

# A problem shared...

**Stephen Redman (pictured right) is head greenkeeper at Yelverton Golf Club, Devon. Stephen was prompted to relate his experiences after reading John Campbell's interview with Laurence Pithie of Minchinhampton GC (*Out On The Course*, January/February 1987).**

YELVERTON is an 18-hole course, situated within the Dartmoor National Park on common land known as Roborough Down. It is approximately 700 feet above sea level on the south-western slopes of Dartmoor.

The common is grazed all-year-round by ponies and a few cattle and, during the summer, sheep and more cattle are also put out to graze, plus the ponies foal down, effectively doubling their numbers.

The course, in general, is quite free-draining and the acid topsoil ranges from 8in deep in some places to non-existent in others.

The course was constructed around old mine and quarry workings in one part and more open heathland in another and the disused Devonport Leat crosses the course in several places.

Heather and gorse-covered mounds and deep hollows make up the features around the old

mine workings and wide fairways bordered by heather and gorse in the more open areas, with clumps of thorn trees, scrub oak and various other indigenous trees, complete the picture.

The grass is predominantly fescue and remarkably resilient – it never ceases to amaze me how well it stands up to the pressure of all-year-round golf and grazing.

## Animal damage

One of the main problems is, of course, animal damage. Apart from the hoof marks of ponies (they also nibble at the greens producing a very unsatisfactory putting surface), the mess on a green first thing in the morning, after 50 or so sheep have chosen to bed down, must be seen to be believed.

We do not erect any fencing around the greens. It was tried, but proved unsatisfactory,



because of the diversity of grazing animals. To make it strong enough to keep out cattle and ponies and secure enough to keep out sheep meant that golfers had difficulty in getting into the greens.

So some animal damage is considered inevitable. I find conservative use of fertiliser and frequent topdressing seem to be the best way of maintaining a reasonable putting surface.

Another problem is overgrazing. It is impossible for us to define fairways with a cut as the animals tend to crop everything at the same height, so it is necessary to mark the edges of fairways with a line.



The carry from the 10th tee to the fairway, which is dissected by a ridge known as the Devonport Leat.



The 16th green at Yelverton is approached by way of a dog-leg fairway to the right.

However, the biggest problem of all is the rough – because of overgrazing, we are reaching the stage where the rough is gradually being eaten away. During winter months, ponies think nothing of grazing on the gorse and heather and any young trees are instantly doomed. Then, with increased grazing in summer, any new growth is immediately eaten down.

We are, at present, in consultation with the Dartmoor National Park's ecologist in an attempt to find ways of regenerating the growth of heather and gorse. Only time will tell how successful we shall be.

Our maintenance consists of lots of aeration work, frequent topdressing, a little fertiliser and regular scarifying and mowing of greens and tees. During summer, the chain harrows are rarely still on fairways. There is no watering system, but then

Dartmoor is one of the wettest places in England. You don't always get the water quite when you want it, but you never have to wait too long.

Spraying of chemicals is something we have to be very careful about but, fortunately, we seldom need to use them.

There is a greenstaff of four

(including myself), which is kept pretty busy all year round. The majority of comment from visitors and members is praiseworthy, but I dream of the day when the fairy godmother of greenkeepers will come and spirit away all the animals. Then we'll give 'em a course to be proud of!



The par-three 12th from the teeing area. "On a clear day, you can see the moors in the background," Stephen promised!

## ***Introducing the complete, all-in-one ground care system***

Modus T Systems has recently introduced its turf maintenance equipment into the UK through the establishment of a distributor network.

The trade's acceptance of the system is, in itself, quite a success story due, in no short measure, to the ability of the Modus T System to interchange an extensive range of attachments automatically through the hydraulically controlled inner frame.

This allows the operator to

carry out a series of turf maintenance operations without removing the main frame assembly from the tractor's three point linkage.

One main frame assembly, with a choice of attachments, allows the system to be added to as budgets allow, at reduced cost, eliminating the need to buy individual mounted units for certain ground care operations.

There is a choice of two tractor-mounted models, the MT 48 – for

compact tractors – and the MT 84 – for medium to large tractors.

This system is easy to operate – no spanners and little or no manual effort is required – and with the planned introduction of additional new attachments, the system looks set for an exciting future. The most recent addition to the range of attachments is the utility skip. Full details from Modus T Systems, Elson Works, Ellesmere, Shropshire SY12 9EY. Tel: 069171 2806.



**Modus T Systems offers a high degree of versatility.**