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As could be expected, the ground was previously poor farmland on difficult soil with considerable clay—hence, perhaps, its availability. There was a field structure with hedges and a number of mature trees, mostly oaks, some of these had obvious potential as 'features' and have been retained, with the course built around them. In fact the landscaping has enhanced them so that they are now vital to their surrounds, both from the golf point of view and visually. Their new-found importance led Martin to consider schemes to protect some of them, and in particular to protect them against lightning. Unfortunately such protection is very expensive involving multiple electrodes and conductors, and in addition there is the dilemma, as Martin observed, "just which trees do you protect? You can be certain if a tree is hit it won't be one which has been protected." As a result, to date no trees have actually been protected.

No less important to the course is the water. This is used extensively with four separate ponds and lakes providing the most challenging of hazards, although most of the six holes driven over water do offer a dry route for the faint hearted.

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From the greenkeeper's point of view the most important value of the water, unless you are a cynic who considers water as a space which does not need mowing, is that it forms a reservoir to contain rainfall for recycling in summer via irrigation – and the Oxfordshire does have a formidable irrigation system. For those who thrive on statistics, two lakes are used specifically for water storage and they have a 198,000 m³ capacity. There are nearly 1400 pop-up sprinklers fed by three pumps capable of putting out 1050 gallons a minute, and controlled individually by a Toro Network 8000 electronic controller through 46 satellite stations.

Every square foot of the course is drained – either as in the case of tees, greens and some fairways with underdrainage or elsewhere by virtue of gradients which shed surface water into catchpits, culverts and ditches, and there are some massive concrete culverts to conduct the water when an open ditch is inappropriate.

The ability of this catchment system can be judged by the fact that it has proved able to cope with the heaviest thunderstorms and in shedding this to the reservoir has lifted the level by 8° overnight.

Tees, up to seven per hole, allow for three levels of play as well as providing for winter, renovation and resting. All are fully drained and covered by irrigation, have 100mm drains at about 7m spacings, the 'sandy' root zone mix is laid to a 150mm depth.

Martin said that Rees was very much the artist who visited the course regularly during its construction but left the day to day work to his 'shapers' who were resident and very able.

Detailed drawings were made after the work was carried out, as a result Martin knows exactly where drains and irrigation lines are – not just where they should have been. The work was carried out by Southern Golf Construction of Warwick.

Greens, to the latest specification, have closer spaced drains than the tees, plus a drainage carpet, sand blinding and a greater depth of rootzone. In general the fairways rely on surface drainage, using catchment pits and culverts, all are fully irrigated usually with three lines. The roughs have similar treatment in terms of water shedding, but because many areas of rough are considered as features in their own right some of these are also subject to irrigation.

Both greens and tees were seeded at a rate of 9g/0.1m² using British Seed Houses' Pencross creeping bent, while fairways were seeded with a mix of Freda chewings fescue and Cobra creeping bent at a low rate of 17g/m². A mix of creeping fescue, chewings fescue and smooth stalk meadow grass was used for roughs at the same rate.

The fertiliser regime overall is based on controlled release compounds to provide a basic level of nutrient for all grass except the heaviest rough with rates being adjusted according to the location. This level is then 'topped up' by applications of a liquid fertiliser as required. Both soil and tissue analysis is used regularly, the former twice a year as routine, the latter - leaf analysis - carried out monthly.

Martin’s records revealed application of 329, 49 and 278 kg/ha each of N, P₂O₅ & K₂O respectively to his greens and tees, while 266, 29 and 72kg went onto the fairways which have all clippings boxed off.

Mowing, and removing the clippings, has become a well organised logistics operation using a five man team, four operating mowers and one with the clippings trailer. Greens and tees are almost exclusively mown with pedestrian machines while ride-ons are used twice or three times a week on the fairways. Plastic boxes are used extensively as intermediate containers for clippings – allowing the mower to work uninterrupted by the need to have a trailer to hand.

The clippings are an embarrassment, Martin admitted. "We compost them." However ‘composting' tends to mean tipping them in a heap to heat and rot. He is hoping to acquire additional 'rough' grassland ground close to the course so that they can be spread finely for better decomposition. One avenue he explored was to offer them to a local major grassland drying company, but they politely declined explaining that they expected their feedstock in considerably larger amounts and in longer lengths.

Electronic control of the irrigation is backed up by electronic weather data collection. One avenue he explored was to offer them to a local major grassland drying company, but they politely declined explaining that they expected their feedstock in considerably larger amounts and in longer lengths. Electronic control of the irrigation is backed up by electronic weather data collection – Martin admitted that he has become a weather junkie – however he is unrepentant, saying that the weather station yielded invaluable information such as transpiration rates, and this is a considerably more accurate basis for irrigation than his judgement and it allowed for winds, day length and other parameters which are not usually included.

This variance from his own judgement has been something of a revelation. Programming the Toro Network 8000 was undertaken by the installers, but they said that it would take about three years for the club to get it tweaked to obtain its full potential. This three year learning curve to get it just right Martin thinks was about correct.

For the first two seasons the club employed
an irrigation specialist and he has been responsible for the system, checking its function and re-programming run times for each sprinkler – however Martin is now satisfied that such a specialist is no longer needed. While the system is exceptionally sophisticated, Martin reckons it is also very easy to use.

The machinery line-up is extensive, with everything phased in as required. The majority of the mowers are Toro, because, according to Martin, their specifications matched requirements at the time. Of course there are also Kubota compacts, the UK company being Thame based. A full time mechanic is employed, this keeps machinery in top condition and also allows the course to run with a lower level of machinery. He undertakes all the mower sharpening, the policy being to both spin grind and back lap regularly, and having asked around “which is the best machine?”, the Oxfordshire ended up with Atterton & Ellis grinders.

The greenkeepers’ complex is situated close to the fourth and a useful distance from the clubhouse. It provides a full and almost lavish range of buildings and facilities, from Martin’s office through rest rooms to workshops and machinery storage, all facing a large yard and car park.

First impressions suggest that it is too large, particularly when it considered that the Oxfordshire is only an 18 hole course. However with the emphasis on perfection it is well staffed – staff numbers from 12 out of season to a high of 20 in summer. If this seems excessive perhaps it should be remembered that the Oxfordshire aspires to championship status, that it is not far from having been farmland and that the only acceptable ‘weed-killer’ for greens and tees and some of the fairways, is handwork.

In summary, from a management point of view the Oxfordshire is impressive – very impressive. From the aesthetic viewpoint I would certainly say Rees Jones fulfilled his aim and it has to be said that the landscaping works, although to be critical I find something unsettling about the sight of a parkland course full of dunes.

As to the challenge and fairness of the course, take Martin’s word, even if he is not unbiased, that it does offer something for everyone.

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SOUTH WEST

With the departure of the summer season and the onset of autumn, so thoughts turn to renovation, and by the time you read this many greenkeepers will be well into essential autumn courses which are in the process of being arranged. If, however, you feel that these apply to you, please contact me to register.

Continuing the education theme, the annual regional seminar will be held at Cannington College on November 30. This has been well supported in recent years so an early return of the application form is suggested. Among the speakers will be Mike Smith, soil scientist at Myrescough College, and David Golding from the GTC. He will be explaining the NVQ system.

This month’s events include matches against South Wales at St Pierre on October 5 and the South Coast at Marloes on October 25.

The section’s annual meeting will be held at Knowle GC on November 10. It will follow a morning of golf, lunch and a short afternoon lecture. Any proposals for discussion at the AGM should reach me in writing by the end of this month.

This year’s Summer Tournament was held at my course, Fitzoy. My greenstaff and I had the pleasure - if that’s what it can for their efforts.

This happened as John York drove from the 6th tee. His ball struck the general play tee marker in front of him and shot at an angle in the direction of the 7th green where Robin Greaves was preparing to putt out. On spotting the approaching danger, Robin took evasive action by leaping into the air only to with possibly two evenings - or even afternoons - right angles in the direction of the 7th green where Robin Greaves was preparing to putt out. On spotting the approaching danger, Robin took evasive action by leaping into the air only to be hit on the ankle, lose his balance and be unceremoniously dumped on his backside on the green. Fortunately the funny side was seen by all and little damage was done!

After some good scoring, an enjoyable day ended with an excellent meal and hospitality laid on by steward and with an excellent meal and hospitality laid on by steward and.

Some major manhandling, poking and prodding the amateur section I would like to set up a few

So I now bid you farewell. I am sure when time permits I will

SOUTH COAST

Our summer tournament at Southwick Park Golf club went well and a profit was made towards section funds. Prizes were donated by Parker Hart and Roffey Bros and we would like to thank them for once again supporting our events. Also our thanks go to the management of Southwick Park for the use of the course and to David Hinks and his team for their role. Our thanks to Mark Webber for all his efforts in the job of the organisation, they’re getting the hang of it now.

The results from the tournament were: 1st with 43 points Martin Harper and Chris Lawrence, 2nd also with 43 points Eddie Fox and Eddie Vickers and 3rd with 41 points Darren Miller and Mark Eggbeer.

The section and region’s autumn and winter events are getting underway now with the workshop on Health and Safety at Cannington College on Wednesday October 12. Also at Cannington College is the regional seminar on Tuesday November 23.

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NORTHERN SECTION
Unfortunately we were not successful in retaining the trophy during the annual Roses match, played out at Mottam Hall this year. However, the team represented by our section were: T Jarrard, L Rikrdg, G Potter, G Oxley, D Collins, A Baxter, R Johnson, M Cordingley, R Smith, M Hanann, D Cockburn, P Marshall, A Gerrard and O H Storey.

Congratulations to you Bert Cross and your Lancashire team, but I am confident that the Northern Section will win the trophy back next year. I must also thank Peter Marshall and Pattissons for their kind sponsorship of this event, I do hope this continue for the coming years.

Our Invitation Day took place at Harrogate Golf Club. The results were as follows; 1, M Hanann - D Robbins 62; 2, A Gerrard - B Gerrard 63; 3, A Baxter - A Taylor 63; VPs - 1, M Guy - D Sidebottom 65; 2, N Schofield - D McPherson 68; 3, A Dyson - R Donaldson 71; nearest the pin - Joe White; putting competition winners - Nellie (Ransomes); highest score - K Millington - H Storey.

Congratulations to all the winners. Firstly, thanks to Harrogate Golf Club for allowing us the use of their beautiful course and clubhouse. Thank you to the Club captain Mr Robinson for giving us a warm welcome and presenting the prizes to the lucky winners. Thanks must also go to Tony Baday, the course manager and his team for preparing a beautiful course for us. Thank you to John Price and his colleagues Tony Dodson who represented our main sponsors on the day, Yorkshire Mowers. The prize table was splendid and appreciated by all members - especially the winners. Thank you for your sponsorship and I hope this will continue in the future. Other prizes donated on the day came from Liam Galway (I had been called in at Bracken Clays to represent the Greenkeeping Supply Company, Norman Schofield of Rhone-Poulenc, and Gerald Brady of Rhone-Poulenc, and Norman Sheddon of Adeka Ltd. The great award for the most competitive - VPs to Harrogate again in January. A bus will take people down on the Tuesday evening and return after the exhibition closes on the Friday. There is no entry fee, so if you wish to be interested should be ready for the forms coming and return them promptly.

Copies of the proposed review to take the Association into the future are in my care and available to any member who contacts me.

Finally, a belated good wish message to Allan Grant who retired earlier this year at Frasburgh GC. We will see him out but in the meantime we wish him all the best for a stress-free retirement.

SURREY
There were more than 50 entries for the latest McIlvan Tankard at Sunningdale Golf Club. Thanks to Jack McIlvan for presenting the prizes and to Geoff Cotton for donating an additional prize of which our Surrey Section were most grateful. Results are as follows; 1, J Roberts 37 on countback; 2, G Kyle 37; 3, G Roberts 36.

Members interested in attending next year's BTME at Harrogate should contact David Andrews on 061 6512522 as a courtesy and accommodation need to be booked.

Tickets for our company-dance at Regent Manor Hotel on November 11 are still available. Anybody interested please contact your committee members. Tickets are priced at £15. Three course meal plus disco inclusive.

The first winter lecture has been set for November 9 7.30pm at Kingswood Golf and Country Club. The lecture by Bill Oliver of Hardy Sprayers will be held in the Warren Room.

For forthcoming events include the Autumn Tournament, this year held at Burhill Golf Club on October 20 and also this year's Turkey Trot at Kingswood Golf & Country Club on December 8. Members of our section do not have handcups and wish to enter competition can submit cards to our handicap secretary, Tony Lafarte c/o Regent Heath Golf Club, Flanchford Road, Reigate, Surrey.

Please also ensure that competition entry forms are returned to Derek Walder on time as late entries will not be included. Any information of interest to other members that you may like to be included within this article please contact me on 0373 852015.

LONDON
Our summer golf tournament was held at Dyker Park Golf and Country Club. The day was a great success and I would like to thank Don Wilson and his staff for preparing the course. The conditions were perfect although the wind did cause one or two problems for most of us. The winner with 36 points was Terry Covill and the runners up were Ian Semple with 35 points and Barry Morgan with 34 points. The longest drive was won by Ian Semple and the nearest pin prize was won by Darren Davis. The winner of the putting competition was our chairman, Doug Smith. The guest prize was won by the captain of Dyker Park Golf Club, Ian Cartwright.

I would like to thank Dyker Park for the excellent hospitality and that was there on offer throughout the day. A special thank-you to the club for supporting us and for providing the funds for the event to proceed.

Our next golf event is the Turkey trot on Wednesday November 23 at Sandy Lodge GC. Details should have reached everyone by now. Those who are playing should contact the secretary as soon as possible. For details of the prize table please contact Mr Cartwright, the captain. A bus will take people down on the morning of the event. Details should have reached everyone by now. Those who are playing should contact the secretary as soon as possible. For details of the prize table please contact Mr Cartwright, the captain. A bus will take people down on the morning of the event.

CENTRAL SCOTLAND
Another Autumn/Winter season, James, (The Viking) Duncan, has joined the trek south of the border. He is leaving Aberdeen GC, where he has been since leaving school, to become first assistant at Bughton GC, Tavermarn, Kent. James has been an ast and helpful support in every situation and there is a strong rumour (started by someone with the initials MJ) that he has moved because the 'pats' beat the Roxers recently. Best wishes and every success for the future! Keep in Touch.

Twelve teams entered the five-a-side tournament, with a good mixture of greenkeepers and trade members. Results will appear next month.

A welcome to Jonathan Franks and Robert Twaddle from British Seed Houses will be held at Aberdeen GC after the afternoon of Tuesday November 8 (not as previously published). Details should have reached everyone by now. The AGM will be held at a date to be announced - please contact the secretary for details.

The next section meeting will be held at Harrogate again in January. A bus will take people down on the Tuesday evening and return after the exhibition closes on the Friday. There is no entry fee, so if you wish to be interested should be ready for the forms coming and return them promptly.

The section AGM will be held at Aberdonian Bridge, on Tuesday November 29, prior to which there will be a talk on aeration practices by Gordon Allardice, contract manager at STS.

DEYN AND CORNWALL
Unfortunately I couldn't attend the National Tournament which was held at Dartmouth Golf and Country Club. All members who played in the tournament were full of praise. Our congratulations to Terry Farkkis and his staff who presented the course as near to perfection as possible.

The section's AGM will be held at Landrake GC, Bodmin, on Wednesday November 23. As usual the morning's foursome competition will be for the Tors Trophy with prizes kindly donated by ‘Davy’ Davison of Davison Machinery and Ley. Non-playing members will have a guided tour of the course during the morning with head greenkeeper morgan Martin as your host. The AGM will follow lunch. Our region's seminar will be held on Wednesday November 30 at Camborne College. If you haven't booked your place yet, contact Gordon Child on 0800 844056. RICHARD WHYMANT

EAST MIDLANDS
This month we welcome Luke Chisholm manor GC to our section. Congratulations go again this month to Richard Barker and David Leatherman on finishing second in an excellent achievement at Dave's home course, Keedleston Park, with a score of 13 under par.

The excellent condition of the section's pairs K/O tournament is L De Pard and P Tawton of Keedleston Park, they beat C James and D James &2 at Redgrave Priory GC.

Finally a reminder to all members that this year's AGM will take place at Ullesthorpe Country Club and Country Club on November 16 at 4.30pm.

ANTONY BINDERLY

SHEFFIELD
The Sheffield section AGM will be held at Rotherham GC on Thursday November 3rd after our winter league event.

NORTHERN REGION
The sun shone again for the righteous at this year's Hayter Challenge Final at Panmore GC. Over 100 members turned up to a most familiar and familiar sight for the Northern Region which team consisted of Tony Mears, Ian Hutton, Gary Potter, Alan Bader, John Waite, David Spurden, Chris Powley, Chris Fiddell and John Jones. Our thanks go to our generous sponsors Hayter and Pannell's new head greenkeeper, Kevin Wroe, for presenting the course so well for the competition.

I should like to thank the Northern team and, as we were discussing at the banquet, the cheques will be in the post.

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