GOOD MOVE FOR MASTER GREENKEEPER PHIL

One of BIGGA’s Master Greenkeepers has been appointed Course Manager at Goodwood’s two highly acclaimed golf courses.

Phil Helen, MG, former Golf Course and Estate Manager at Heythrop Park, and who featured in GI back in June last year, has taken the reins at the West Sussex venue.

Phil will be working closely with Andrew Brown, Head Greenkeeper of The Downs course, and Simon Berry, Head Greenkeeper of The Parks course, along with the rest of the greenkeeping team.

Phil’s extensive experience includes the construction and grow-in of four courses. One was in Florida under the direction of distinguished golf architect Tom Fazio, the second one in Cyprus designed by Tom Mackenzie of UK based architects Mackenzie and Ebert, The Watermark Club and finally Heythrop Park Resort.

Phil’s early career saw him work at Morecambe Golf Club, Camberley Heath and Cullompton Park.

He said: “I have been a greenkeeper all my adult life and love my career choice. Goodwood is a quality brand and specifically the golf courses are highly ranked and revered. It will be a fantastic challenge to help Goodwood improve even further on its recent successes and ranking.

“Me and the entire greenkeeping team have some big plans for the future so it’s an exciting time to be here.”

Phil joins Goodwood at a significant time as the James Braid designed Downs Course celebrates 100 years of golf this year, and to mark the occasion Goodwood will be hosting a number of high profile events throughout the season.

LIVERPOOL FAN IN OLD TRAFFORD CHARITY ABSEIL

A greenkeeper Liverpool fan is putting football rivalry to one side for charity when he jumps 140 feet from the roof of Manchester United’s Old Trafford ground!

Paul Pearse, Head Greenkeeper at Warrington Golf Club, was undertaking a check-up in April 2012 when doctors noticed a lump indicating testicular cancer, and which had begun to spread. He was operated on within days, and after six weeks of chemotherapy and a further two months of recuperation he was given the all-clear last year.

Now Paul, who says he doesn’t like heights, is preparing to make the epic 225-mile journey to Bridgewater, which is at the heart of the badly affected Somerset Levels.

Travelling at a top speed of around 30mph, ‘Tractor Aid’ arrived 11 hours later to meet a grateful James at nearby Sedgemoor market.

Phil said: “I’ve been watching the news for the last few weeks and saw what a mess the Somerset farmers are in. I saw an interview with James and you couldn’t fail to be moved by it, even more so as a fellow farmer. The water was chest-high in his kitchen and he has lost almost everything, and the pictures showed the only way he could get to his farm was by boat.

“I just thought as a fellow farmer, I could help him, and the thing he really needed was cattle feed…James’s feed which he had been storing over winter is now getting in sheds, it’s terrible.

“I don’t have any cattle on my farm but I borrowed some feed from local farmers and set off. The support we had from the journey from the public has been fantastic, it makes me really proud.”

Meanwhile the rest of Wootley Park’s greenkeeping team – Phil’s son John, Andy Seaman, Richard Thompson, Stuart Mason and Pete Colley – have been working to keep the course open despite 100mm of rain in January.

John said: “Golf and agriculture are intrinsically linked as they are both so dependent on the weather. If golf courses are underwater for too long the grass rots, and it’s the same with crops in farming. We’ve been hit by the relentless rainfall as so many other golf courses have, but luckily our site drains well and is high up.

“We made a few calls and mentioned ‘Tractor Aid’ on Twitter and it’s gone on from there. We felt Somerset had been neglected by the media so hopefully this has reminded everybody of the seriousness of the situation down there.”

Their amazing journey has caught the public’s imagination with Phil even being interviewed live on the BBC’s ‘One Show’, BBC Radio 2 and in local newspapers.

Phil featured in Greenkeeper International last June when we focused on his combined role as Course Manager and farmer. Wootley Park is a 27-hole facility, and the adjacent farm’s main function is drying and storing grain for local merchants and farmers.

PHIL’S ‘TRACTOR AID’ TO FLOOD-HIT SOMERSET

A Course Manager who combines his greenkeeping role with his job as a farmer has ridden to the rescue of a flood-hit Somerset farmer after seeing his plight on TV.

Phil Rowbottom is a BIGGA member, head man at Wootley Park Golf Club and member of the National Farmers’ Union – and was moved by a TV interview with Somerset farmer James Winslade who has lost 800 acres of his 840-acre farm to floodwater, with the water chest-high in his kitchen.

James managed to save his 500 cattle but had lost all of his cattle feed. So Phil joined forces with neighbour Andrew, an agricultural contractor, and loaded 25 tons of cattle feed onto his tractors. They then set off from Phil’s proprietary golf club near Wakefield, West Yorkshire, at 5am on February 13 to make the epic 225-mile journey to Bridgewater, which is at the heart of the badly affected Somerset Levels.

Travelling at a top speed of around 30mph, ‘Tractor Aid’ arrived 11 hours later to meet a grateful James at nearby Sedgemoor market.

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Now Paul, who says he doesn’t like heights, is to plunge 140 feet from the 76,000 capacity stadium’s roof in aid of The Christie, an organisation which raises funds for vital cancer research and treats more than 40,000 patients each year.

Paul said: "I wanted to give something back so that other people suffering from cancer have a better chance to be as fortunate as I’ve been."

"I know some people would gladly chuck a Scouser off one side for charity when he abseils 140 feet from the roof of Manchester United’s Old Trafford ground!

"I just thought as a fellow farmer, I could help him, and the thing he really needed was cattle feed... James’s feed which he had been storing over winter is now rotting in sheds, it’s terrible."

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AIRBORNE CHALARA SPORES DEBATE AT CONFERENCE

A Conference held in London appears to have ‘laid the ghost’ of long distance airborne travel of ascospores of the ascomycete fungus *Hymenoscyphus pseudoaldaiadis* (limperfect or asexual stage *Chalara fraxinea*) to rest, while raising the possibility of another unexplored avenue of transcontinental movement for the fungal pathogens and disease.

Arguments in favour of long distance airborne travel of chalara ascospores from continental Europe and into Eastern England rely heavily on circumstantial evidence relating to the high concentration of reported disease outbreaks in East Anglia. The long distance movement and survival of completely different fungal spores in other parts of the world is used as supporting evidence.

The arguments used against rest on a clear mismatch between long distance airborne movement with the time lines and distance lines of chalara outbreaks and spread of the pathogen across Europe over the last 20 years, coupled with the known high susceptibility of the ascospores to UV (ultra violet) light and desiccation.

Speaking at the Fraxback Conference Dr Anne Chandeler presented detailed results from chalara ascospore trapping research carried out in Belgium which throw light on the situation. By trapping chalara ascospores at different heights she showed that spore concentration was thirty times higher at 0.5m than 3.0m above ground level. Lateral movement for the majority of spores was no further than 50 m from the point of liberation.

Dr Chandeler showed that Chalara ascospores liberated from apothecia (chalara fruiting bodies) on fallen ash leaf stalks are concentrated at only 0.5m from ground level, indicating little opportunity for lift off into the atmosphere and subsequent long distance dispersal in air currents. Moreover any ‘high flying’ spores would clearly be exposed to correspondingly high levels of UV light and stronger drying out forces compared with the same spores closer to ground level.

In these respects the Chalara fraxinea situation is completely different to that for *Phytophthora* from continental Europe and into the UK via airborne spores from *Phytophthora ramorum* the spores being capable of producing apothecia (chalara fruiting bodies containing ascospores) for two to three years after leaf fall. By trapping chalara ascospores Dr Chandeler was able to show that the spectre of another avenue of disease entry into the United Kingdom could be averted.

However, there appears to be one unexplored avenue of chalara entry into the UK and a corresponding avenue of ‘escape’ for Defra. Apart from the role of infected ash planting material, comments made by Dr Chandeler’s about infected ash leaf stalks being capable of producing apothecia (chalara fruiting bodies containing ascospores) for two to three years after leaf fall raises the spectre of another avenue of disease entry into the UK: chalara ash dieback and providing a ‘fathers’ unrecognised and unexplored route of entry for chalara ash dieback into the UK?

After all this was considered to be the most likely mode of spread of horse chestnut leaf miner (*Cameraria ohridella*) across Europe and into the UK, with dead horse chestnut leaves containing live overwintering pupae adhering to the wheels and bodywork of transcontinental vehicles. Be that as it may, you still have to explain why chalara ash dieback took almost exactly 20 years to move the 1000km from Poland to the Pas de Calais region of France and exactly what articulated lorry loads of wine from France, cheese from the Netherlands and bacon from Denmark were doing inside ancient East Anglian woodlands.

FRAXBACK is a 4-year action plan initiated in 2011 and funded by COST (The European Cooperation in Science and Technology). Generation of a comprehensive understanding of chalara to produce practical guidelines for pan-European sustainable management of *Fraxinus* (ash) species are the aims.

Dr Terri Malhotra
A Conference* held in London appears to have ‘said the ghost’ of long distance airborne travel of ascospores of the ascomycete fungus Hymenoscyphus pseudoalbidus (imperfect or asexual stage Chalara fraxinea) to rest, while raising the possibility of another unexplored avenue of transcontinental movement for the fungal pathogens and disease.

Arguments in favour of long distance airborne travel of chalara ascospores from continental Europe and into Eastern Europe is clearly questioned by these findings. Evidence supporting the airborne movement of viable chalara ascospores into the United Kingdom would clearly exonerate many from accusations that they acted too slowly in banning the import of infected ash foliage at the tops of tall Japanese larch trees. (sporangia) of which are released from infected ash leaf stalks and providing a fertile ‘unrecognised and unexplored avenue of entry for chalara ash dieback into the UK?’

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Speaking at the Fraxback Conference Dr Anne Chandelier presented detailed results from chalara spore trapping research carried out in Belgium which throw light on the situation. By trapping chalara ascospores on vertical profile she showed spore concentration was thirty times higher at 0.5m than 3.0m above ground level. Lateral movement for the majority of spores was no further than 50 m from the point of liberation.

Dr Chandelier showed that Chalara ascospores liberated from apothecia (fruiting bodies) on fallen ash leaf stalks are concentrated at only 0.5m from ground level, indicating little opportunity for lift off into the atmosphere and subsequent long distance dispersal in air currents. Moreover any ‘high flying’ spores would clearly be exposed to correspondingly high levels of UV light and stronger drying out forces compared with the same spores close to ground level.

In these respects the Chalara fraxinea situation is completely different to that for Phytophthora nanorum the spores (apicillia) of which are released from infected foliage at the tops of tall Japanese larch trees. Defra’s claim that chalara ash dieback arrived in the UK via airborne spores from Europe is clearly questioned by these findings. Evidence supporting the airborne movement of viable chalara ascospores from continental Europe and into the United Kingdom would clearly exonerate Defra from accusations that they acted too slowly in banning the import of infected ash planting material.

Moreover, there appears to be one unexplored avenue of chalara entry into the UK and a corresponding avenue of ‘escape’ for Defra. Apart from the role of infected ash planting material, comments made by Dr Chandelier’s about infected ash leaf stalks being capable of producing apothecia (chalara fruiting bodies containing ascospores) for two to three years after leaf fall raises the spectre of another avenue of disease entry into the United Kingdom. Could infected ash leaf stalks attached to the wheels of European vehicles be responsible for spreading chalara ash dieback and providing a fertile ‘unrecognised and unexplored avenue of entry for chalara ash dieback into the UK?’

Tributes to BIGGA Life Member Henry Fry

Everyone at BIGGA was saddened to hear of the passing of Henry Fry on 29 January, aged 84, following a brief illness.

A Life Member of the Association, he replaced his father when he became Head Greenkeeper at Clyne Golf Club in South Wales and was also BIGGA’s South Wales Section Secretary before his retirement in 1994. He was also a Chairman of the BIGGA, as was his father.

Gareth Dunce, Deputy Head Greenkeeper at Southerndown Golf Club in Bridgend, paid this tribute.

“Reserved and unassuming, Henry could be described as a gentleman, a man of absolute integrity, great loyalty, and worth his weight in gold – a cliché which hardly does him justice. His father Henry Fry was appointed as Clyne Golf Club’s first Head Greenkeeper in February 1920 and was directly responsible for the construction of the course as designed by golf architects H.S Colt and Harry Colt. Henry joined the greenkeeping team in September 1958 and took over the Head Greenkeeper position upon his father’s retirement in 1962. He gave many years of dedicated service on the course, often under extremely frustrating conditions. Henry was heavily involved within the industry from the start of his career and was very keen to promote all aspects of greenkeeping, and went on to become BIGGA’s South Wales Section Secretary.”

“As a well-known and respected figure during this period he assisted many colleagues and friends whilst organizing many golf days and other events, in which he could be found improving his game. He was a good golfer but never took the game too seriously. He was a great approachable figure and was happy to pass on his many years of experience and advice to younger greenkeepers.

“Henry was also well known for his mechanical skills and could often be found repairing, improving and improvising on machinery in the workshop. He was frequently many people’s first point of call regarding any mechanical problems and always offered to lend a helping hand.”

“Clyne Golf Club recognised his outstanding contribution by electing him an Honorary Life Member in 1994 and he also became a Life Member of BIGGA. To mark the end of his time at Clyne the Henry Fry Retirement Event was held in September 1994. The clearest ever indication of the respect in which Henry was held by the club’s members was the fact that he was accorded a standing ovation by the large crowd present.”

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Below: FTMI Delegates 2013

The delegates for the second Future Turf Managers Initiative made possible by Jacobsen have been announced, and they will head to Ipswich later this month for three days of superb education and networking.

The inaugural 2013 event, aimed at promising greenkeepers looking to make the step to Course Manager, was such a success BIGGA and Jacobsen have agreed to repeat it.

It will be held at Ransomes Jacobsen HQ between 25-27 March. Course Managers from some of the UK’s top golf facilities will be mentoring, there will be sessions covering everything from interview techniques to building a budget and Dr Frank Rossi Ph.D, Director of Turfgrass Agronomy at Cornell University in the USA will be the special guest speaker.

The feedback from last year’s event was terrific and Daniel Scott, Greenkeeper at Woburn Golf & Country Club, spoke for many of the attendees when he said: “It was a superb programme with excellent speakers, I learnt so much during the three days that will be relevant to my career progression.”

For 2014, the candidates will have sessions covering effective communication strategies, interview tips, volunteering opportunities at tournaments, dealing with club politics plus an open forum on challenges in the workplace.

They will work with five hugely experienced mentors – Steve Chiappelli, Head Greenkeeper at Gleneagles’ PGA Centenary Course, Matt Plested, Course Manager at Muswell Hill Golf Club, Michael Siewicki, Head Greenkeeper and Club Manager at Dunwich and Sydenham Hill Golf Club, Lee Strutt MG, Course Manager at G West and Stuart Varwood MG, Course Manager at Lynn Golf Club.

The candidates will also have a factory tour and play RJ National – the three hole course on site. They are:

- John Bateson - St Andrews Links Trust
- Sean Brocklehurst - Harpenden Common GC
- Stewart Brown - Royal Aberdeen GC
- Joe Buckley - Queenswood GC
- Duncan Caimie - Carnoustie Golf Links
- Rob Downey - Hockley GC
- James Fox - Trentham GC
- Gary Fraser - Rockcliffe Hall GC
- David Gibbons - Little Aston GC
- Kevin Glaister - Royal Mid Surrey GC
- Steven Haire - Ealing GC
- Jamie Hughes - RJ National
- Richard Jenkinson - G West
- Derrick Johnstone - The Wentworth Club
- Harry Larkins - Northamptonshire County GC
- Gregor Mackintosh - Turnberry Hotel & Golf Course
- Peter Moores - The Wentworth Club
- Graeme Roberts - Tandridge GC
- Richard Sheldon - Stonebridge GC
- Chris Taylor - Willesley Park GC
- Myles Wood - Berkhamsted GC
- Thanks to all who applied, commiserations to those who did not make it this year.

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