

# Out·On·The·Course

## Worthing

**John Campbell renews his friendship with course manager Hugh MacGillivray, who was one of his charges at St Andrews**



**Hugh MacGillivray—a dedicated supporter of EIGGA.**

“AS I was born and bred in a great forestry area of Perthshire, I toyed with the idea of going in for timber management after leaving school, but finally opted for a job as an apprentice greenkeeper at Rosemount, Blairgowrie,” Hugh MacGillivray, 38-year-old course manager of Worthing Golf Club said. Hugh and his wife Angela live with their bonny four-year-old daughter Kirsty in a charming cottage within the grounds of the club estate on the South Downs.

Like a great many Scots in greenkeeping, Hugh decided to get as much experience as possible in his chosen profession by moving around. On completion of his apprenticeship at Blairgowrie, he spent two years at St Andrews working with me when I was the links supervisor.

“St Andrews is the home of greenkeeping and it is an advantage to be able to say you were trained there when applying for a job anywhere in course management,” Hugh said. “I gained invaluable experience, which I would never have received anywhere else in the world.”

Hugh then moved to Skegness where he got his first job as head greenkeeper at the age of twenty.

From there, he went to Lanark GC during which time he contracted a serious illness that compelled him to give up work for two years. But you can't keep a good man down and when he regained good health he went to Rowlands Castle GC as course manager, after which he spent six months as a rep for Toro (London) before being appointed in charge of the golf courses at Sunningdale, where he remained for seven years before finally moving to Worthing.

“To look after our two 18-hole courses, we have to be highly mechanised and have all the best equipment. I have an assistant, Peter Bacon, who is also our engineer and saves us a considerable amount of money in repairs,” Hugh added.

One man is in charge of each course and is responsible for all the important routine jobs, such as changing the holes and setting up tee markers, etc. The other six members of the staff are deployed as a team and carry out specific tasks allotted to them.

The present maintenance sheds are not in the best position close to the clubhouse, but a new, more central site has been chosen with better access to both courses. Building work is due

to begin on the new headquarters when the necessary planning approval has been granted by the local authority.

In this same spot, a borehole is being drilled to 300 feet, which will allow a much cheaper source of irrigation than the present water supply from the domestic mains. (It will only be a sixth of the cost.)

Hugh believes in the policy of minimum water and fertiliser to reduce the amount of poa annua in his greens and he has achieved good results. The quality of the turf is improving—it is firm and resilient to cope exceedingly well with any amount of winter play.

“I am a great believer in sulphate of iron to maintain good colour,” Hugh said. “It also helps keep fungal disease at bay and acts as a deterrent for moss. This material was always a great favourite with the old school of Scottish greenkeepers. We also have an annual programme of shallow hollow tining and overseeding with a 50/50 mixture of fescue/agrostis.

“I have also used Farmura with Nitroform on the greens, which seems to promote steady vigour and a nice depth of colour to the turf. I also

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purchase from our suppliers a compost mixture with hoof and horn meal added to it—so every time the greens are topdressed, there is a little bit of nitrogen in the material to stimulate a gentle growth. I do not use seaweed extracts, but sometimes we mix a bit of Alginure with the compost and find that this is also a satisfactory treatment to keep the grass in healthy condition,” he added.

Hugh, like many greenkeepers nowadays, is compelled to use ride-on triplex greensmowers to get the work done quickly and efficiently—particularly at the weekends or when there is staff sickness and holidays. However, for tournaments and club events, he prefers to use pedestrian mowers for that bit of extra grooming and polish. “There’s something about the appearance of a green that looks good when it has been cut with a single unit machine and the experts prefer this type of finish for accurate putting,” Hugh said.

I asked him who had inspired him most in his career. “I think the gospel preached by Jim Arthur is worth listening to. I have always been influenced by his intelligent and sensible approach to all aspects of course upkeep, which are the result of his long experience as a highly qualified agronomist.

“I am also grateful to you, John, for the opportunity and training you gave me while I was at St Andrews. To have worked at such a world-famous course during an Open Championship was a unique experience for me and one I will never forget.”

Hugh recently had an opportunity to demonstrate his skill at bunker construction and some excellent examples of the art are already evident at Worthing. I admired the formidable trap he has built on the left side of the 10th green, which has improved the strategy of play.

His style of bunker building has obviously been influenced by an intimate acquaintance with the famous bunkers that adorn the Old Course. With the number of bunkers he has at Worthing, he values his Ransomes sand-trap rake, which grooms the sand on the floor of the bunkers, while the edges are tidied up by staff with hand rakes.

“Although the ride-on triplex greensmowers ushered in a new phase of golf-course maintenance, I believe the advent of the Cushman was even more significant to greenkeeping and an important advance in the introduction of mechanised techniques for turf culture,” Hugh said.

“This type of equipment and that produced by SISIS has been a



**Drilling operations on a borehole are expected to yield a good supply of water for irrigation.**



**This unfinished bunker on the fringe of the Lower Course’s 12th green illustrates the MacGillivray style of trap building influenced by his training at St Andrews.**



**A new bunker by the 10th green on the Lower Course has added to the strategy of play.**



Some 3,000 trees are being planted in a course improvement programme by contractor Don Wells.



Resurfacing work to a public bridle path...



Hugh with assistant and engineer Peter Baker.

godsend to greenkeepers in view of the ever-increasing amount of play. Manual operations, such as hollow tining, scarifying, topdressing and a whole range of other time-consuming jobs so often neglected, can now be carried out without undue interference to play."

A useful and inventive flexible rubber finger drag blade disperses the early morning dew before Worthing's greens are mown. It was made by splitting a ten foot length of three inch metal tube with an oxy-acetylene torch. Thick rubber fingers 16 inches wide and 14 inches long are fixed on to a strip of wood that prevents them from falling out of the tube. This simple implement is easily mounted on the back of a small Kubota tractor on an A-frame and the greens on both courses can be brushed in three hours without any friction damage to the surface. It is also ideal for brushing in compost.

Hugh has a lot of experience and is brimming with enthusiasm and good ideas. He was one of the driving forces in the establishment of EIGGA and is a trustee of the association. His ambition is to raise the status of greenkeeping by providing more and better facilities for the education and training of craftsmen greenkeepers.

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"I want to see young men having the opportunity for a sound basic training in the theory and practice of golf-course upkeep. We owe it to them to provide suitable educational courses with experienced instructors and lecturers," he said.

"In some areas, advanced training courses may be difficult to find, but the ambitious man should not be deterred and is advised to try an appropriate business studies course to prepare himself for the role of head greenkeeper or course manager.

"Course maintenance budgets at some clubs may be as much as £100,000. The responsibility of running a modern golf course involves intensive planning and preparation by a competent individual, who has to be able to show his club he's capable of leading and directing the greenkeeping staff and has the ability and business acumen to prepare an accurate budget to run the course efficiently and economically to the membership's satisfaction."