A day in the life

They say “variety is the spice of life”. If that’s true, greenkeepers certainly live spicy lives. Judging by a little survey we carried out recently, no-one was doing the same thing on the same day and no-one restricted themselves to just one task.

We contacted two greenkeepers from each region – a course manager/head greenkeeper and deputy course manager or first assistant – to find out what they were doing on one day, also chosen at random – March 17. Here are the replies from the magnificent seven who responded to our request.

We’re going to do this again on June 14. If you would like to take part, drop the editor a note.

GAVIN KYLE, 28
DEPUTY COURSE MANAGER
ASHFORD MANOR GOLF CLUB, ASHFORD, MIDDLESEX
An 18-hole parkland course built in 1898 on a gravel subsoil. It covers 102 acres of which approximately 85 acres are manicured and the rest is woodland. 700 members.

Time spent in job: FIVE YEARS

6.45-7am
Check oil and water in machinery. Set up machinery that will be used first thing. Start and leave to warm up. Make sure they are in working order.

7.7-10am
Delegate morning jobs and then plan the rest of the day’s work with the course manager.

7.10-7.20am
Attach slitter to Jacobsen workhorse.

7.20-10.30am
Slit-tine greens and surrounds. This operation is usually carried out 1-2 times a week and is carried out regularly in the lead-up to spring when we will start our spring/summer maintenance programme. The greens total approximately 8,200 m sq in size.

10.30-10.55am
Break time.

10.55am-12.45pm
Mow greens with Jacobsen Greensking to tidy up greens after the recent warm weather has produced some patchy growth. This is also done in preparation for the weekend competitions.

Mowing height is 6mm (1/4in).

12.45-1pm
Wash off machine and make ready for next period of work.

1-3.10pm
Mow fairways with Jacobsen Tri-Ring. After recent warm weather and with the moisture in the soil, the fairways are starting to grow and are patchy in certain areas. This is also done to tidy up the course for the coming weekend’s competitions. It won’t be long before we are into our summer programme if weather conditions remain the same.

3.10pm
Head for the bank – it’s pay day.

Finishing time: 3.15pm

Typical day?
From a slitting point of view, this will continue while the weather and ground conditions permit before we are fully into our summer working programme. As the month goes on, so the cutting programme will continue while ground conditions permit. The mowing frequency should increase. In some ways it was a typical day and in others it wasn’t. We are trying to make the most of the conditions and use them to our own benefits.

DOUGLAS DUGUID, 40
HEAD GREENKEEPER
WESTHILL GOLF CLUB, ABERDEEN
An 18-hole parkland course set in 109 acres. 700 members.

Time spent in this job: 18 YEARS, SIX MONTHS

7.45-8am:
Close course under 1 inch of snow.

8-9.30am
Mixing topdressing.

9.30-11.30am
Preparing new pins and flags for start of the golf season on March 19.

1-3.15pm
Load trailer up with tee markers, litter baskets for putting out before the 19th.

2.15-3.45pm
Working on the 10th fairway.

3.45-4.15pm
Tidying up stones on 16th fairway - they’ve rolled down about 10th fairway.

4.15-4.30pm
Prepare bunkers, getting rid of rabbit scrapes and foot marks.

4.30-5.15pm
Mixing topdressing.

5.15-6pm
Tidy up bunkers, getting rid of rabbit scrapes and foot marks.

6-7.15pm
Mixed fairway and tee. The 10th hole at the moment has a severe climb up the side of a hill and we are shaving away the slope to site a tee near the bottom rather than the top. We should have started this job two months ago, but couldn’t because of the weather.

7.15-8pm
Check course and re-open it.

8-9.30pm
Finishing time: 8.30pm
typical day?
Unusual as we are rebuilding a new fairway on the 10th. Normally we would be topdressing at this time of year, but due to the weather this winter we have been under snow for all but two weeks since Christmas.

DOUGLAS DUGUID
Steve Evans

Graham Edwards
21 ASSISTANT GREENKEEPER HARPENDEN GOLF CLUB, HARPENDEN, HERTS

An 18-hole parkland course set in 136 acres. 850 members.

Time spent in job: FOUR YEARS, SEVEN MONTHS

7.8am
Tidy up bunkers, getting rid of rabbit scrapes and foot marks.

8-9.30am:
Build new path and steps to the 18th tee.

9.30-10am
Lunch.

10-11.15
Continue with path and steps.

11.15am-12.30pm
Fit new nets in practice nets.

12.30-1pm
Dinner.

1-3.30pm
Continue with practice nets.

Finishing time: 3.30pm

Typical day?
It was a normal day for this time of year.

Douglas Duguid
Steve Evans

Meetings with greens convener about 10th fairway.

12-12.30pm
Lunch.

12.30-1.30pm
Preparing new pins and flags for start of the golf season on March 19.

1.30-2.15pm
Load trailer up with tee markers, litter baskets for putting out before the 19th.

2.15-3.45pm
Working on the 10th fairway.

3.45-4.15pm
Tidying up stones on 16th fairway - they’ve rolled down from the 10th fairway above.

Finishing time: 4.20pm

Typical day?
Unusual as we are rebuilding a new fairway on the 10th. Normally we would be topdressing at this time of year, but due to the weather this winter we have been under snow for all but two weeks since Christmas.
DAVID NORTON, 29
HEAD GREENKEEPER
THE BELFRY, WISHAV, WEST MIDLANDS
One 18-hole pay-and-play course. The Brabazon, plus the 20-hole Derby with 460 season ticket holders and a driving range. All in 500 acres.

Time spent in job: 20 MONTHS

6.30-6.40am
Check conditions, weather and golf booked on the courses for the day. Decide jobs for the day. Roll call and allocations of day’s work.

6.40-8.25am
Inspection and course set up on front 9 holes on Brabazon Course. Markers switched, check bunkers, trim holes with one other member of staff.

8.25-8.40am
Fill in time sheets and coming week’s planner.

8.40-8.55am
At hotel, go through computer for following week’s bookings and sheets for any important golf details of groups, ie start times (two-tee start, shotgun etc).

8.55-9am
Get mail etc from office.

9-9.05am
Collect week’s wage slips for the greenkeeping staff.

9.05-9.30am
Assist greenkeeper (front of hotel, back of 9th and 18th greens) topdressing new artificial turf path and directing golf with signs, hoops etc to 10th tees and hotel around new turf and bedding borders.

9.30-9.35am
Break, give lads wage slips, check no problems with anything and have a coffee.

9.35-9.45am
Have a short meeting with the course manager.

9.45-11.45am
Assist on the Derby Course with the hollow-tining, core collection and clearing of greens. We’re in the middle of this at the moment.

11.45am-12.20pm
Swap with member of staff and go to see how work on the new 8th Brabazon tees is coming along, liaise, assist and direct continuation of work and turfing.

12.20-12.30pm
Go to office and ring two suppliers.

12.30-1pm
Dinner.

1-2pm
Carry on work on 8th tees.

2.2-4pm
Attend heads of departments meeting in hotel, when we go through next week’s business and I also roughly plan my following week’s operations.

2.40-3.40pm
See personnel manager and go through recruitment file for anyone suitable for vacancies arising shortly.

3.40-3.55pm
Agree shortlist with personnel manager and instruct her secretary to make necessary arrangements.

Finishing time: 3.55pm

Typical day?
Fairly typical for a Thursday. However I had one member of staff on holiday, one at college and four away doing their PA2 spraying courses, so I was pushed for staff. But it’s always busy. Both courses were fully booked from first tee times at 7am until ‘nine holes only’ late afternoon.

CRAIG WYLLIE, 27
FIRST ASSISTANT
GLASGOW GOLF CLUB, GLASGOW
An 18-hole parkland course set in 90 acres. 1,000 members.

Time spent in job: 10 YEARS

8-8.40am
Put pins on winter greens due to 1in of snow.

8.40-10.10am
Drainage work.

10.10-10.30am
Break.

10.30am-1pm
Continued work on drainage.

1-2.30pm
Continued work on drainage. We were putting in a 100mm pipe in a blaxe path to remove water that was lying on it. The pipe was to be put into a conduit that we thought was not used.

After opening the conduit we found that there was water running in it. We then decided to put dye into a conduit we already had open further out on the course. We discovered that the two conduits were linked as the dye went past the hole we had opened. We then discovered that the two conduits are joined in the area we were working. One of them was blocked past the join due to a sewage pipe that was put in 20 years ago. We have now decided that this will have to be left to next year to be fixed as we have too much work to do.

Finishing time: 4.30pm

Typical day?
Weatherwise, very typical. Workwise, this was due to the weather as we could not do course work.

STEVEN EVANS, 33
DEPUTY COURSE MANAGER
ST ENODOC GOLF CLUB, NR WADEBRIDGE, CORNWALL
Two 18-hole links courses set in 200 acres. 1,500 members.

Time spent in job: TWO YEARS, SIX MONTHS

7.30-7.40am
Liaise with course manager, organise work programme and direct greens staff.

7.40-10.10am
Fertilise greens on Church Course with NPK, granular fertiliser; 10s per square yard.

10.10-10.30am
Morning break.

10.30am-12.35pm
Fertilise surrounds and aprons on Church Course with NPK, granular fertiliser; 10s per square yard.