difficult to recruit the right staff, not only in our industry but across many sectors.”

“The RHS would argue that more

people are getting into horticulture than ever before, which is brilliant for National Trust sites etc. However, as a grounds maintenance facility, we require a multi-skilled workforce; general grounds, sports fields and horticulture skills, right through to emptying bins etc. and there are most definitely fewer people with the broad skills of knowledge and expertise coming into the industry.”

Karl continued: “No team members were furloughed throughout the pandemic and they have all been very understanding and helpful to assist wherever they were needed. Right at the beginning, mowing grinded to a halt for a period of six weeks, so the team were even sent out to help with refuse collections. Then, as grass cutting was approved again, we started bringing them back one by one with newly adjusted



Markeaton Park lake

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Derby City Council



Louise in action

social distancing measures (where possible). They are all trained to carry out every aspect of daily tasks and maintenance, but some are more trained in certain areas than others. We're just looking to start an apprenticeship scheme which will be beneficial to new starters and provide training across all areas."

"Servicing of machines is conducted in-house in the dedicated grounds maintenance workshop. The charge-hand, Antony and his colleague Ashley, have done extremely well in very difficult circumstances to cope with everything. As our garage is currently under-staffed, and we would have been in a very different place if he hadn't been there to service and fix machines when we haven't been able to get spare parts throughout the pandemic. The repair shop is the vital link in the chain; if it moves it will break, and they keep us on the road."

"We have an arboriculture department within the grounds team, who look after all the trees around the City, but everything else is handled by the us," Andy concluded. "We have seventeen staff covering mowing, pitch maintenance, floral

feature maintenance, shrubbery works, hedgecutting, bin emptying, etc. across all highways verges, a cemetery, social services and parks and private sites."

It was at this point, I drove to Darley fields with eleven senior football pitches, to see a few of the team in action; Louise, Jack and Steve. I spoke to chargehand Louise who has been with the council for nearly twenty-five years. Along the way, she has qualified in Tree Management and Turf Culture and, according to the team, can achieve the straightest lines of anyone with the transfer wheel marker. She said: "I really like initial marking out as you get to really use your brain and then I enjoy the overmarking aspect too. The challenge of straight lines is always something that needs concentration but, coming from a fine turf background, I have a lot of experience."

It was great to see first-hand how dedicated and committed the team are to their work and, as I'm driving round my home City in the future, I'm sure I will look at the planted areas and green spaces with a smile - knowing just how much work is involved.



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## Liatroim Fontenoy's GAC

# A chance to breathe...

Covid-19 has certainly played havoc with sporting fixtures and the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) in Northern Ireland is also affected. With various lockdown regulations governing sporting venue closures, some heavily used pitches got a chance to breathe. Chris McCullough travelled to Liatroim Fontenoy's GAC to view its newest pitch



**W**ork on the new state of the art football pitch at Liatroim Fontenoys GAC, based at Castlewellan in Northern Ireland, was completed in 2018, with the first games played there in July 2019 after the pitch had established.

Costing £1.2m, the investment at this, the oldest club in County Down, included the new 140m by 100m sand-based pitch plus floodlights and parking for 100 cars.

It's a real busy sporting arena as it caters for thirty-two teams in Gaelic Football, Hurling, Camogie and Ladies Gaelic Football from fundamentals (U6) to Senior.

The complex has three grass pitches and a small enclosed 3G ball wall (25m x 15m),

plus a 1km Fit Trail with car parking facilities. It is a 5ha site comprising the new pitch at 1.4ha, the old pitch at 1.2ha, training pitch at 0.5ha, with the remainder housing car parking and the fit trail.

To document a brief history on Liatroim Fontenoys GAC, the club was founded back in 1888 in the rural area surrounding Castlewellan by the McAleenan Brothers and JL Savage.

Initially, the club was known as Leitrim Fontenoys, but the name was changed to Liatroim Fontenoys following a proposal at the AGM in 1993.

From its formation the club was involved in playing hurling and football, featuring regularly in county finals, and became the

first and only club to ever win both the Down Senior Hurling and Senior Football Championships in the same year.

Volunteer groundsmen are a vital part of groundcare for many clubs across the UK and indeed at Liatroim Fontenoys GAC, as the father and son team of Declan and Tiarnach Magee are tasked with looking after the new pitch.

Tiarnach, who works full-time as a greenkeeper at Royal County Down Golf Club (RCD), has been volunteering at Fontenoy Park for the past two years.

"I initially stepped in to help out the groundsman Nicky McAtee but, as the workload with the new pitch and fit trail increased, it became too much for one





**We are now vertidrainning the new one more often. It is a hungry pitch needing higher instances of fertiliser applications due to leaching and the demands of the grass plant**

person to look after the pitches and the clubhouse, so I assumed the role of pitch maintenance and Nicky still looks after the buildings on site.”

“My full-time job is a greenkeeper at Royal County Down Golf Club in Newcastle. I have always had an interest in farming and accompanied my uncle Patrick McCartan during my spare time tending to his cattle and sheep.”

“Patrick was vice chairman of Liatroim until his untimely death in 2010 and was always present around Fontenoy Park. Following Patrick’s passing, my farming neighbour Brian Malone took me under his wing and my love of farming continued.”

“My father saw a news item on the local bulletin where it said that there was a shortage of young people in the horticultural industry and, in particular, in the sportsturf industry.”

“When I had to choose a work experience placement, I applied to one of the best golf courses in the world and I was accepted. I



Tiarnach Magee

then took up a seasonal position in the summer of 2016 at RCD.”

“I loved the work and my plan was to go back to school and get my GCSEs and then apply to the College of Agriculture Food & Rural Enterprise at Greenmount to study greenkeeping. I successfully achieved my GCSEs and, in the summer of 2017, started working at RCD. I embarked on a modern apprentice scheme and attended Greenmount one day per week studying Level 2 Sportsturf which I successfully completed,” he said.

Tiarnach reports to the Liatroim Fontenoy’s GAC committee and mostly to the current chairman Dan Morgan. As well as Declan, Tiarnach and Nicky, there are other volunteers who help out around the complex including Dan Morgan, Brian Malone, Noel Brown and Niall Brown.

Tiarnach said: “Noel, Niall and Brian provide larger machinery for any jobs that require it. Nicky looks after the clubrooms and Dan does whatever is needed from

helping to mow and marking out, on top of the demands of being chairman.”

“We try to do as much as we can in-house and are in the middle of our autumn renovations, including scarifying our new sand-based pitch followed by an overseed.”

The front original pitch has a soil-based profile which was laid around fifty-three years ago and opened in 1968. The new pitch is a sand-based one laid in the late spring of 2018 by McAvoy Construction of Banbridge.

“We are learning that the new pitch, with its excellent drainage capabilities, does not behave in the same manner as the old pitch,” said Tiarnach. “We are now vertidrainning the new one more often. It is a hungry pitch needing higher instances of fertiliser applications due to leaching and the demands of the grass plant.”

“The pitches are mainly for club use but, as is the case with most sports, the hosting of fixtures requiring a neutral venue is facilitated and our location in the centre of



**The visiting Kildare manager complimented the club on the condition of the pitch and that there was probably no other club pitch in the country in as good a condition as Liatroim**



Declan Magee



the county makes it a regular venue of choice for the Down County GAA competitions control committee and their female counterparts in the Camogie and Ladies Gaelic Football Associations.”

“During the wet spring we were asked to be on standby to host National Hurling League fixtures due to the possible unavailability of designated county grounds in Newry and Ballycran. The call came and preparations commenced to stage the Down v Kildare NHL 2B fixture.”

“The visiting Kildare manager complimented the club on the condition of the pitch and that there was probably no other club pitch in the country in as good a condition as Liatroim.”

#### Testing climate

There is no escaping the weather elements at Liatroim Fontenoys GAC which have indeed been quite an enemy this year.

“During August, we had a rainfall event of biblical proportions which led to the Leitrim

River bursting its banks, flooding part of the main playing pitches but totally engulfing the small training pitch which, unfortunately, is slightly lower.”

“Back in August 2008, intensive rainfall flooded the entire complex with 250mm of water. As we are located in a valley reasonably high up, we would be affected with some severe frost but, as our normal playing season would be from the start of March to the end of October, it does not really have an impact.”

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“We try and save the playing pitches for as long as we can from teams using them to protect the surface so that, when the fixtures kick in, the pitches are the best that they can be.”

“This coming year may not be as bad, as now we have the generator installed and the floodlights operational on the new sand-based pitch, it might alleviate some of the problems associated with waterlogging.”

“There are no real issues with shade and air flow as the pitches are quite open and there is always a wind, even on the calmest of days.”

“The 1km Fit Trail has seven fitness stations along its route. It is fully surfaced with asphalt or concrete and is also fully lit by some seventy LED street lighting fittings.”

“We obtained a cost matching grant from the local Newry Mourne and Down District Council to install the lighting on the Fit Trail and this was greatly welcomed,” he said.

#### Maintenance work

Tiarnach and Declan fit the maintenance work in around their own full-time jobs, mostly cutting the grass once or twice a

week. “Most of the tasks are carried out by my dad and I. We mow the pitches, normally once per week but maybe twice during the peak growing season.”

“However, as both of us have full time jobs and the pitches are constantly in use, fitting the tasks in can see us doing very irregular hours, either very early in the morning or late in the evening.”

“There are matches or training on every day of the week and working around them is not easy, but I wouldn’t have it any other way as the pitches are there to be played on.”

“I am mainly the pilot on our John Deere X740 with a 62-inch cutting deck with a MCS 800 collection system. During the playing season, I have my height of cut at 35mm as it is a balancing act between the requirements for football, hurling and camogie.”

“The footballers would like the grass kept a little higher, maybe 38mm or 39mm, with the hurlers looking for 31mm or 32mm, so 35mm is a compromise. As there is a crossover of players between the two sports, there are very few complaints.”

“We have a Sisis slitter at the club which requires a larger tractor, so we get Brian Malone to carry this task out, but having agricultural tyres on his machine limits the times we can deploy it.”

“The club is looking into upgrading our machinery in the future, but on my wish list would be a suitably sized tractor with a larger mower and a multi-task implement carrier for pitch surface conditioning.”

“I am limited to what I can do as regards scarification and aeration. We only carry out weed control on the hard standing surfaces using a knapsack sprayer and, having my PA1 and PA6, this task falls to me.”

“The marking out of the pitches is carried out by my dad who takes great pride in ensuring that the lines are shotgun straight and highly visible. Gaelic games pitches contain three times as many lines as a regular football pitch and are double the size, so it takes slightly longer to complete.”

“Dad would spend usually three and a half to four hours for one pitch if doing it on his own, which he usually prefers to do unless he has a very tight deadline to make. We obtained a new Fleet Kombi linemarker last



**The footballers would like the grass kept a little higher, maybe 38mm or 39mm, with the hurlers looking for 31mm or 32mm, so 35mm is a compromise**





**We divot as often as we can but would ensure that the bigger divots are repaired in the first instance and then work our way down to the minor areas of damage**

year which has helped immensely compared to the old transfer wheel marker that was previously in use.”

“Although the pitch surface is not what would be regarded as fine turf it is still of a high quality. Pests such as chafer and leatherjackets are not really much of an issue, but damage from birds does occur.”

“I would like to get a sprayer for the tractor and this would allow me to spray a

selective herbicide or soluble fertiliser to deliver an even better pitch quality. There is a fertiliser programme set for the year and dad spreads it with a newly acquired ICL 2000 spreader.”

“We divot as often as we can but would ensure that the bigger divots are repaired in the first instance and then work our way down to the minor areas of damage,” said Tiarnach.

Presentation ranks very highly with both Declan and Tiarnach who both agree good presentation is achieved with good plant health, so the two complement each other.

“The entertainment and enjoyment level of both players and spectators is higher when the pitches are well groomed,” said Tiarnach.

“At the end of last year’s season, we only undertook the returfing of the goalmouths



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**One example is the lighting on the Fit Trail where we had to install low level light fittings along some sections adjacent to the river to take into account the presence of a bat colony**

on the old and training pitches which was a great success, mainly due to Covid-19 having shut the club down!"

"This meant that the turf got time to establish whereas, in previous years, it didn't. As our playing season is at its fullest during peak growing season, it is difficult to get the results that winter sports achieve."

"We started to returf immediately after the last match which was 20th November. Myself, along with some of the lads from work who are volunteer groundsmen at Bryansford GAC in Newcastle, got it completed."

"Budgets may affect renovations in the future as Covid-19 has had an impact on revenue generation here like the majority of sports clubs."

"We don't have too much trouble with pests here but did have a minor issue with either foxes or badgers. We carried out some repairs to our fencing which seemed to cure the problem."

"Thankfully, we do not have an issue with rabbits but I know some neighbouring clubs have and they are very frustrated at the level of damage they have caused," Tiarnach added.



Tiarnach considers the environment and its components very important, keeping a close eye on wildlife and fauna.

"We consider local flora and fauna to be really important, especially as we are a rurally based club," he said. "The recent development undertaken by the club took into account any possible impact that it may have had."

"One example is the lighting on the Fit Trail, where we had to install low level light fittings along some sections adjacent to the river to take into account the presence of a bat colony, which are resident under the bridges in the immediate locality."

"We planted 120 saplings of native species around the Fit Trail where we could; mostly beech, birch and ash, which is quite appropriate as hurling sticks are made from ash."

"I have made contact with our local council's Countryside Officer and the Parks Department regarding funding for small environmental projects and progress is going well on that front."

"The village's wastewater treatment plant is located adjacent to the site and we have been in contact regarding tree planting

along the access road and within the plant to provide an element of screening and for environmental enhancement."

"The club doesn't employ an environmental consultant as we use the expertise within the club, who happens to be my cousin Pearse McCartan. I have sought advice from him as regards environmental matters on many occasions."

Tiarnach has a few ideas up his sleeve on how to improve the local area around the club and make it even more environmentally friendly.

"I intend to carry out a programme of wildflower planting in the spring in areas where I have difficulty accessing with the mower. We recently renovated our house and replaced the flooring. Now I have some real wood flooring, I intend, over the winter, to recycle that and make some bird boxes and place them at various locations around the Fit Trail before the nesting season begins."

**Industry thoughts**

Although Tiarnach hasn't been working a long time in the industry he has witnessed a 'slow appreciation' for the work groundcare professionals do.





"As I have not been in the industry long, I feel I cannot make an objective assessment on it as I would need a longer period to evaluate it and I just don't have the time under my belt yet."

"However, so far, I would say we are most definitely undervalued and unappreciated in the main, but there is a growing level, albeit slowly, of appreciation of the work we do."

"I believe the majority of people do not realise what it takes, or how long it takes, to prepare and present sports facilities to the standard that they expect."

"Raising our profile? That's a hard one, but I would say more engagement with the stakeholders in the clubs, such as committees, coaches, players and the membership in general, is essential."

"Social media is probably the way forward, get on it, showcase your work and explain what you are doing and why you are doing it," said Tiarnach.

"We attend Saltex every year, which I find to be very useful. I would love to get to BTME some year or the GIS in the USA, given that my main job is as a greenkeeper."

"Local suppliers and dealers have organised some shows recently which we have attended where it was great to meet up with other people in the industry."

Any machinery required at Liatroim Fontenoys GAC is purchased outright, but that policy may change in the future.

"As the club has an excellent community ethos, we try to buy the machinery locally to support the economy which, in the current situation, is badly needed," Tiarnach said.

"We don't really stay with one manufacturer but, having said that, the club purchased the John Deere X740 eleven years ago and it has done pretty well for us. I am a self-confessed John Deere fan so you will not hear or read a bad word about JD from me."

"Servicing is mostly carried out by ourselves as there is expertise amongst the members of the club, and we will task the dealer to carry out the work we cannot do."

"My machinery wish list includes a tractor, a bigger mower, multi task implement carrier, a sprayer and a verti-drain, fingers crossed!" he concluded.



**Raising our profile? That's a hard one, but I would say more engagement with the stakeholders in the clubs, such as committees, coaches, players and the membership in general, is essential**

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Mansfield Town FC

# Tights on nights!

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Mansfield Town Football Club was formed in 1897 and, since the end of the First World War, have played their football at the 9,186 capacity One Call Stadium. Nicknamed ‘The Stags’ (after the old borough’s coat of arms) the team compete in League Two of the English Football League and, at the time of writing, were languishing close to the relegation zone. However, as any good manager will tell you, there’s plenty of time to go and the club remain hopeful of retaining their league status. Lee Williams caught up with Head Groundsman **Michael Merriman** over the phone to chart his twenty-two years’ service

**A**fter leaving school, Michael Merriman undertook a two-year youth training scheme in construction but, when the bottom fell out of the industry and no houses were being built, he had to find another career path. “I took up painting and decorating, which lasted just six months after I found out I was not a fan of the double ladders when working on the gable end of a house in 80mph winds! I knew there and then that it wasn’t the job for me. I then went to Metal Box, making biscuit tins for Marks & Spencer and Glenfiddich, but that was only a temporary position. I then got a job at Simpson Wright & Lowe Ltd packing tights on nights for Marks & Spencer. It was good money to be fair, but the company moved its business abroad as the labour was cheaper, leaving me to go and sign on. I saw an advert for football coaching and I thought, I play a bit of football, I will see what it is all about. The position was with Football in the Community at Mansfield Town. I had

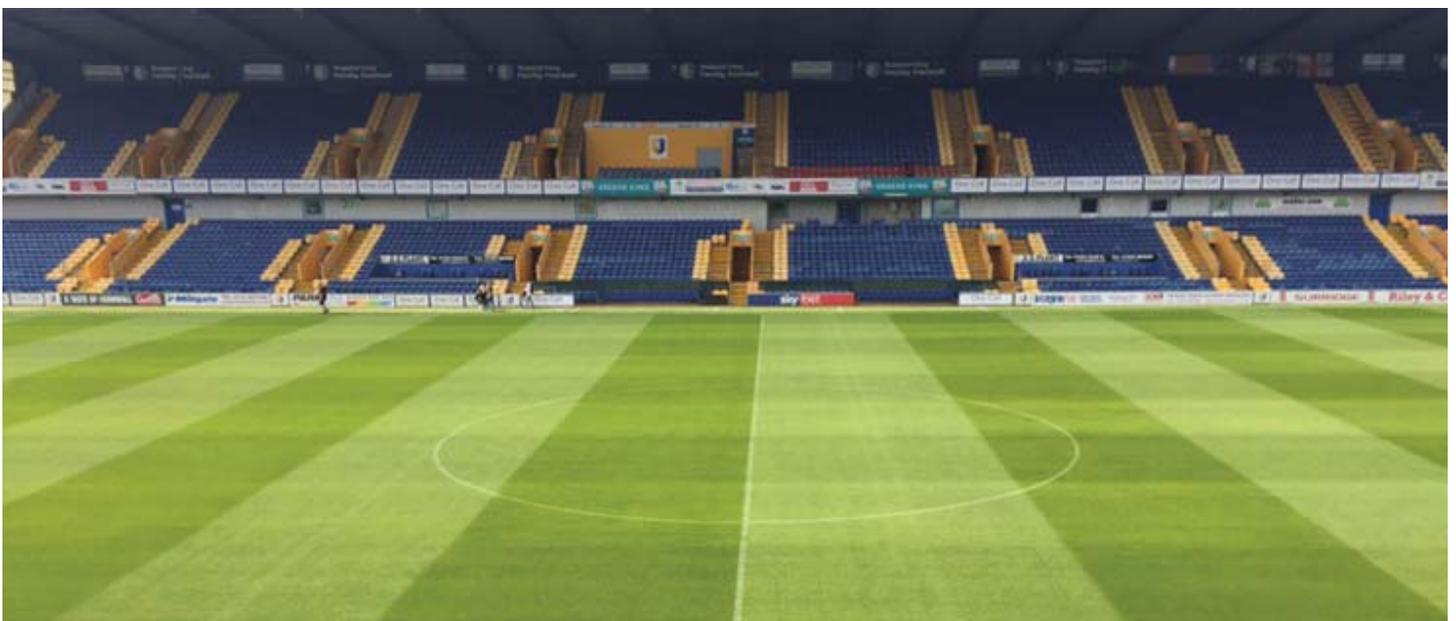
been doing that for a year and a half when the club took on Rob Sprigg as their new head groundsman and my name was put forward by the community coaches to be his assistant. I started with Rob on £70 a week. Back then, it was just a matter of cutting and divoting the main pitch, and the training pitch at the back of the ground, as we had very little money for feed etc.”

In the days when Michael first started his career in groundsmanhip, the team would get changed in the home team dressing room for daily training. “One of my jobs was to fill up the big bath as there were no showers. Once the players had spruced themselves up and left for the day, I had to empty it and scrub it out for the next day; and that is how my journey at the club started! I was with Rob for seven years then, when he left, the chairman at the time gave me the Head Groundsman job, which I have now been in for the last fifteen years.”

In my days at Oldham Athletic, I would often see Michael and have a chat in the



**Many people still think we just cut grass for a living, but if you look at the pitches from now to ten years ago, it is amazing how much they have come on**





Michael with Scott (middle) and James



put it out once they'd got to the ground. Eventually, I ended up travelling with the team to away games, but this came to an end three seasons ago when Steve Evans became manager. He wanted me to look after the grass full-time, so my son Scott, who works with me on the grounds, became kit man full-time. It made a lot of sense as, if anything was wrong with the pitches, I was there to sort it out, and vice versa with Scott and the kit. Plus, it got me out of travelling around the country which I'd had enough of at the time, especially when I had to be back on the pitches first thing in the morning."

Things have changed again this season, and Scott is now back on the grounds full-time alongside his dad and James (Jimmy) Gillet.

Michael works closely with Mark Robinson from Rigby Taylor when looking at the agronomy of the pitches and their fertiliser requirements. "He has been a massive help to me since I became head groundsman fifteen years ago. I would also like to mention Mark Pearson from Lightwood Sports Groundcare Ltd. When the club dropped into the Conference, we did not



**There are all kinds of grass species in there. It is horrible. All different colours; it is not a pretty sight**

tunnel about his turf, but also see him setting out the kit for the players. I asked him how he ended up taking on the kit man's role as well as being the head groundsman. "At about the same time I was assistant, names and numbers on the back of the players shirts came in, and there was a meeting at the club between the managers about who would be responsible for the kit, and basically they decided between them that I was to be the kit man. Back then, I did not travel. I packed the kit ready for them to take to away games and the physio would





SGL MU18 lighting rig



**Three weeks ago, I overseeded the pitch with five bags of a ryegrass mix with the dimple seeder to help us get through the winter months**

have two pennies to rub together. I was stood on car park duty one day when we had the local kids' finals, and I was charging the parents a pound each to park, from which I made two hundred and fifty pounds. Mark came in scarified, reseeded and put some sand on the pitch for just those pound coins I had collected. So, after that, Mark has always done our renovations, but for a few more pound coins than we gave him the first time! He has been a godsend to me."

The stadium pitch underwent some improvements three years ago, when Steve Evans became manager. "I don't know how he managed to get it done but I was allowed to get in some Fibresand, which I had been after for ages. Obviously, it came at a cost - £70,000 in the end - and I was amazed that Steve had got that for me. So, we put 50mm of Fibresand concentrate on top of the existing 100mm of sand/soil already in the pitch. This was then ameliorated in and

levelled. We also installed new drainage, which was put in every three yards across the pitch."

Michael tells me that the sizeable West Stand causes him a lot of problems with shade and frost in the winter months. "This time of year (November) I have no sun on the pitch whatsoever; I might get an hour if I'm fortunate. The shade caused by the stand takes out the whole of the pitch, which is far from ideal. We have a full set of frost





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# Getting Personal

## Michael Merriman - he's done OK for a daft lad!

**Who are you?** Michael Merriman. Head Groundsperson at Mansfield Town FC.

**Family status.** Married to Zoe.

**Who's your hero and why?** Anyone that goes to work for a living.

**What's been the highlight of your grounds career so far?** Liverpool at home in the FA Cup.

**If your younger self saw you now, what would he think?** Wow - done OK for a daft lad!

**Which famous people wind you up?** Piers Morgan, he is always right.

**What job would you love, other than your own?** Liverpool Head Groundsman.

**What was the most embarrassing moment in your life?** Forgetting the shirts for an away game when I did the kit as well.

**What is your favourite film?** Kez.

**What scares you?** Life.

**What would your autobiography be called... and who would play you in the film?** Mezski the Whole Truth played by Cillian Murphy.

**What is your favourite sport?** Football.

**What would you cast into Room 101?** Politics/cricket.

**Which historical time and place would you most like to visit?** London 1800s.

**Do you have a lifetime ambition?** Live as long as possible.

**Which three people, living or dead, would you invite to a dinner party?** Mohamed Ali, Steven



Gerrard, my grandad Merriman, he passed away when I was only five.

**What's the best advice you have ever been given?** Don't let the bastards grind you down.

**What's your favourite piece of trivia?** Did you know the loudest animal on earth is a sperm whale?

**What's your favourite smell?** Geraniums.

**Which three albums would you take to a desert island?** Queen, Elvis and The Who's - Quadrophenia.

**What's the daftest work-related question you have ever been asked?** Why is it frozen when my garden is not?

**What's your favourite piece of kit?** Verti-drain.

**What three words would you use to describe yourself?** Grumpy, honest and loyal.

**What is the single most useful thing you could tell a 16-year-old groundsperson?** Listen and learn off the right people because everyone knows your job better than you.

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

**What law/legislation would you like to see introduced?** Life sentence/hanging for sex offenders.



covers to help get games on when frost is forecast and an SGL MU18 lighting rig which we use on the bottom goalmouth."

Michael talks me through the seasonal maintenance of the stadium pitch from cutting heights to aeration. "We have an Allett Buffalo and an Allett C34 which we use to cut the pitch in the summer months, cutting at the height of 22mm seven days a week, depending on the weather. Then, around November time, I will lift the height of cut to 25mm for winter, and I tend to cut the pitch three times a week. At least once a month, I go over the pitch with our Charterhouse 7316 Verti-Drain - with 22mm tines at a depth of seven inches - to help relieve compaction in the surface and to get some air down into the profile.

I also borrow a Toro ProCore 640 from another local club when it's available to us."

"This year, I have made use of the verti-cut unit in the C34 and the Allett scarifier for the back of the tractor in the early season. We took four full trailer loads of organic matter and debris out of the pitch, and you would not even know we had done it as it was so thick the sward. We then gave the pitch a light verti-cut once a week up until recently to keep the surface clean. Three weeks ago, I overseeded the pitch with five bags of a ryegrass mix with the dimple seeder to help us get through the winter months.

The club buys their machinery outright, whether that be second-hand or new, when they require an upgrade or a replacement. PS Marsden in Nottingham carry





**One of my jobs was to fill up the big bath. Once the players had left, I had to empty it and scrub it out for the next day; and that is how my journey at the club started**

out servicing and regrinds on the cutting machines. I asked Michael if he could buy any one machine right now to help improve the pitches, what would it be and why? "A Toro ProCore 648, one thousand percent; it is an incredible piece of kit. It is light, fast, smooth and causes no real damage to the surface, even when it is wet. Let's say we had a bit of a damp patch the day before the game and again on the day of the game, you can quickly nip over with one of them, whereas you can't with the tractor mounted equivalent."

With the unprecedented times we are currently living in, I was interested to know how Michael had been affected. "At the start of lockdown, we were all furloughed for three months, and I was only working two days and quickly nipping over the main pitch. I am now back to full-time, but the lads are on thirty hours. It has been a nightmare trying to look after the training ground with its three full-size grass pitches, warm-up

area and a full-size 3G, plus the stadium, with staff on reduced hours. It has tripled my workload. Groundsmen know how it works though. We get paid for forty hours, but end up working sixty as we end up doing stuff off our own bats, because we need to. We are managing to keep on top of things, but I could do with lads back full-time."

Covid has affected what Michael has been able to spend on pitch renovations as the club (like most others) finds itself struggling for income with fans still unable to attend matches. "We had no outside contractors come in this season to carry out a thorough renovation on the stadium pitch. I scarified and raked the pitch myself, then Ulyett





**This time of year (November)  
I have no sun on the pitch  
whatsoever; I might get an  
hour if I'm fortunate**



**What's in the shed**

- Allett Buffalo
- Allett C34
- Toro Reelmaster 5500D
- Charterhouse 7316 Verti-Drain
- Honda Pro rotary mowers x 3
- Huxley triple mower
- SISIS Variseeder
- Iseki tractor



Landscapes spread just twenty tonnes of sand on the top. The pitch is now starting to struggle, if I am honest with you. There are all kinds of grass species in there. It is horrible. All different colours; it is not a pretty sight. It had played pretty well up until one weekend recently when the pitch took a bit of a battering as we had a torrential downpour just before the game. This seems to be happening every single matchday for some reason."

With the introduction of a new CEO, Michael is hopeful that he will get the funds to carry out a full renovation before the start of next season. "David Sharp has recently joined the club from Wigan Athletic Football Club. He is Dave Whelan's grandson and is a proper football man. The first day I spoke to him he asked me if we had taken the top off the pitch. When I replied no, he said that is the minimum we should be doing, surely?"

That was refreshing to hear; someone who does not just see green grass and thinks everything is okay. I genuinely believe that, if David had come in a few months earlier, we might have found the funds to do a full renovation this season."

Michael believes pitches in all leagues have improved dramatically since he first started his career in the sports turf industry, but many groundsmen and women still do not get the praise they deserve. "Many people still think we just cut grass for a living, but if you look at the pitches from now to ten years ago, it is amazing how much they have come on. Do not get me wrong; some of that comes down to machinery and other products that have come along to help us. But we still must use our brains to apply science and use our knowledge and experience to help provide these surfaces."



Jimmy and Michael enjoying the snow

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## Edgbaston Archery and Lawn Tennis Society

# A history of lawn tennis

Founded in 1860, Edgbaston Archery and Lawn Tennis Society (EA&LTS) is the oldest lawn tennis club in the world. It is a friendly, social club situated next to the picturesque setting of the Botanical Gardens, Birmingham. **Robert Holland (Bob)** is currently a Trustee and Historian, but has held numerous other titles during his time. We spoke over the phone to gain an insight into the rich history of the club and lawn tennis itself

**A**s a young lad, Bob Holland played tennis in Edgbaston, which is where his interest in the sport first started. However, in the mid-1970s, he gave up playing tennis and did not take it up again until the mid-1980s. "In 1987, I was approached by one of the Trustees of EA&LTS to see if I would stand as the ground secretary. I didn't know enough about it, but there was also a vacancy for the honorary secretary (which essentially is the managing director) and my name was put forward. So, from 1988 until 2005, I served the club whilst also undertaking the Chairman position between 1991 and 1993. That led to some interesting meetings of me talking to myself, as both the honorary secretary, whilst wearing my chairman's hat and vice versa."

Bob has also been involved with the grounds maintenance (in some form or

another) right from the word go in 1987. "The groundsman at the time was Bob Cooper, who had a background of traditional training with the parks department and also had been an assistant groundsman working on cricket pitches. He first joined the club in the 1970s and retired just four years ago. He undertook the maintenance of the six grass courts, four shale and the two floodlit artificial grass courts. He also did a lot of work on the pavilion maintenance, as he was pretty handy when it came to DIY. Following Bob's retirement from the job as a full-time groundsman, he came back as a consultant. We now have an assistant who carries out all manual work whilst Bob directs."

Back to Bob Holland - who has studied and started to write about the entire history of the club and tennis in detail - however, the pandemic and his medical issues have slowed things down somewhat as he is

unable to visit the library. I was interested in finding out how it all began and what he has found out so far. He starts our conversation by telling me he will try and keep it brief, but that was not easy with such a rich history.

"The club was first formed in 1860 as the Edgbaston Archery Society; literally bows, arrows and targets in which both men and women were able to play. Our original ground was on Hall Hill Road, which was just down from the home of the landlords. In 1867, we moved to our current ground in Westbourne Road and, according to the minutes of meetings, we did this as various members said it was too far to go down the hill and they wanted grounds that were nearer to their houses. They were influential Birmingham people - for example, the Chance Glass founders; a dozen of them were members and the Elkington's who were silver platers (who actually made the men's and women's singles Wimbledon trophies). These people lived in some style, in rather big houses, on what I call Edgbaston ridge - which is only about one hundred yards from the club, so you can see the reasoning behind it."

"As it happened, the Botanical Gardens was in financial difficulty and needed to make more money. We did a deal with them for an acre of their land (which at the time was a tree nursery) at the back end of 1867. We carried on playing archery, but





August bank holiday 1908 tournament

Reproduced with kind permission of the Library of Birmingham



Groundsman Bob Cooper

croquet was also introduced in March 1870 and shared the ground. In 1874, there was a guy from London called Major Wingfield who launched a game called Sphairistike (an ancient Greek term, meaning skill in playing at ball), however he very soon changed it to lawn tennis and that was the first commercial version of the game as we know it."

"It's important to mention at this point that there were two guys, Harry Gem and Augurio Perera, based in Birmingham, playing a precursor to the game (then known as 'Pelota') in 1859 and Harry was a member of Edgbaston Archery Society in the 1860s. They moved to Leamington in 1872/3 and showed the game to a couple of doctor friends - who got quite enthusiastic, so the four men formed the world's first Tennis Club in the grounds of the Manor House Hotel in 1874. This club did not survive for very long, although there is today, of course, a Leamington Club. The game very quickly switched to Major Wingfield's game because Gem and Perera had no commercial interest in 'Pelota'. Wingfield, in London with his Sphairistike, appointed an

agent to sell his kit and the game very soon spread around England and, subsequently, across the world."

After Leamington, the first Club to take up the game of lawn tennis appears to have been Edgbaston Archery and Croquet Society, although it must be admitted that the Edgbaston Cricket and Lawn Tennis Club and Solihull Lawn Tennis Club must run it fairly close. However, the evidence supports that, with the demise of the original Leamington Club, the Society is the oldest surviving tennis playing club in the country and, therefore, by implication in the world.

The club has all its minutes recorded since 1860, which are stored in the archives at the Birmingham Library. "In 1875, we introduced Sphairistike to Edgbaston Archery Society; it was very popular and well established in that same year. It is possible they were playing it in 1874, but I can't prove that hand on heart. However, in the 1875 records, it says they were actually playing competitions which leads us to think that (because our grass courts are still in their same position and orientation), there is no playing surface





Bob Holland



anywhere in the world that is older than our facility here at Edgbaston. A couple of years later (at the AGM in 1877), they decided the game was so popular the club name was changed to Edgbaston Archery and Lawn Tennis Society."

"The All England Lawn Tennis Club, Wimbledon would also have a fairly good claim to be the oldest, but they are much younger and were actually formed as a croquet club in 1868. They took up

Sphairistike in the exact same year as us (1875) but still kept their croquet club name. Similarly, in 1877, they decided the game was so popular that they would run the first ever Championships that season. They dedicated three weeks and three members to look at the whole setting up of a tournament and also looked at revising the game itself. Up until this point, Wingfield's courts were hourglass-shaped, so it was narrower at the net than it was at the baseline and the net



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Grass courts 2010 © RMC Holland

was very high at four feet in the middle and five feet at the edges. It was at this point of revision that courts were made rectangular and the net we know today was reduced to three foot at the centre, three foot six inches at the posts. With the first tournament set, the club name was changed to include lawn tennis and so became the All England Lawn Tennis and Croquet Club ... three weeks after EA&LTS changed its title to include Lawn Tennis.”

“Croquet eventually disappeared at the club, but we continued to play archery until the mid-1920s, when the pavilion burned down - along with all the bows, arrows and targets. That basically killed the game and so, from then on, we played only lawn tennis. Sometime before World War II, land became

available next door (occupied in those days by some of the Guinea Gardens) which we acquired; and this is where the four shale and two floodlit artificial grass courts are situated today.”

“In 1962, we suffered another fire which burnt down our traditional looking pavilion with its veranda entirely to the ground. We took on some more land from the landlords, Calthorpe Estates, and a new pavilion was built. This was opened in 1963 by one of our members Pip Jones, husband of Ann - the 1969 Wimbledon Ladies Singles Champion. Ann was appointed an Honorary Member of the club when she won the tournament.”

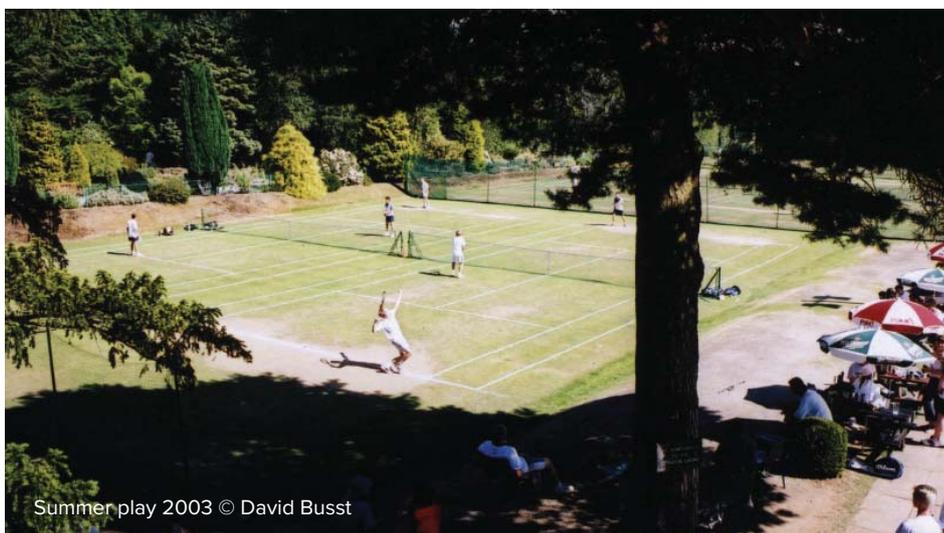
“Since then, there have been many famous tennis players who have been at the club - two Americans; Jimmy Connors and

Stan Smith and Australian John Newcombe - who were all winners of the Wimbledon Men’s singles title at various times. Back in 1989 when I was the secretary, Martina Navratilova needed somewhere to play out of the way of the press. She turned up with her coach and, on the second day of being here, there was a knock on the door - it was none other than Billy Jean King who was there to help Martina with the mental aspect of her game. In 2004, Maria Sharapova turned up with her dad and her coach; she went on to win the tournament at the Priory. Interestingly, all those years ago, her dad would shout at her to stop grunting, but he obviously didn’t do a very good job of that!”

“Coaches have come and gone, but one of the most notable for spending time here



**The club was first formed in 1860 as the Edgbaston Archery Society; literally bows, arrows and targets in which both men and women were able to play**



Summer play 2003 © David Busst



Edwardian era © EA&LTS archive



Artificial court in 2004 © David Busst



Grass play in 2008

was Joaquin Loyo-Mayo. Joaquin had been a Davis Cup player for his native Mexico between 1965 and 1979, world ranked number one at eighteen years of age, reached the last sixteen both at Wimbledon and the US Open and won a record ten singles and seven doubles Mexican National Championship titles.”

With the advent of artificial grass in 1987, the Society was one of the first clubs in the region to convert two courts to this surface. Floodlit, these considerably extended the tennis playing season for members. From that time, membership has grown apace and a major redevelopment of the pavilion was completed in 1994.

Bob concluded: “We’re very proud of the rich history of our Society and, in early

2020, we were delighted to announce that the Birmingham Civic Society awarded us a history plate. However, the oldest tennis club in the world is not standing still! There are lots of things we would like to do to make the club even better; Karsten Scholer, our chairman and the committee have recently put together a ten year plan.” “This will include increasing the all-weather floodlit courts from two to four, which will significantly increase the number of playable hours at the club during the winter. We want to make tennis more accessible for all and we aim to run some free community sessions. Longer-term, the Society plans to set up as a ‘social prescribing’ outlet so that, where appropriate, GPs can refer patients to us.”



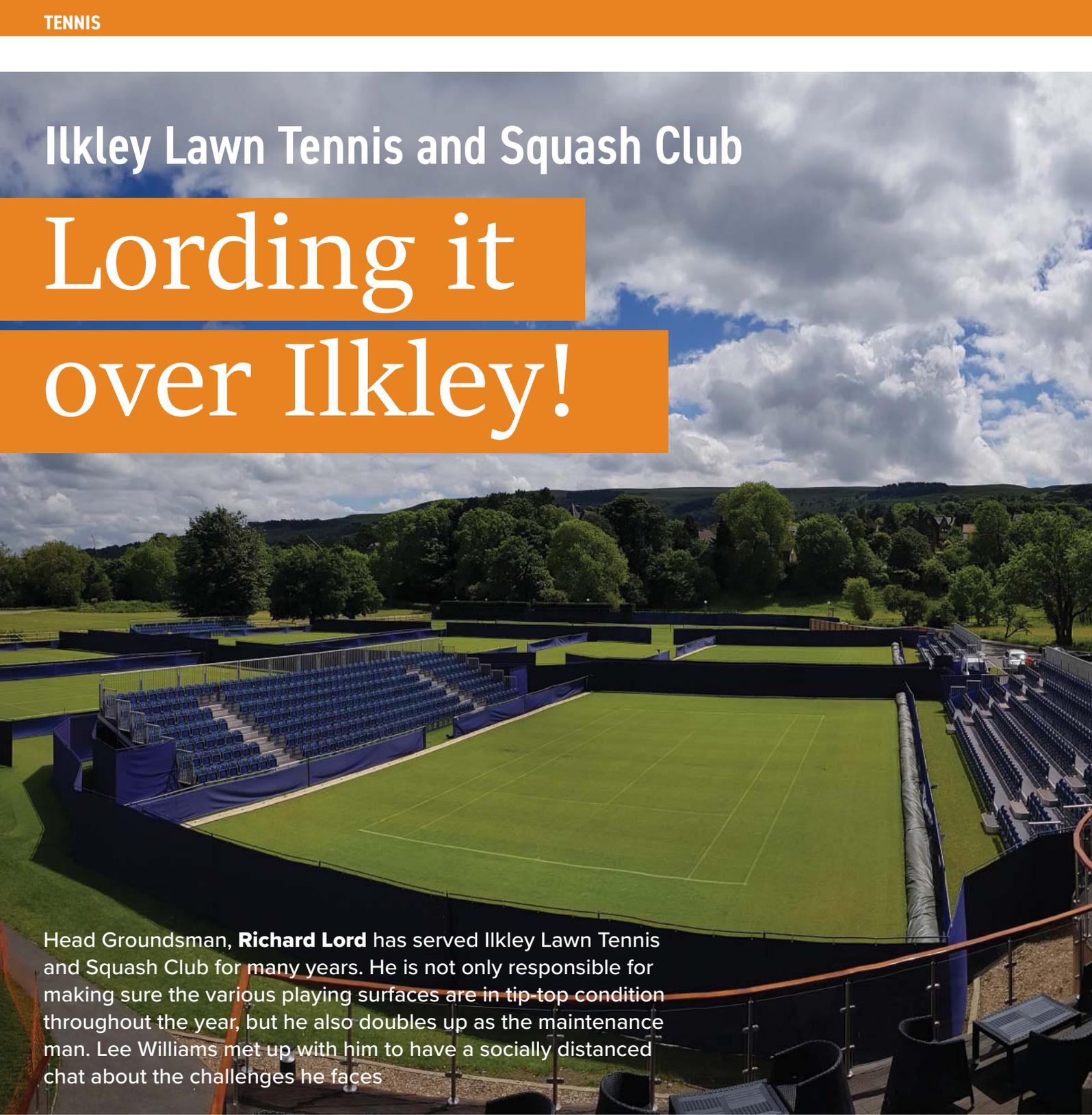
**Major Wingfield launched a game called Sphairistike, however he very soon changed it to lawn tennis**



Autumn evening 2020 © David Busst

# Ilkley Lawn Tennis and Squash Club

## Lording it over Ilkley!



Head Groundsman, **Richard Lord** has served Ilkley Lawn Tennis and Squash Club for many years. He is not only responsible for making sure the various playing surfaces are in tip-top condition throughout the year, but he also doubles up as the maintenance man. Lee Williams met up with him to have a socially distanced chat about the challenges he faces

Ilkley Lawn Tennis & Squash Club is a member-run club based in Ilkley, West Yorkshire. With a long history stretching back to 1880, the club enjoys a fantastic position next to the River Wharfe with panoramic views across Ilkley's famous moor. Over the years, the club has grown into a dynamic multi-sports community, focused on their primary sports of tennis, squash and racket ball.

Being next to the River Wharfe, and with the amount of rain the area has experienced in recent years, the club is now, unfortunately, more prone to flooding than in previous years. Richard tells me how they

have had to adapt and what they do once the water has subsided. "When we know it is going to flood, we have to evacuate the site as the water can get up to four feet high on the grass courts. The water cannot get into the main clubhouse as this has been built on stilts, but it will get onto the indoor courts - the most we have had so far this winter is seven inches! It has also started to reach our Astroturf courts and, although they are built on a raised platform, the water level still reached two to three inches. This has caused some rippling on parts of the Astroturf carpet which we will have to assess once it dries out."

"Once the water has subsided, we ask members to come down and volunteer to help us with the clean-up. We normally get an excellent response. It is often the same people each time, so we get them to concentrate on clearing the hard courts and paths. The debris and sludge are put into piles, and we then collect it with the tractor and trailer and give it back to the river! For the indoor courts, the tennis coaches come down and, between us, we push the water out of the building with the Dewmaster brushes, power wash the surface and get them back into play, which can be done in a day if we work hard. On the grass courts, we



let the water dissipate naturally, remove the debris left behind and, when possible, give them a brush and a cut.”

I asked Richard how often flooding has occurred in recent years? “It definitely seems to be a more regular occurrence. In the past, they used to say it was a ‘one in every fifty years flood’. But this latest one (November) is the third this past year that has got onto the indoor courts. It has been one of the worst we have had so far. The seasons seem to be changing. We had great weather in early February, and it was blistering sunshine for much of the year, so we found ourselves watering early. The

seasons are not defined like they used to be. We don’t tend to have April showers anymore, and I have not witnessed as much snow, if any, in the winters. The seasons are all mixed up!”

The site has thirteen grass courts, three of them for tournaments, three acrylic, five Astroturf, five acrylic indoor courts, five squash courts, and a well-equipped gym.

The tennis club holds a tournament every year which sees the winners of the men’s and ladies’ singles trophies get a wildcard into Wimbledon. Unfortunately, due to the pandemic, the event was cancelled last summer. Richard talks me through what is



**I try and stick to what rates and inputs they give me. I trust our sales representative to offer me the right advice as he was once a groundsman**



**When we know it is going to flood, we have to evacuate the site as the water can get up to four feet high on the grass court**

involved in getting ready for the tournament. “It is now named the Ilkley Trophy and is a pre-Wimbledon tournament. Work starts about now really to get the grass prepared for next spring. Then, two weeks before, we begin to put up canvases and the stands are erected a week before the tournament. We get help from the local rugby club (who want some paid work) to help the groundstaff during the event. As we need at least six people to pull the covers on and off, we will cut every day and white line some courts the previous evening to save us time in the morning. We used to start work at 5.00am but, since investing in better machinery and cutting and prepping some courts the evening before, we are able to start an hour later. We can be here till at least ten at night prepping for the next day’s play.”

“The tournament lasts nine days, running

from a Saturday to a Sunday. We do not get the top players attending the event as we are on at the same time as the Queen’s Club and Halle Open in Germany. We normally get players ranked between sixty and one hundred and fifty. A few years ago, our ladies winner Magdaleyna Rybarikova, got to the semi-finals of Wimbledon and, at the last tournament, we had Leander Paes come and play in the doubles; he has won eighteen Grand Slam titles (mainly doubles) in his career. In recent years, we have also had Daniil Medvedev, who won the 2020 ATP Finals, and Ivan Dodig, to name a few.”

Richard tells me the soil profile of the courts is a combination of clay and sand, and that they are very well-draining, considering there are no drains. In the past, the courts have been koroed off,





Flood damage



**On the grass courts, we let the water dissipate naturally, remove the debris left behind and, when possible, give them a brush and a cut**

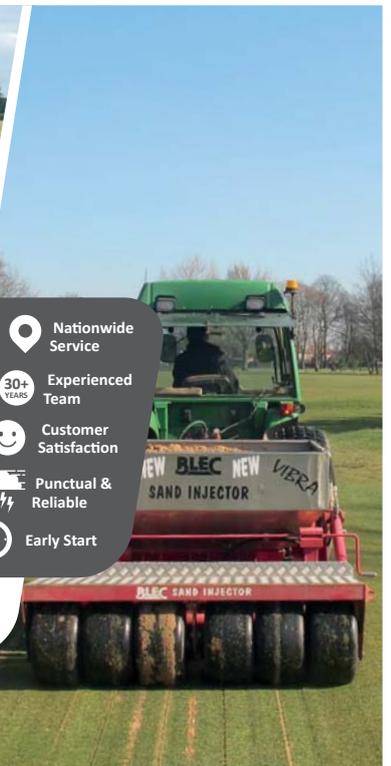
removing the top surface and replacing this with 20-30mm of Surrey Loam to level of the playing surface. This is the same loam they use at Wimbledon.

The club draws water from the River Wharfe to irrigate the courts in the summer months. "We can take up to 20,000 cubic litres a day from the river without needing a licence. When we had the courts koroed off the last time, we had some irrigation pipes laid underground, along with some

connection points, so we can irrigate from there rather than using the old aluminium piping. We do not have pop-ups, just a travelling sprinkler and some statics that we will just keep moving around. We can run four static sprinklers at a reasonable rate enabling us to water two courts an hour."

Richard and his assistant, William Rigg, are responsible for carrying out the seasonal maintenance of the grass courts. "In the playing season, which starts in early May,

we will cut at a height off 8mm using a combination of a Toro Greensmaster triple and a Dennis G860. For the tournament, when we have more staff, we will use the Toro hand mowers, which we purchased from Wimbledon when they went to the battery powered Infinicut mowers. After the floods in November, I set the Dennis to 16mm. I tend to find with the Dennis, being a heavier machine, it cuts about a millimetre and a half lower, so we try and



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# Getting Personal

## Richard Lord - he has a very good piece of advice and a cat!

**Who are you?** Richard Lord, 49 years young and a cat owner, Head Groundsman of Ilkley Lawn Tennis and Squash Club, Est. 1880. I was born in Pudsey, moved to Leyland, Lancashire then onto Victoria BC on Vancouver Island. In 1981, I moved back to England and Burley-In-Wharfedale.

**Family status.** Single, never married, no kids, very happy!

**Who's your hero and why?** Can't say i have a hero.

**What's been the highlight of your grounds career so far?** The end result of hard work and teamwork in getting ready for our Ilkley Trophy tournaments. Then, seeing all the players that did well at Ilkley go on and have a good run at Wimbledon.

**If your younger self saw you now, what would he think?** Nice beard!

**Which famous people wind you up?** Most of them - when they complain about how tough life is.

**What job would you love, other than your own?** Top Gear test driver ... come to think of it, any test driver really.

**What was the most embarrassing moment in your life?** Running up to a woman when I was a young kid at the seaside and giving her a hug from behind as i thought it was my Nana ... and then realising it wasn't.

**What is your favourite film?** One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest.

**What scares you?** Not so keen on spiders - the big ones.

**What would your autobiography be called... and who would play you in the film?** The Lords Life, Russell Crowe.

**What's the best advice you have ever been given?** Unplug it before you fix it.

**What's your favourite smell?** Freshly home baked bread and fresh coffee.

**What would you cast into Room 101?** Racism.



**Which historical time and place would you most like to visit?**

Egyptian era, to see how the pyramids were actually built.

**Do you have a lifetime ambition?** Not really.

**Which three people, living or dead, would you invite to a dinner party?** Morgan Freeman, Robin Williams and Michael Caine.

**What is your favourite sport?** Formula 1.

**What's your favourite piece of trivia?** Can't think of any.

**Which three albums would you take to a desert island?** Nizlopi - Half These Songs Are About You, Paulo Nutini - Sunny Side Up and John Newman - Tribute.

**What's the daftest work-related question you have ever been asked?** To get the stripes on the grass, are they cut at different heights? Asked by a tennis coach.

**What's your favourite piece of kit?** The Elephant's Trunk when hedgecutting, takes all the weight away from the machine; priceless.

**What three words would you use to describe yourself?** Pragmatic, fastidious and helpful.

**What is the single most useful thing you could tell a 16-year-old groundsman?** Don't be afraid to ask if you do not understand.

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

**What law/legislation would you like to see introduced?** Legalise cannabis.



Indoor court construction

keep them between 14-15mm over the winter."

"We will aerate at the end of the season using our SISIS slitter, rather than throughout, purely for the fact that the players need the bounce. We do really need to start looking at using more of a solid tine rather than the slitter which we have had for a long time."

"A light scarification is carried out just before the start of the season to tidy them up. Then, during the season, we will give the courts a light verti-cut once a month, using the Dennis G860's verti-cut cassette, to keep the surface clean."

Renovations take place on all courts in August, but this can stretch into September depending on when the club end their season. "We generally do our renovations

in-house, hiring in machinery as required. This year, I opted for the SISIS Rotorake TM1000 dethatcher, along with a tractor to power it. We scarified three ways using the Rotorake, followed by the slitter. We then overseeded using the Charterhouse disc-seeder this year, where previously we would have used a dimple seeder. I was very impressed with the results. I think, if we would have used a dimple seeder, we would not have been able to topdress straightaway and we would not have had the growth results we had. We use a seed mixture of ryegrass and fescue as I find the rye on its own needs too much nutrient to look after it and, with the conditions up here, it can be a bit patchy; we do not generally get southern temperatures. The





**For the tournament, when we have more staff, we will use the Toro hand mowers, which we purchased from Wimbledon when they went to the battery powered Infinicut mowers**

fescue just helps fill it in and there's always been a mixture of the two in the past, and it works well."

The STRI advise Richard on his fertiliser programme and recommendations for the grass courts. "I try and stick to what rates and inputs they give me. I trust our sales representative Paul Emmanuel to offer me the right advice as he was once a groundsman. It is also a matter of working around the weather when it rains, or we get a flood; the nutrients just fly through the profile. A long time ago, we used to use a lot of liquid sprays, but we have gone more towards granular feeds with a liquid spray only in spring and summer. This seems to last longer and give us better results, especially with slow-release technology available to us all now."

With the national lockdown due to end on the 2nd December, Richard and the rest of the club's staff were getting ready to re-open. I asked him how the pandemic had affected him and if he had been able to get on with the job. "I have not been furloughed at any stage, but Will was from the first lockdown in March to when he came back in August. Apparently, he was more worried about me as, if he caught it and passed it on to me, it would have killed me. He obviously



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Allett BJB42 scarifier

Karcher B60w scrubber dryer

Karcher KM 75/40 W indoor courts brush sweeper

Stihl BR 600 leaf blower

Makita RBL600 leaf blower

SGG Pellicano brush PTO tractor-mounted

SISIS topdresser

Everris broadcast pedestrian spreader

Stihl trimmers x 2

Mitsubishi strimmer

Shindaiwa long-reach brushcutter

GTM Elephants Trunk

Fleet Tim transfer linemarker

Fleet Kombi Classic linemarker



thinks I am older than I am!"

"Whilst Will was on furlough, I had some help from one of the tennis coaches, who used to be on the groundstaff many years ago; he came down and helped from 10.00am until 3.00pm each day, so I wasn't on my own. I will be honest; it was nice to not have the members around for eight weeks; it made it easier to get some jobs out of the way. I have not really been affected by COVID-19 personally as I have still been able to come in and work and my job hasn't changed at all, but I'm aware that I have been one of the lucky ones."

Richard went into landscaping straight from school as he did not want to work in an office. "I wanted to work outside and prefer manual work. I was not fond of going to school; it was the time when all the teachers strikes

were going on. So, this meant no sports activities after school and no team sports, so school just was not enjoyable. I ended up doing a Certificate of Pre-Vocational Education, which was a course for people who did not know what they wanted to do. Halfway through that, I got an offer to become a landscaper with my girlfriend's uncle. I did that for four and a half years, until I was made redundant. I spent a year on the dole, then did some labouring until

a job came up here as an assistant.

I stayed for seven and a half years before setting up a landscaping business with my friend, which I did for five years. Then the phone call came asking if I would come back here as a groundsman again. That was in 2007. So, I have been back here thirteen years, with six years as head groundsman.



# Supporting a safe return to sport

## Agrovista Amenity has been helping UK grounds managers to address new protocols and take steps to a safe return to sport through the use of a multipurpose disinfectant product.

The team has been advising the use of Huwa-San TR50 and TR-3 for safe and effective multi-use viricidal mode of action. Based on stabilised hydrogen peroxide, the product quickly inactivates Coronavirus and is safe on all surfaces with no rinse application.

Huwa-San also has efficacy against bacteria, mould, spores, fungi and mycobacteria and is biodegradable, breaking down to oxygen and water.



### Amenity Specialist Allan Wright has been recommending Huwa-San to his customers. Allan said:

“After such a difficult year, enhanced protocols and cleaning regimes have been at the fore for many.

Huwa-San has been well received and is being actively used by my customers, including at a leading private school. It's being used to disinfect sporting equipment such as rugby balls and also in classrooms, where it's sprayed and left to degrade into water and oxygen. This means you don't have to wipe the surfaces as you usually would after using a typical bleach-type disinfectant.

The product is odourless, non-corrosive, non-irritant to skin, biodegradable and fully compliant with BS and EN regulatory standards. The feedback has been very positive.”

### Head of Commercial for Agrovista Amenity, Dan Hughes said:

“Providing our customers with the correct advice and support couldn't have been more important, given recent times.

Grounds managers want to ensure that new working protocols are in line with Government guidance, and that the risk to their staff, players, officials and the public can be minimised.

Huwa-San is an effective solution for the current climate. It's flexibility also means that it can be used across the board - in irrigation tanks, on hard surfaces such as machinery, and for hand-contact surfaces such as steering wheels, tools and equipment.”

The hydrogen peroxide solution found in Huwa-San TR-50 has increased stability thanks to the application of unique ionic silver stabilisation technology. This means that the product is powerful yet non-residual. It is also non-corrosive and biodegradable, as well as approved by the Health and Safety Executive, as a constant dose biocide for the control of legionella.



At 3% active H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>, Huwa-San conforms to a number of EN standards for disinfection including; Virucide EN14476 and Bactericide: EN1276, EN13697, EN1656, EN13727, EN14561, EN14349, EN16437, EN13626. A systematic review published in the Journal of Hospital Infection demonstrated that a (H<sub>2</sub>O<sub>2</sub>) concentration of 0.5% achieved a Log<sub>4</sub> (99.99%) inactivation of human coronavirus HCoV-229E within one minute.



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**It's a different way of working. We mark out pitches to help coaches keep pupils in their bubbles, and they play in forty minute sessions before a changeover instead of, for example, having all the senior school pupils out on the sportsfields at once on a particular morning or afternoon**

Dean Close School

The feel good  
factor returns



Dean Close School in Cheltenham, part of a Foundation with extensive sports facilities managed by a small team

‘The New Normal’ - one of this year’s buzz phrases that has been worn out by overuse. Yet, for school groundsmen, sports coaches and pupils, it describes how they are making school sports work and providing the physical and mental boost needed in such a difficult year. Grounds Manager **James Munn** talks to Jane Carley about life in lockdown and beyond



Grounds Manager James Munn

**A**t the Dean Close Foundation, which has co-educational day and boarding schools in Gloucestershire and Wales, this means adapting the use of facilities for sport and play to allow pupils to use them in their ‘bubbles’, reducing the risk of any infection spreading.

“It’s a different way of working,” explains Grounds Manager James Munn, who came to the Foundation four years ago having previously worked at the site as a landscape contractor. “We mark out pitches to help coaches keep pupils in their bubbles, and they play in forty minute sessions before a changeover instead of, for example, having all the senior school pupils out on the sportsfields at once on a particular morning or afternoon. Play areas for the pre-prep school have temporary fencing to help the teachers maintain their bubbles.”

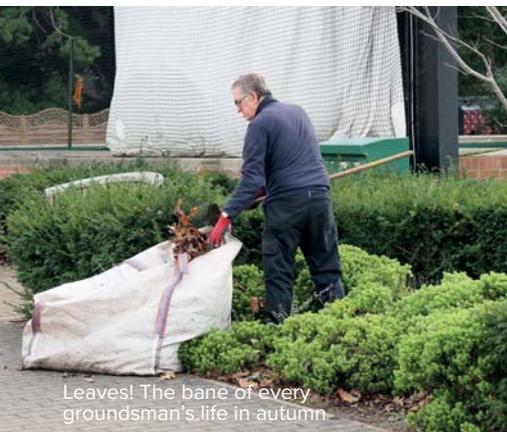
Despite the increased regulation, pupils are clearly delighted to be back in school and playing sport once again, and James says that the ‘feel good factor’ extends to the grounds team.



**We worked full time hours and the priority was basically keeping the grass down. The team was not back up to full strength until August, but we also managed keep a couple of grass wickets open**



One of six main rugby pitches; James hopes to topdress and reseed in the spring



Leaves! The bane of every groundsman's life in autumn



Pitches have additional markings to help coaches group pupils into 'bubbles'



Cricket lanes have been fitted with rodent trapping fencing to prevent hedgehogs getting trapped in the nets



Wickets were kept ready for the return of pupils and have now been renovated ahead of next season

“Like most grounds teams, we were down on numbers through the spring due to furloughing and there was the constant feeling of uncertainty over when pupils would be back, and whether pitches needed to be prepared to training or tournament standards,” he comments.

James’s team at the Foundation’s base in Cheltenham is small, with two staff, Neil Carter and Mark Smith, dedicated to grounds and sports fields, Paul Yates, Callum Smith and Gala Delbrooke-Jones in the gardens, plus landscaper Steve Jones, looking after fifty acres.

Groundstaff at Dean Close St Johns in Chepstow and two Dean Close nurseries in Gloucestershire and Wales, which have extensive gardens and forest schools, also report back to James.

“During the first lockdown, we were down to two here at Cheltenham with one man at Chepstow on reduced hours,” he says. “We

worked full time hours and the priority was basically keeping the grass down. The team was not back up to full strength until August, but we also managed keep a couple of grass wickets open.”

Key workers’ children remained in school, so there was also the need to provide safe play facilities for them.

“We were unsure whether to set the rugby pitches up or not; in the end we had a couple of weeks’ notice to get every sports facility ready, although the synthetic pitches got more use initially. We marked out a 100m athletics track and made a long jump that could be used in ‘bubbles’.”

Despite all the hard work, a feeling of ‘something missing’ lingered with the lack of competitive fixtures, apart from those for bubble house groups.

“On the positive side, the pitches have had less wear than in a normal year. We have been able to renovate the cricket squares



The Sisis Quadraplay in action on the pitches, doing 'four jobs in one'



**The lack of competitive sport can result in a lack of motivation for the ground staff, who particularly enjoy preparing the rugby pitches for fixtures**

and hopefully we can topdress and reseed the rugby pitches at the end of the 2020/21 season."

"The lack of competitive sport can result in a lack of motivation for the ground staff, who particularly enjoy preparing the rugby pitches for fixtures. We're now preparing to match standards ready for restrictions to be eased, which helps," comments James.

Suspension of community sports has also impacted on the school's finances - the tennis and netball courts and the

sportsfields, booked most summers for cricket camps, being especially popular for hire.

The entire site is on clay soil, so wet conditions and wear are a constant challenge. Many pitches are more than fifty years old and have received only routine renovation throughout their lifespan.

"The ground is wet in winter and can dry out and crack in summer. It can be hard to get on the pitches to repair them, but the best item in the machinery shed is a Sisis

Quadraplay which does four jobs in one, which saves so much time," he explains.

It is pulled by a Kubota L4250, purchased from Lister Wilder's hire fleet in 2019.

"We've got an old Ford with a ROPS, but I like the large cab on the Kubota - I'm tall and felt a bit cramped in some of the other makes! The Kubota is used for all the pitch work and I added a loader so it can be used for moving mulch. It's nice and compact but has the lift capacity to work with a good range of implements."

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Earmarked for renovation, the prep school cricket pitch also does duty for rugby training



**It's been warm this year so we are still mowing with a John Deere ride-on, and we've been able to get on the cricket square with a Groundsman 345 pedestrian aerator, which is also very useful on the lawns**

A larger tractor is also under consideration for the expansion of the existing composting operation.

"It's been warm this year so we are still mowing with a John Deere ride-on, and we've been able to get on the cricket square with a Groundsman 345 pedestrian aerator, which is also very useful on the lawns."

James says that regular soil tests guide his fertiliser regime. "I like to try a wide range of brands to see what works best, but I've settled on products supplied by Agrovista having achieved good results on the cricket square."

He's also trialled new grass seeds, having been so impressed with the improved sward development offered by MM50 from Limagrain that he plans to use it on the cricket outfield in the future.

Moss on hard surfaces is another ongoing issue: many of the paths suffer from shading by the numerous trees, and the tennis courts need to be sprayed twice a year. Leaf clearing increases the autumn workload, wet ground making blowing and raking or picking up with an Etesia ride-on the only options.

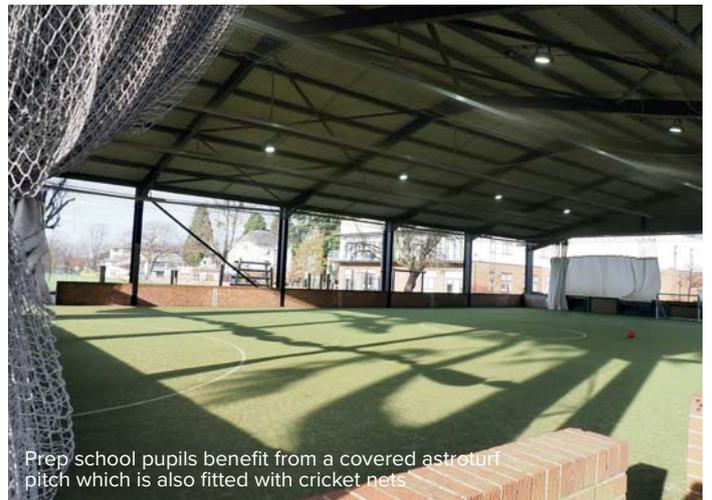
Despite the difficult year, pupil numbers are looking good for 2021, so existing projects go ahead and new ones can be planned.

The many gardens around the public areas, staff and pupil accommodation are a work in progress, and a new study and relaxation area for day pupils features a peaceful lawn and seating area.

Outside the senior school buildings, an area that used to be a 'wilderness' is planted up with trees and shrubs, and alliums bloom



Gardening projects completed so far have included new beds outside the Senior School buildings which bloom with Alliums in spring



Prep school pupils benefit from a covered astroturf pitch which is also fitted with cricket nets



A new water-filled hockey pitch has been a real success, and needs minimal routine maintenance



**We maintain it weekly with a pedestrian power brush, and spray for weeds as needed, whilst Slatters come in quarterly to do a deep clean**

in the spring.

Former headmaster's accommodation Dean Close House is now used for admin, welcoming parents and outside events such as weddings and has a charming secluded garden.

"We plant it up with annuals and hang baskets for the summer, but the lawn is on my list for renovation and would be perfect for croquet," says James.

Even passers-by could benefit - plans for the front gardens of the pre-prep school

along the A40 include a line of flowering cherry trees to unify a building frontage which ranges from the historic to the modern.

James is currently pricing up repairs to the prep school cricket pitch, beautifully situated next to the atmospheric chapel and with its own pavilion, but suffering from doing double duty for rugby training.

A striking addition on the prep school side of the road is a new water-based hockey pitch, built by Slatters.

"It's a very good pitch and has made the coach very happy," says James. "We maintain it weekly with a pedestrian power brush, and spray for weeds as needed, whilst Slatters come in quarterly to do a deep clean. Debris has to be kept down, especially on the far side where leaves blow, so we'll regularly go in with a Billy Goat and clear up."

By its side is an older sand-filled pitch also due for replacement, at an expected cost of £750,000.

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**This pitch may be more of a multi-use facility and is still in discussion with the coaches. Rugby and hockey are our key sports and having a synthetic pitch for training is extremely useful**

**Careers and training**

James gained qualifications in sportsground maintenance and greenkeeping at Hartpury College before starting his career in greenkeeping - hoping to become a professional golfer!

“I couldn’t see many opportunities for progression as a greenkeeper, so moved into grounds maintenance, including a role at Stratford Park in Stroud where I also had responsibility for aspects such as play equipment, before setting up my own landscaping business.”

He comments that, while his four-man grounds team have undertaken GMA (IOG) short courses, he’d like them to have access to more regular training, possibly on a day release basis.

“But the workload means it’s not an option at the moment. I’m focusing on industry events such as the Sports and Grounds Expo at Malvern for 2021 and then hopefully BTME 2022 where they can take advantage of some of the training.”

James’s own role sees much of his time spent behind a desk managing the workload, planning operations and preparing budgets, with a small amount of hands-on groundsmanship. He also develops projects, including the design of a new play area for the Cheltenham Dean Close Nursery.

“Budgets are tight, but we have introduced some novel ideas such as a ‘gardening club’ where parents and pupils help out by painting play equipment and planting raised beds,” he comments.

The demands of being both manager and hands-on operator are not lost on James.

“We’re really missing a head groundsman’s role to form a link between myself and the groundstaff, but hopefully that’s something that can be considered in the future,” he says.

“This pitch may be more of a multi-use facility and is still in discussion with the coaches. Rugby and hockey are our key sports and having a synthetic pitch for training is extremely useful.”

The tennis courts are also due for refurbishment in early 2021, and should prove a good investment, he suggests, with increased interest in tennis among pupils, parents and the community.

Machinery is mainly stored on the senior school side in large garages, but James hopes to build a store next to the sportsfields where a series of shipping containers currently hold paint, linemarkers and other small items of kit.

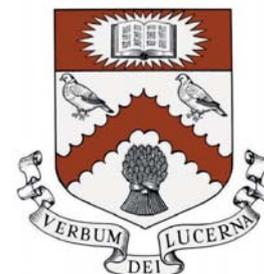
“It would be so much more convenient to have a second store so that kit used for the grass pitches is handy,” he comments.

A more distant aspiration concerns the drainage system.

“There are no records or details of the

drains,” explains James, “But in the hot summer of 2018 when the pitches cracked, a drone photo showed lines indicating the position of the drainage pattern, and even old manhole covers. We found the outlet and it’s clearly blocked and collapsed, so I’d ideally want to restore the drainage at some point. It would be a great help in the depths of winter!”

The workload is immense and this year has been testing, but James and his team clearly have the will to make a success of it and the extensive, well cared-for facilities will continue to attract pupils to the Dean Close Foundation.



Gardener Gala Delbrooke-Jones mows in the interesting surroundings of the art block

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- Covered astroturf pitch
- Ten hard tennis courts (also used for netball)
- Eight-lane synthetic cricket nets
- Gardens and grounds (including gardens for staff houses)
- Extensive areas of woodland and forest

school managed in partnership with Cheltenham Tree Services

**Other facilities:**

- Sports hall for basketball, football, hockey, badminton, tennis, volleyball, netball and cricket
- Fitness suite fitted with training equipment and weights, dance/aerobics studio, seminar room, a viewing gallery also feature
- New sports pavilion has been erected opposite the sports hall
- 25m indoor pool
- Two squash courts



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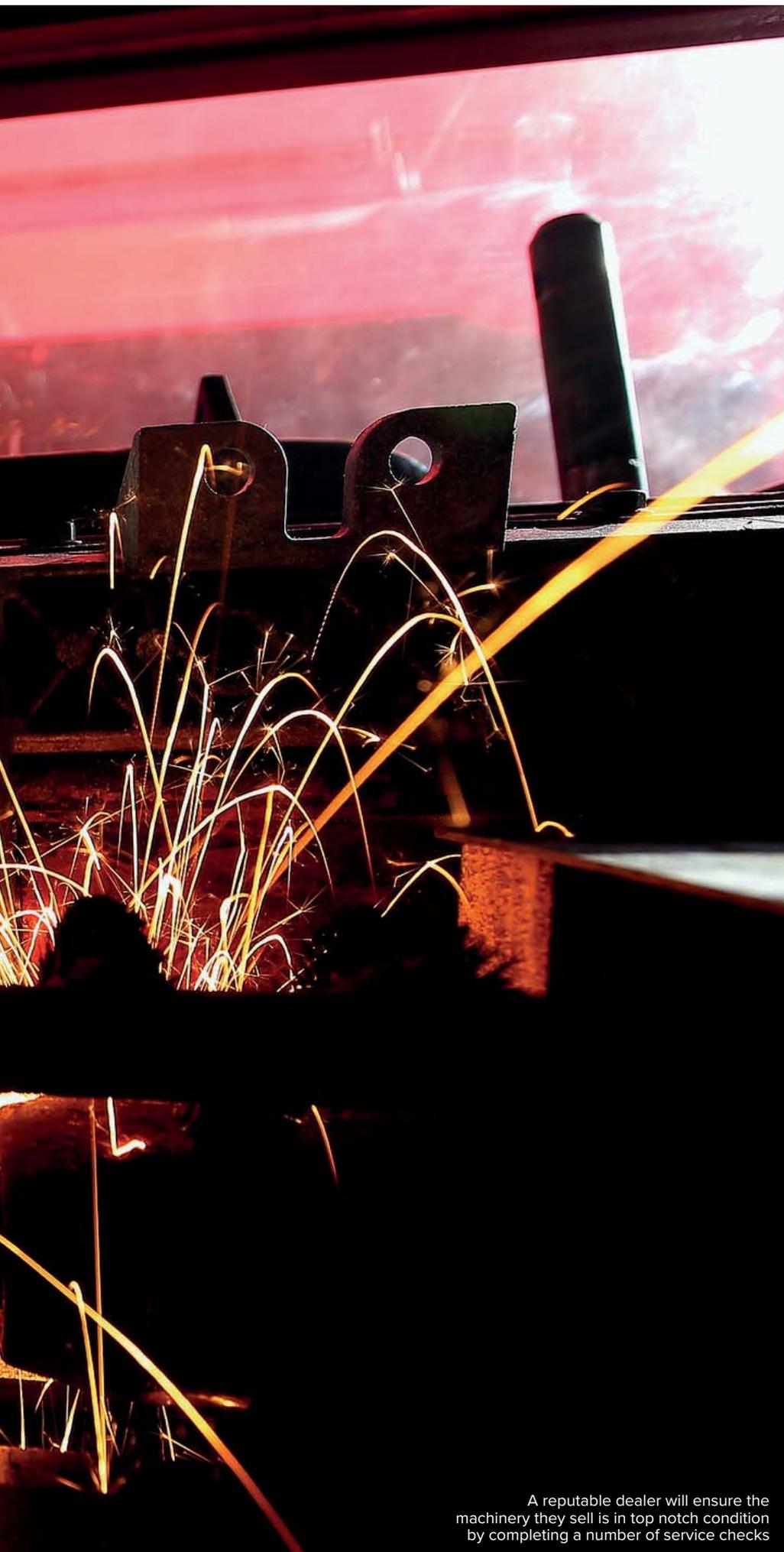
CampeyTurfCare





Used machinery

# What to consider when buying



A reputable dealer will ensure the machinery they sell is in top notch condition by completing a number of service checks

In the last article, Reesink Turfcare discussed how to control spending and avoid surprise costs, allocating maintenance budget in an uncertain economy and how to manage this cost component over time. In this article, **Alastair Rowell**, UK sales manager - turfcare equipment at Reesink Turfcare, takes a closer look at buying used machinery, the benefits of doing so and what to look out for when purchasing a pre-owned machine



Alastair Rowell, UK sales manager - turfcare equipment at Reesink Turfcare

**B**uying used machinery for turfcare maintenance has always been prevalent in the industry but, with the impact of Coronavirus this year and its effect on the economy, it's a subject that will likely gain more interest in the coming months.

Whilst the golf industry has seen increases in membership and has fared incredibly well, sports venues have suffered with the loss of in-person supporters. For public grounds maintenance, changes to local government budgets in the near-future could be significant as policies change to help stimulate the economic recovery, and private grounds maintenance companies could see a change in customers priorities and spending. At the very least, the sudden change in circumstances this year has led many to take a closer look at their finances and re-evaluate spending. Now, more than ever, value for money is the name of the game - which is why used machinery has



When buying used machinery it's important to ensure you look to a reputable and trusted source

seen increased interest.

Buying used is already entrenched in our culture, with sites like eBay and Gumtree growing ever more popular as consumers continue to strive for a bargain, as well as take an eco-friendly approach to reusing/recycling rather than always buying new.

Buying used is probably most popular when it comes to cars. According to research released last year by the AA, consumers are three times more likely to buy used rather than new. Plus, AutoTrader reports that the average car on the road is 11.4 years old, whilst drivers keep a car for around six years. By this, it is clear to see that most people buy a used car and keep it for a significant length of time.

#### The benefits of buying used

With consumers trusting the pre-owned market for buying a car - one of the largest purchases many will make in their lives - it seems there is a lot to be gained from buying used. And the same can be said for used turfcare machinery.

There are many benefits to buying used machinery; the biggest and most obvious is cost. Without paying the premium of having a brand-new machine, the upfront cost can be significantly lower. Buying used could also mean that higher-quality brands become affordable, negating the need to buy lower quality new machinery that can be unreliable and costlier in the long term.

However, whilst the obvious benefits are

certainly enticing, there is always some doubt as to what exactly you're buying. For many, there is certainly a question over what they should look for in a used machine:

- How do they know it's good quality?
- How many hours usage is too much?
- How can they be sure they're making a good investment?

#### What to look out for when buying used

So, what should you look out for when you're buying used machinery?

##### 1. A trusted source

With turfcare machinery, it's not just a question of getting seemingly good value for money upfront; you need to know that the machinery you buy is fit for purpose. A machine that costs significantly less used means nothing if it can't do the job properly. And, with turfcare machinery often needing to be used regularly for tough work, it's paramount to know the machine's history, and trust it has been through a multipoint check by a trained technician.

Added to that, when buying new, you will likely have the guarantee of a manufacturer warranty to give you peace of mind. But buying used doesn't mean you have to miss out! Trusted dealers will offer their own warranty to provide that extra reassurance.

##### 2. Quality of brand

If you're buying machinery that has already been used, it's important you invest in a

reliable and trustworthy brand. If a brand is already well-known in the industry for producing durable, robust machinery that maintains its longevity, you know you're onto a winner.

##### 3. Machinery use

Just as you'd avoid a car that has clocked up a substantial number of miles, you wouldn't want to invest in machinery that's been used for a huge number of hours. Make sure you know the age, specification and hours used on a machine, as this will give you an early indication of the condition you can expect the machine to be in.

Whilst this can be a good way to sense the quality of a machine, don't rely completely on the numbers. What may look good on paper, doesn't necessarily translate to reality. If a machine has a low number of hours, but in reality looks damaged, this could be a sign that it has an underlying problem or hasn't been used with care and is worn out already. So, whilst it's a good place to start, make sure you can always back up what's on paper, either by seeing the machine or going to a trusted dealer.

##### 4. Service checks

This goes hand in hand with purchasing from a trusted source. A reputable dealer will ensure the machinery they sell is in top notch condition by completing a number of service checks to find and resolve any issues. Much the same as you would find when purchasing a used car, you'll get



**Much the same as you would find when purchasing a used car, you'll get additional value for money when the dealer carries out an MOT before selling the machine on to you**



A range of good quality used Toro machines are available for purchase through the new Ree.Own network

additional value for money when the dealer carries out an MOT before selling the machine on to you.

For a turfcare machine's equivalent MOT, the following things should be checked as a minimum:

- Engine and cooling system
- Hydraulic and electrical system
- Steering and brakes
- Chassis
- Fuel system
- Transmission and final drives
- Wheels and tyres
- Cutting units and decks
- Operator platform and controls

**5. What to avoid**

While it's fairly clear what to avoid based on the above, it's always worth reiterating the key things to avoid. Avoid machines that haven't had any service checks carried out, especially if they don't have any service history either and, when you go to view a machine, stay clear of anything with visible signs of damage or excessive wear. If a seller isn't legitimate or trustworthy, trust your gut and steer clear.

**The new home of used Toro machinery**

Here at Reesink, we understand the cost savings benefits of buying used machinery, but we also understand the need to have assurance that by buying pre-owned, you're not losing out on quality. Which is why we've created an online nationwide network, Ree.Own, providing access to the best used Toro machinery available in the UK.

The platform, reeown.co.uk, has an 'Autotrader' style, where the machines listed have been certified for sale through a network of authorised Toro dealers and Reesink branch locations. The site gives customers the ability to browse and compare prices on a range of machines that are guaranteed to represent quality and value for money.

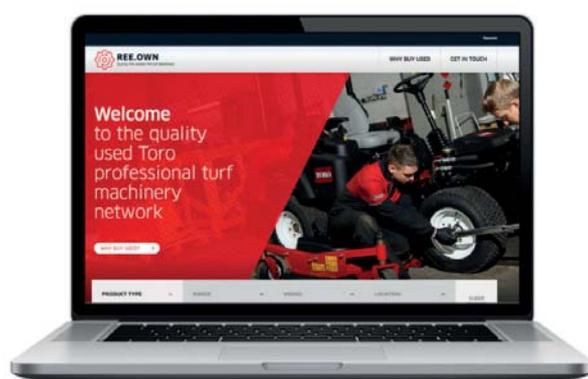


All Ree.Own certified machines will have gone through a multipoint check by trained technicians

All Ree.Own certified machines are no more than seven years since first use, with less than 3000 hours use. Plus, all machines will have gone through a multipoint check by trained technicians. Machines are fully serviced when history is unavailable, or where there are over 50 hours use since the last service and, to top it all off, machines will come with a minimum 90 day warranty, with some even having an extended warranty of up to 270 days.

Having an online platform providing a range of preowned machines meets the needs of the market. Now, more customers can benefit from the quality of cut, precision engineering and innovation that comes with a Toro machine, whilst making huge cost savings, which is incredibly important in these uncertain times.

For further information on Ree.Own or Reesink Turfcare, visit [reeown.co.uk](http://reeown.co.uk) or [reesinkturfcare.co.uk](http://reesinkturfcare.co.uk).



# Frank Newberry

# Mind your language

Training Advisor **Frank Newberry** looks at the way we speak to people. He suggests that our choice of words and tone of voice can profoundly affect our relationships with others - not just our friends and family, but work colleagues, bosses and team members



**I want to start by telling you about a former Belgian Air Force lieutenant called Charles A Didier, who taught me how to 'mind my language'.**

Mr Didier suggested in a speech, many years ago, that we can measure the quality of our relationships by the way we speak to each other.

What, he wondered, were our relationships actually based on? Thinking about the words we choose, and the tone we use, were our relationships based on trust and respect? On duty and justice? Or, for some of the time at least, were they actually based on fear and doubt?

He went on to cover a lot of ground. Basically asking us what type of world we wanted to live in? One based on a fear and doubt mindset? One based on duty and justice? Or one based on trust and respect? Here is my take on what he said.

### Trust and Respect

Let me begin with some of my own findings. Over many years, I have been asking work teams, educators and managers what they would ideally want to have their working relationships based on. The unanimous response? A mindset of mutual trust and respect.

From research that I have seen, about half of the workforce wants to be left alone and trusted and respected enough to do the work the way they think is best. You, like me, may come into this category yourself.

The research also suggests that the other half of the workforce wants to know what 'best practice' at work might be, and then be trusted and respected enough to get on and do the work efficiently and correctly. In my own case, if work methods change, or if the work is new to me, I will also drop into this second category.

So, now we might ask ourselves - what are the consequences of people not getting the trust and respect they want at work? Surely, trust and respect at work have to be earned?



**My view is that we ought to be able to sort out who does which boring and mundane task - as a team - and in a way that we show support for each other, rather than inferring or even accusing people of not pulling their weight**

In my experience, if we do not give people trust and respect (from the outset) then we run the risk of losing these people - who might, sooner or later, look for trust and respect elsewhere - in a new job perhaps, or a new situation or a new relationship in their life.

Time for an audit of yourself? Does your current choice of words and your tone of voice always show people the trust and respect they crave?

### Duty and Justice

I hope that it does. If not now, then in the future. Again, in my experience, the trust and respect mindset is seen by people as being far superior to the duty and justice one.

We might often be tempted to say something like: 'It is your turn to do that dirty job - it is only fair on everyone else'. Tone would be very important here. We can communicate the view that trust and respect have to be earned - just in the tone of our voice. The problem is that the source of this statement is rooted in the duty and justice mindset, and not in trust and respect.

My view is that we ought to be able to sort out who does which boring and mundane task - as a team - and in a way that we show support for each other, rather than inferring or even accusing people of not pulling their weight. For more information on sorting things out as a team, check out one of my earlier Pitchcare articles from 2016 - Ten Ground Rules for the Turfcare Team.

Those of us in leadership can set the tone by saying (at the outset) to new people 'We believe team members should show trust and respect to each other at all times. Will you have a problem with that?' With some individuals, or even whole teams, we may need to be patient. For patience, as opposed to impatience, shows trust and respect.

### Fear and Doubt

Showing impatience might be the beginning of using fear and doubt as a weapon in our relationships. That night, Mr Didier taught us not to base our relationships on fear and doubt, e.g. 'If you do not do that dirty job right away, you are in big trouble'.

His view was that, if people cannot escape their situation, they will become cynical and resentful. They might not do good work willingly. We risk a situation in which people fight for their self-respect and satisfy their feelings of resentment by doing just enough work to get by. Their work is of an acceptable standard, but no better. It is just enough to get by so that they will keep their job.

Now, if I audit my own performance over time, I have to admit to using all three mindsets, particularly with my children when they were younger. I might start by saying 'Let's tidy up our rooms so that we can get on the road to Alton Towers in good time'.

This love and trust approach would quickly become a duty and justice one if my kids did not get down to their chores. I would continue by saying: 'Come on now, you promised, that was our deal'.

And, sure enough, this would then default to fear and doubt as the time went by and

nothing was finished, I would shout: 'That's it. If you do not tidy your room right now, we ain't going to Alton Towers ... ever!'

**Internal Dialogues**

Let me finish this piece on where we might be getting these negative statements from; the comments that can so easily leak into our conversations with people.

Apparently, 75% of what we say we say to ourselves, and two thirds of these messages, called internal dialogues, are negative ones. They seemingly get locked into our memory at an early age. They are like replays, or reminders of criticisms, or feelings of shame that we were made to endure as small children sometimes.

Thankfully, as adults, we can now choose to counter negative thoughts with positive ones. Sadly, the majority of the things that we say to ourselves will start, to some extent, in the fear and doubt mindset, but we can respond and treat ourselves, and others, with trust and respect.

**Punishing ourselves, blaming ourselves, even hating ourselves**

On the plus side, these negative thoughts and feelings have made us cautious and careful and this has helped us to survive as a species. However, if we are not careful, we can end up punishing ourselves, blaming ourselves, even hating ourselves. We need to treat ourselves as we want others to treat us - with trust and respect.



**People who under-perform at work or let you down in your life will be a particular challenge. Getting angry, and then judging and condemning others, will be extremely easy things for us to do. In my experience, people are often angry with themselves before they are angry with others**

So, maybe we can start by looking at ourselves. I know that I need to see me as I want others to see me. We can begin by being kind to ourselves, and perhaps think a little about how we can bring more trust and respect into our lives, and into the lives of others.

Perhaps we can begin this by treating others with trust and respect, whether we think they

deserve it or not. Maybe we can practice on each other at home, with our families and loved ones?

**People who let you down in your life will be a particular challenge**

People who under-perform at work or let you down in your life will be a particular challenge. Getting angry, and then judging and condemning others, will be extremely easy things for us to do. In my experience, people are often angry with themselves before they are angry with others.

They are angry with themselves for not spotting a problem in advance, or for being fooled, or perhaps trusting someone too soon. Then they look for someone to blame, so they feel better about themselves. Eventually, they might condemn themselves for losing their temper.

May we remember what Mr Didier had to say and stop condemning ourselves and others, but rather, to the extent that we can, strive to be an example of trust and respect.

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If you have questions about communication at work and in your career, you can reach Frank Newberry at his personal website [www.franknewberry.com](http://www.franknewberry.com).

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Machinery and Supplies

# Product Update

A round-up of the latest product news announced in recent weeks



**The new Air2G2 336 is the most productive pedestrian aerator on the market, with 36-inch probe centres allowing operators to cover ground quicker with the same industry-leading results.**

Aeration has always been an integral aspect of sports turf maintenance, and the introduction of the original Air2G2 revolutionised the process. The principle of laterally injecting air using three probes up to 12-inches below the surface has decompacted countless greens, pitches and courts.

The factors of no surface disruption and the option to operate the machine in wet conditions have seen many rely on the Air2G2 as their go-to solution for game or course saving aeration across all levels of professional, semi and non-professional sport. The ability to aerate when needed rather than working at designated times is also a bonus

Consistent use of the machine is proven to create surfaces that are healthy, firm and free draining. This happens over time because the pressurised air fractures the hardpan layers without disrupting roots while increasing pore space which promotes faster drainage and root development.

In turn, this respiration forces oxygen in and pushes CO<sub>2</sub> and other anaerobic gases out for root zone gas exchange.

[www.campeyturfcare.com](http://www.campeyturfcare.com)



**Reesink Turfcare is the new distributor of Franklin water pumps to the UK and Ireland. The turfcare distributor has secured a range of high-quality pumping systems for clean and dirty water in submersible and surface applications.**

The ES, VS and EV series are suitable for pumping clean water through irrigation systems at golf clubs and sports grounds, and the EGT and EGF series provide the solution for dirty water extraction from reservoirs, streams etc.

The ES series includes the five-inch compact close-coupled submersible multistage pump with 50Hz for flow up to 7.5m<sup>3</sup>/h. It's small and installation is easy as it's not necessary to connect the pump to a control panel.

The hydraulic design of the four-inch submersible VS series enhances overall efficiency, reduces energy consumption and makes the pumping systems more cost effective. The 50Hz deals with flow up to 24m<sup>3</sup>/h.

The EV Series features multistage surface pumps with single free-flow impellers which are good for irrigation systems with a flow up to 120m<sup>3</sup>/h with the 50Hz.

[www.reesinkturfcare.com](http://www.reesinkturfcare.com)

**Siems Turfgrass Ltd will operate two independent services available to golf courses, football clubs and all other grass sport surfaces.**

The consultancy side of the business is providing site-specific golf course management consulting, tailored to support clients in improving all aspects of golf course maintenance, from improved budget management to course construction and renovation.

Additionally, Dryject is being reintroduced into the UK and Ireland. The machine offers sand injection that also aerates, topdresses and amends in one pass, with playing surfaces ready for play within one hour after treatment.

DryJect uses a high-speed, water-based injection system to blast aeration holes through the root zone to fracture the soil. The patented vacuum technology simultaneously fills holes to the surface with high volumes of sand or amendment. This means it can relieve compaction, increase water infiltration, reach the rootzone with oxygen and amend the soil with high volumes of material all at the same time, using wet or dry sand,

[www.kensiems.com](http://www.kensiems.com)



**Hayter announce the launch of the all new Hayter Harrier 60V GreenSeries® range. These battery powered mowers mark the first of the iconic Harrier range to make the jump to a greener focused future.**

The cordless Harrier 41 and 48 will feature the same 60V battery power system used in the rest of the GreenSeries® range, as well as brother brand Toro's Flex-Force Power System®. The mower's 41cm deck is perfect for those tending to smaller areas, while the 48cm deck lends itself perfectly to mowing medium to large sized areas.

As is a staple for the Harrier range, these mowers are equipped with the quintessential ribbed rear roller, to perfectly and effortlessly create those sharp striped lawns, which are loved by the British consumer. Both Harrier models feature the two piece, ribbed rear roller which allows for superior traction, manoeuvrability and helps to avoid any turf marking when turning the mower.

[www.hayter.co.uk](http://www.hayter.co.uk)



**STIHL has launched the new HLA 66 and HLA 86, updating its range of cordless long-reach hedge trimmers designed for landscaping professionals and groundskeepers.**

Ideal for pruning taller hedges and shrubs as well as clearing ground cover plants, the new HLA 66 and 86 replace the popular HLA 65 and 85 models, and feature a series of upgrades to improve the user experience. Exceptionally well balanced thanks to the repositioned battery, the hedge trimmers are lightweight for easier handling and reduced fatigue when working over longer periods.

Thanks to the EC motor, rapid acceleration of the blades is achieved for optimum

performance, and the tool can be used in wet conditions to minimise downtime. The 115° swivelling cutter bar allows user to achieve top, side and bottom cuts easily, whilst the blade is also sharpened on both sides for efficient cutting in any direction. Additionally, the cutter blade can be folded flat for improved user safety and space saving when transporting.

Both models feature a new ergonomic control handle and a self-resetting locking lever in combination with the Ergo lever for an intuitive start-up process. This design also ensures that the tool is comfortable to use whether right-handed or left-handed and features anti-slip protection for further safety and comfort.

[www.stihl.co.uk](http://www.stihl.co.uk)



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# OFFSIDE

The not so serious side  
of the industry

## Thirteen ponies turn up to play hockey

**A groundsman at Were Di Tilburg in The Netherlands was shocked to discover thirteen ponies on his pitch when he turned up for his morning's work.**

The highly unusual sight of the four-legged animals were discovered on the outfield on Friday morning, with the gates locked - suggesting that it was a deliberate act -



before the police were called.

According to hockey.nl, club chair Fabienne van Engelen received a message saying: "We have thirteen new four-legged members. I just think they can't play hockey very well and they aren't that fast either."

It was only when the men in blue turned up was it realised that the ponies had been temporarily put on the pitch by the police themselves after they had been spotted roaming the streets the previous night.

According to the owner, the ponies had been lost for two days.



## Botham 'out of his depth' in RSPB beef

**There has been much ruffling of feathers since Sir Ian Botham reignited his ongoing feud with the RSPB, this time in the Telegraph.**

His October column revved up under the headline 'I won't let the eco-woke ruin our countryside' and launched into an attack on 'grim eco-warriors' such as the BBC's Chris Packham, and, inevitably, the RSPB - whom he had threatened to sue in 2015 in a spat over hen harriers.

This time he went on the attack against the RSPB's campaign to end the burning of heathland in winter, accusing it of hating country folk and being 'a nightmare for nature.' The 'You Forgot The Birds Campaign', for which Botham has been a spokesperson, is reportedly funded by elements behind the British grouse industry.

Mark Cocker, a naturalist and regular contributor to the Guardian's Country Diary, was blunt. "I love Botham, don't get me wrong, but his article was tawdry and he should know better."

"Owners of driven-grouse moors are setting fire to peatbog, which is the single most valuable habitat in Britain for the sequestering of carbon, and which it does more effectively than rainforest. When the RSPB seeks to improve the conditions of other parts of nature - trees, flowers, insects - they are still doing good works for birds. You can't abstract birds from nature, they are all inextricable parts of a single system - this is the critical point that he is missing."

## New sporting craze

**Rugby Golf is the latest sporting craze sweeping USA and Europe, apparently!**

Rugby golf involves punting rugby balls down the fairway and courses can vary from between nine and eighteen holes.

The hybrid sport is being played all over the UK, France and the US, allegedly. It requires both the lower body strength of rugby and the precision of golf.

There are fifteen core rules you need to stick to including: shots from the fairway can be kicked 'ball in hand' and, if a ball is on the



green, it must be thrown and not kicked.

The games founders, The Association Française de RugbyGolf, hope it will advance the kicking game of rugby.

## Club finds two people having sex in a bunker

**Several clubs have reported misuse of their courses since their venues closed in March - with reports including people**



**using quad bikes, riding horses and picnicking in bunkers.**

However, according to the Scottish Daily Record, Glenbervie Golf Club Chairman, Ronnie Neil, sent out a newsletter in which he told members of 'a couple engaging in sexual relations within a bunker' - (yes, this was actually witnessed).

He added: "Obviously, we would all like our course to be in as good a condition as possible when we reopen and acts like some of those listed above do not support this goal. Nobody minds people taking a stroll round the course, but this isn't Butlin's."

If you spot anything you think might  
give readers a chuckle send it to:  
kerry.haywood@pitchcare.com

## Lineker talks about unfortunate moment

On his 60th birthday recently, Gary Lineker spoke about the fateful episode when he s\*\*t himself during the opening clash for his country at the 1990 World Cup.

On the Match of the Day podcast he said: "I'd been ill overnight and it was the opening day of the cup and I'd woken up a few times with diarrhoea, etc. I didn't want to tell Bobby Robson because I thought he might leave me out of the team and I wanted to play, as always."

"We go out for the second half, we're ten minutes in and I'm starting to cramp and I think, 'Oh, I'm in trouble here.' I ran across and tried to block something, then sort of fell to the ground and relaxed for a second ... it just went 'boom.'"

At least he can laugh about it now!



## QUOTE ME HAPPY

"The goal is equivalent of a Lebanese mixed grill." **BBC Sport's Matt Newsum** describing Bournemouth's third goal that gave them the lead against Reading. A wonder-strike by Lewis Cook apparently!

Visited a premier Sydney golf club today. Was told I wouldn't be able to play wearing black socks with black shoes and I needed to buy white club socks. Leaving this open for discussion, but I said out of principle, I'd prefer not to play than bow to archaic rules." **Australian broadcaster Ewan Porter** revealed that he was not allowed to play at a golf club because he was wearing black socks. He later said he has been banned by the club for taking his tale public on social media.

"I know a lot of people go on about the hand of God. It made Peter Shilton anyway!" **Gascoigne** couldn't resist a dig at his former England teammate Peter Shilton's expense while paying tribute to Diego Maradona.



Peter Shilton

"It's frustrating that members aren't even allowed to get their daily exercise by playing a round on their own in the fresh air, yet you've got locals having sex in the bunkers. Where's the social distancing in that?" **A couple were recently caught engaging in sexual relations within a bunker at Glenberrie Golf Club.**

**In his article on page 22 of this issue, Richard Wing, currently working in Holland, says that the language barrier brings about some very entertaining moments.** "Certain words can be mis-translated quite easily with several strange looks," he says. "One tip coming to The Netherlands, 'Neuken in de keuken' does not mean 'How are you?'. **We can't possibly print what it does mean, but Google Translate will be able to!**

"Results bring belief. They bring confidence. I have set it out to the players, where we are standing this year and the challenges we are going to face. I was involved in two relegations and that is where we are going to be this year. We have to be comfortable around it." **Fulham Manager, Scott Parker** speaking after the 2-1 win over Leicester City.

## DIARY DATES

JAN

1st: Happy New Year

7th-25th Feb: Horseracing - Dubai World Cup Carnival ([dubairacingclub.com](http://dubairacingclub.com))

18th-31st: Tennis - Australia Open Melbourne, Australia ([ausopen.com](http://ausopen.com))

25th-4th Feb: The Ernest Doe Show - with a difference ([ernestdoe.com](http://ernestdoe.com))

FEBRUARY

6th: Rugby Union - Six Nations round one, Italy vs. France (Stadio Olimpico, Rome); England vs. Scotland (Twickenham Stadium) ([sixnationsrugby.com](http://sixnationsrugby.com))

7th: Rugby Union - Six Nations round one, Wales vs. Ireland (Principality Stadium, Cardiff) ([sixnationsrugby.com](http://sixnationsrugby.com))

13th: Rugby Union - Six Nations round two, England vs. Italy (Twickenham Stadium, London); Scotland vs. Wales (BT Murrayfield Stadium, Edinburgh) ([sixnationsrugby.com](http://sixnationsrugby.com))

14th: Rugby Union - Six Nations round two, Ireland vs. France (Aviva Stadium, Dublin) ([sixnationsrugby.com](http://sixnationsrugby.com))

27th: Rugby Union - Six Nations round three, Italy vs. Ireland (Stadio Olimpico, Rome); Wales vs. England (Principality Stadium, Cardiff) ([sixnationsrugby.com](http://sixnationsrugby.com))

28th: Football - 2021 Carabao Cup final (Wembley Stadium) ([efl.com](http://efl.com))

28th: Rugby Union - Six Nations round three, France vs. Scotland (Stade de France, Paris) ([sixnationsrugby.com](http://sixnationsrugby.com))

MARCH

11th: Rugby League - The Betfred Super League begins (Old Trafford) ([superleague.co.uk](http://superleague.co.uk))

13th: Rugby Union - Six Nations round four, Italy vs. Wales (Stadio Olimpico, Rome); England vs. France (Twickenham Stadium) ([sixnationsrugby.com](http://sixnationsrugby.com))

14th: Rugby Union - Six Nations round four, Scotland vs. Ireland (BT Murrayfield Stadium, Edinburgh) ([sixnationsrugby.com](http://sixnationsrugby.com))

16th: Horseracing - Cheltenham Festival begins ([thejockeyclub.co.uk/cheltenham](http://thejockeyclub.co.uk/cheltenham))

20th: Rugby Union - Six Nations round five, Scotland vs. Italy (BT Murrayfield Stadium, Edinburgh); Ireland vs. England (Aviva Stadium, Dublin); France vs. Wales (Stade de France, Paris) ([sixnationsrugby.com](http://sixnationsrugby.com))

To have your event included in this magazine diary section, please email details to [kerry@pitchcare.com](mailto:kerry@pitchcare.com)

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