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PT8 – the go everywhere trencher!
Scott MacCallum headed to the west of Scotland to visit a new course designed by the same man who gave us Kingsbarns on the east.

There is a degree of rivalry in the MacCallum household based on the fact that I come from the east coast of Scotland while my wife is a west coaster. I have to put up with little homilies like "East is east, but West is best" and complaints about how cold she finds the east. But I counter with official Met Office statistics which confirm that it rains 365 days of the year in the west while the east coast has sunshine records which better even the Bahamas. Usually we agree to have sunshine records which better even the Bahamas. Usually we agree to

Recently I was able to blow the east's trumpet about the wonderful new Kingsbarns Golf Club which just happens to be on the east coast, just a couple of miles from St Andrews, the Home of Golf... which is also to be found on the west

However the west is fighting back with a new course designed by the same man who gave us Kingsbarns.

Kyle Phillips is casting his spell over southern Gailes which is currently under construction in Irvine, in an area which already, even to this East Coast, must rank as one of the richest golfing seams to be found anywhere in the country.

It borders two fine courses, Western Gailes and Glasgow Gailes with Barassie not too far away and Royal Troon and Prestwick within shouting distance. The ambition is that the new course will more than earn its place among such exalted company.

Philips was asked to look at the site.

...a traditional Ayrshire golf course and the one for this one. He looked at it and was very upbeat about what he found," he recalled.

The original routing plan was completed in June 2000 and the sod cutting ceremony performed in August of last year.

Kyle has visited the site every four or five weeks since and there have been considerable changes to his original thoughts and design.

"You can easily do contour drawings but when you see the earth moving you can tweak the design then," explained Alistair.

Kyle Phillips has used the four corners of the compass on the design and has cleverly shielded the golfer from the massive paper mill building which is a few hundred yards from the site on the vast majority of the holes.

"It is a bit of an eyesore and if people are here to play golf they'd rather be looking out to sea than at a paper mill," he said.

The course also boasts the distinctive Phillips' greens.

"He has his own thoughts about a greens. You could say that some of them could be defined as square but he has target areas on which he looks to give potential pin positions. You certainly wouldn't describe them as an American-designed green."

Alistair and John Souter, who are Co-Directors in Grass Technology International were asked if they would be interested in looking after the course and were interested in looking after the outside bodies who had an interest in the project.

"It was the likes of Scottish Natural Heritage and Scottish Wildlife and we had to liaise with them and agree on the final spec of rootzones etc to assist with the planning requirements," he said.

"That was how I got involved initially and then I was asked if I would be interested in coming to work for the company and having had a greenkeeping background, for over 30 years I did miss the day-to-day involvement of golf and it was something I felt I could get my teeth
One of the distinctive Kyle Phillips greens under construction.

into," said Alistair, who currently works four days a week at Southern Gailes.

"My role now is Golf Course Director and I'm part of a team of directors and it is my role to oversee the construction of the course, act as the middle man between Kyle Phillips and the Directors and grow-in the course to a playable standard."

One of the main decisions taken was to put together an in-house team to do the construction.

"To construct a golf course you can have an open cheque book but we had a budget to build a course and felt that it could be done in-house at a cost that wouldn't frighten anyone off. We've proved it can be done. We've used a subcontractor to do some of the muck shifting and hauling of materials and we're still on target to come in on budget.

"One shaper, Jeff Puff, an American based in Wales who was brought in on the recommendation of Kyle Phillips and he does all the shaping to the architectural drawings and works closely with Kyle."

Alistair put together a crew comprising greenkeepers from neighbouring clubs who can do the finishing work and the growing in of the course and they have all had to get used to the problems of working on pure sand.

"Wind is the problem. The name Gailes says it all and for a large percentage of the year there is a wind blowing from one corner of the site and it sometimes proves difficult to stabilise the sand. At the early stage we had a state-of-the-art irrigation system from Rainbird installed with which we've managed to minimise the blow-out.

"We have 85% take at the moment and the other 15% can be done during the work carried out over the winter."
The team stripped a 15 acre site on the edge of the course of rootzone and used some of this to build the two and a half metre high dunes which define much of the course's perimeter. Such is the quality of natural rootzone Southern Gailes has been able to sell some of it to off-set cost.

"It's been used to construct football pitches in Glasgow including Murray Park the new state-of-the-art Glasgow Rangers training facility while we've also offered it to other local golf clubs."

Part of the site includes EEC grassland areas and the planning restrictions meant that no dune structure could be higher than two and a half metres above ground.

"We are now on those critical grassland areas which were part of the old overgrown Dundonald golf course over which Southern Gailes is laid out and the grasses have lovely fescues in them and we want to retain those indigenous grasses to retain the links feel."

Another element which had to be taken into consideration was the trees with 32 acres of fir trees on the site.

"The site is about 320 acres but about 33 acres were fir trees planted when the Government were giving tree planting grants in the 70s."

"We had no problem with the planners who said the trees were a blot on the landscape and a contractor came in and gave us a price for removing them and the money we made from the job gave the construction crew and the rest of the staff a nice Christmas party last year."

The rolling dunes are all man-made

"Hopefully we will have some play in July of next year and if not we'll wait until the August but as we speak we are quietly confident that a given a good break with the weather in the winter and spring we will remain on course."

One of the aspects which pleases Alistair the most is the employment the new project is bringing to the area. "We feel we are putting something back into Ayrshire by way of jobs. We've got a clubhouse, a golf course and will have a hotel and it will bring tourists to the area and that brings jobs."

On a personal note Alistair hasn't yet made up his mind about the future. "I would like to stay for three years and by then this course will be complimenting the other very good courses it has around it, but beyond that I don't know what will happen."

Once matured the new Southern Gailes course will, undoubtedly and some might say unfortunately, become another valuable addition to the west coast's case when it comes to the great east-west debate.
As a member of the Greenkeepers Training Committee, BIGGA is actively involved in raising the standard of Greenkeeper Training. The range and quality of training now available means that there is a training course for every greenkeeper which should improve the quality of greenkeeping and help to produce quality golf courses.

Golf Course Managers should ensure that their staff are trained to the highest standards, beginning by selecting a training provider that meets the criteria laid down by the GTC.

There is a clear link between education, training and economic success and if you think that training is expensive then try ignorance.

Ken Richardson
Education and Training Manager,
British and International Golf Greenkeepers Association
Tel: 01347 833800
Email: education@bigga.co.uk
Website: www.bigga.org.uk

The Greenkeepers Training Committee (GTC) is continually striving to raise the standards of Golf Course Maintenance and Management and they are totally committed to ensuring that the range of qualifications are relevant to the Sportsturf sector and used by Employers for recruitment and by trainees for their own personal development.

The Government endorsed awards range from National/Scottish Vocational Qualifications (N/SVQ's) to the more academic Higher National Certificate (HNC)/National Diploma (ND)/Higher National Diploma (HND) in Golf Course Management and the Degree in Sportsturf Science.

The qualifications are continually under review by the National Training Organisation (NTO) in association with the GTC. The quality of the delivery of these awards by the network of GTC Approved Training Providers is also constantly monitored by the GTC.

For up to date independent advice on qualifications, education and training courses contact the GTC on:-
Tel: 01347 838640
Email: golf@the-gtc.co.uk
Website: www.the-gtc.co.uk
GREENKEEPER TRAINING

ABINGDON AND WITNEY COLLEGE, Warren Farm Campus, Wester-cum-Shadwell, Oxford, OX3 3HY Contact: Alan Brown or John Reyns Tel: 01908 331791 Fax: 01908 358913 Email: classes@abingdon-witney.ac.uk Website: www.abingdon-witney.ac.uk Information: Warren Farm Campus is the new home for Abingdon and Witney College’s education and training in Greenkeeping, Sportsturf, Arable Horticulture and hill based courses for the whole of Oxfordshire. Courses include: NVQ Levels 2 to 3 in Sportsturf, Environment Horticulture and Field Landscape. We also offer a range of short courses for the industry including Health & Safety, pesticide training and Chainsaw operation. For more information contact either Alan Brown or John Reyns on Tel: 01908 331794 or Fax: 01908 358913.

ASGARD BRYAN COLLEGE, Ardcham Bryan, York, North Yorkshire YO12 5JR Contact: Central Admissions Tel: 01704 772294 Fax: 01704 772286 Email: office@asgbryan.ac.uk Website: www.asgbryan.ac.uk Information: National Certificate in Horticulture, National Diploma in Horticulture (Turf Option), Higher National Diploma in Horticulture (Self Management Option) all available full or part time. Block based courses: NVQ Level 2 Greenkeeping, NVQ Level 3 Greenkeeping and Specialist Maintenance, NVQ Level 4 Amenity Horticulture. Short courses: FEPA spraying, chairman and Backcutter courses.

BERKSHIRE COLLEGE OF AGRICULTURE, Ruff Place, Buncton Green, Maidenhead, Berkshire SL6 6OF Contact: Tel: 01628 824444 Fax: 01628 824905 Email: enquiries@berkscollege.ac.uk Website: www.berkscollege.ac.uk Information: Full-time programmes - BTFC First & National Diploma. Part-time programmes - NVQ 2 & 3 Amenity Horticulture, Sports Turf. (day and block release). Short courses - Greenkeeping for golfers, NVQ Chain Link Competence Certificates, Spray Operation Training Courses.

BRINSBURY COLLEGE, Pullough, West Sussex, BN26 6EX Contact: Tel: 01903 877460 Fax: 01903 875222 Email: student-services@brinsbury.ac.uk Website: www.brinsbury.ac.uk Information: FRTM: National Diploma in Horticulture (Greenkeeping option). BTFC First Diploma new (Ent extinct Horticulture (Greenkeeping option), National Certificate Horticulture (Greenkeeping & Sports Turf option), Part-Time NVQ Sports Turf Maintenance (day release or work based), NVQ2 Amenity Horticulture (Greenkeeping & Sports Turf options), plus various short courses including Chainsaw, Brushcutter/Strimmer, Pastry/Cake/Pastry etc.

BROOKSBY MELTON COLLEGE, Brooksbury, Melton Mowbray, Leicester LE12 7UJ Contact: Amber Hurst/Terry Lees Tel: 01664 855850 Fax: 01664 855355 Email: info@brooksbymelton.ac.uk Website: www.brokbsburymelton.ac.uk Information: Situated on the A41/A46 between Leicester, Melton Mowbray and Nottingham. Programmes available include NVQ Level II, III & IV in Greenkeeping. Work based emphasis for all of these programmes. Short courses available in Arboriculture/Chainsaw work, TEFL Training and Pesticide application training.

CANNINGHAM COLLEGE, Canningham Bridgemead, Swindon, Wiltshire SN2 2EG Contact: Philip Sharples Tel: 01793 465994 Fax: 01793 465895 Email: sharples@canningham.ac.uk Website: www.canningham.ac.uk Information: BTFC (Horticulture) 1 year Diploma in Horticulture (Sports Turf Option), BTFC National Diploma in Horticulture (Arable Science), Higher National Certificate Golf Course Management, BTFC First Diploma, BTFC National Diploma in Golf Course Management, Foundation Degree in Golf Course Management, Foundation Degree in Topsoils Science and Technology, NVQ Level 2 Golf Greenkeeping, NVQ Level 3 Greenkeeping and Supervision Management, FEPA - Training, Chairwork Certification, Off-road Vehicle Certification, Greenkeeper Mechanics Certification, Certificate in Horticulture (BCA) 1 week course: national Certificate in Greenkeeping (CMA) 11 week course: Foundation Degree - part-time option (150). Chest HCW 2 yr day release course.

EAST DIHURAH AND HOUGHAL COMMUNITY COLLEGE, Houghall, Durham, DH7 8SG Contact: Tel: 0191 386 1351 Fax: 0191 386 0490 Email: enquiries@hbc.ac.uk Website: www.hbc.ac.uk Information: Full-time courses - National Certificate in Horticulture/Greenkeeping and Groundsmanship, 1 year: National Diploma in Horticulture/Turf Option - 2 years, Greenkeeping and Specialist maintenance NVQ Level 2 - Day Release, NVQ Level 3 Greenkeeping and Sportsturf Maintenance Day Release. Short courses: FEPA Modules, Chairwork certification, tree inspections, Horticultural Machinery, Safe Lifting and First Aid.


MERRISSTOWN COLLEGE, Werpleland, Guildfield, Surrey GU5 3PX Contact: David Rhidde Tel: 01483 884081 Fax: 01483 884081 Email: info@merrisstown.ac.uk Website: www.merrisstown.ac.uk Information: Full-time courses - Games, Horticulture Management, National Diploma in Groundscaping & Sports Turf Management. Part-time course on NVQ Amenity Horticulture Level 2 and 3 in the workplace - we come to you, NVQ Amenity Horticulture Sports Turf Maintenance Level 2, NVQ Amenity Horticulture Sports Turf Maintenance Level 3 (afternoon/evening release), HNC Turf Science (afternoon/evening release), now for 2002 - HNC Turf Science and NVQ Level 4, various short courses throughout the year. Please contact us for up-to-date listings and information.

MYERSCOUGH COLLEGE, Bilsborrow, Preston, Lancashire PR5 6QB Contact: Tel: 01945 422114 Fax: 01945 422333 Email: mailroom@myerscough.ac.uk Website: www.myerscough.ac.uk Information: Full-time courses - BF (Arable), Turf Grass Science, HNC Turf Science and Golf Course Management. HNC Turf Science. HNC Groundsmanship and Greenkeeping. First Diploma, Turf Science, NVQ Level 2, 3 & 4 Greenkeeping. Greenkeeping course delivered both in the work place and over the internet using the college’s ‘Virtual Campus’. Also offer D32/D33 in the work place. Part-time courses NVQ Level 2 & 3 Greenkeeping and Sportsturf. Sportsturf Maintenance (day/black release or fixed work based training qualifications). HNC Turf Science and Golf Course Management. HNC Turf Science: FEPA Short courses.

NESCOG - North East Survey College of Technology, Reigate Road, Ewell, Epsom, Surrey KT17 3DS Contact: Mr C Smith Tel: 0208 314 3220 Email: info@nescog.co.uk Website: www.nescog.co.uk Information: NVQ Levels 1, 2 & 3 in Amenity Horticulture (Greenkeeping options). Pesticide Application - Certificate of Competence. Part-time Day Release. Duration: Two years. Level II: FEPA Spraying Courses. Also available - RHS General and Advanced Certificates in Horticulture.

OAKLANDS COLLEGE, Oaklands Campus, Hatfield Road, St Albans, Hertfordshire AL1 4DA Contact: Ian Merrick Tel: 01727 275000 Fax: 01727 275752 Email: ian.merrick@oaklands.ac.uk Website: www.oaklands.ac.uk Information: Full-time programmes - National Certificate in Greenkeeping and Sports Turf Management. Part-time programmes - leading to NVQ Level 2, 3 & 3 Greenkeeping, Modern Apprenticeships. Evening Courses: leading to NVQ Level 4. Short courses: Multi-cut, Chainsaw.

PLUMPTON COLLEGE, Lees, East Sussex BN23 6AE Contact: David Blackmur Tel: 01273 928942 Fax: 01273 900071 Email: enquiries@plumpton.ac.uk Website: www.plumpton.ac.uk Information: National Diploma in Amenity Horticulture (options in Landscaping and Sportsturf); National Certificate in Amenity Horticulture; First Diploma in Horticulture. Part-time courses: NVQ Level 1, 2 & 3 Amenity Horticulture in Decorative, Nurseries, Hard Landscape and Sportsturf, Level 1 Amenity in Decorative and Sportsturf, Level 4 Amenity. Also available are RHS General and Advanced and RHS National Technical and National Diploma (int). Short courses are also available for FEPA spraying and chainsaw courses.

REASEHEATH COLLEGE, Nantwich, Cheshire CW5 6DF Contact: Tel: 01270 625513 Fax: 01270 625665 Email: brian@reaseheath.ac.uk Website: www.reaseheath.ac.uk Information: Full-time First Diploma Horticulture (Sportsturf option); NVQ levels 1, 2 & 3 in Horticulture (Sportsturf option). Part-time courses - BTEC Higher National Diploma Golf Course Management. 3 years. Part-time: HNC Golf Course Management with Open Learning option, NVQ Levels 3 & 4 Greenkeeping with fast track options. NVQ courses available. Short courses: FEPA Chemical Safety, Safe Lifting, Chainsaw, Off-road Vehicle Driving, First Aid.
This guide is not exhaustive and a full list of GTC approved training providers can be obtained from the GTC. The Greenkeepers Training Committee (GTC) is continually reviewing the approved status of training providers offering greenkeeper training courses. Anyone with a query regarding greenkeeper training should contact the Greenkeeper Training Committee at Aldwark Manor, Aldwark, Alne, York YO61 1UF, Tel: 01347 838646 or visit their website at http://www.thegtc.co.uk

**Available courses guide**

**SPARSHOLT COLLEGE HAMPSHIRE**

- **College of Horticulture**
- **National Botanic Gardens**, Glasnevin, Dublin DUBLIN 9

- **Information:** Block release courses in greenkeeping providing Level III Certificates by the National Council of Vocational Awards. Level III Certificate in Golf Course Management.

- **Courses:** Full-time and part-time courses in Greenkeeping, Grounds Maintenance, Golf Course Management, Horticulture, Land and Environment and Applied Ecology. Short courses for land-based industries including Risk Assessment and Pesticides.

- **Contact:** 01352 841031
- **Website:** www.bridgend.ac.uk
- **Fax:** 01656 302672
- **Email:** pfdiscombe@bridgend.ac.uk

- **PENCOED COLLEGE**

- **College of Horticulture**

- **Contact:** 01353 869490

- **Courses:** Pesticide application, Chairman Operation and many others.

- **Website:** www.pencoed.ac.uk


**WELSH COLLEGE OF HORTICULTURE**

- **Contact:** Grahame Wright Tel: 01352 843011 Fax: 01352 843011

- **Website:** www.wchc.ac.uk

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Richard Windows takes up the cudgels against the dreaded thatch

IN THE Groove

An essential attribute of golf greens is that they are firm underfoot and free draining. Unfortunately this condition is often difficult to obtain due to the presence of thatch beneath many putting surfaces. Thatch restricts drainage and naturally holds water, producing a soft, spongy turf. Consequently, thatch control is one of the main aims of the greenkeeper. The recent availability of two deep scarification units in the UK will provide the greenkeeper with a much more efficient and less disruptive form of thatch removal, providing golfers with higher quality putting surfaces.

The fight against Thatch!

Thatch is an organic material, which can naturally accumulate in the soil profile, as grass leaves and roots go through a continuous process of senescence and death. Organic build up is possible in every kind of plant community, but in intensively managed turf areas the process is accelerated due to excess growth from possible over application of fertiliser and irrigation water. In a healthy soil/turf situation, natural microbial action will start to break down this organic ‘litter’ and it will subsequently become incorporated into the organic fraction of the soil. When the rate of dead plant tissue accumulation exceeds that of natural microbial digestion, thatch in the soil profile accumulates.

Excessive thatch can restrict the free passage of water through the soil profile as the pore spaces between the soil particles can be reduced or blocked. This type of damp, often nutrient rich environment is a relatively attractive place for grass roots to colonise, especially those of annual meadow grass. Therefore thatchy soil profiles gen-
The advent of the newly developed deep scarification machines will provide Greenkeepers with a more effective method of thatch removal; the Graden VS003 Verti-cutter and the Sisis Auto-Rotorake 600 are the two machines currently available. Both operate similarly and can achieve penetration to a depth of 40–50 mm on most types of soil. The former was developed for use on Australian cricket pitches. The study by the USGA Greens Section showed that a deep scarification machine fitted with 2 mm blades impacts 7.9% of the turf surface and one fitted with 3 mm blades impacts 14.1% of the surface. It is clear that these figures are almost double and triple the surface area impacted compared to more conventional 12 mm hollow coring. These statistics are impressive but the question often asked by turf managers is ‘how much disruption does the operation cause?’ The answer to this is simple, invariably very little. Essentially the grooves look like a severe verti-cut operation and if the operation is achieved during periods of active grass growth the ‘grooves’ quickly recover and the surface is back to normal within a few days. The ‘grooves’ have proved to be excellent preparation to work top dressing into the surface and provide an ideal seedbed for over sown grass seed.

A further benefit from such an operation is the grinding effect of the rapidly revolving blades against buried sand and thatch. This is similar to a ‘chewing’ action as the sand particles rub against the thatch, which hopefully exposes a greater surface area of thatch to the enzymatic action of the natural soil micro flora, i.e. bacteria and fungi. Therefore the natural rate of thatch breakdown is often increased by microbial action at the same time of physically removing the unwanted material.

Grooving for Golf

Many golf greens contain thin 2-3 mm layers of buried thatch in the top 40 mm of the soil profile, which are very difficult to remove by conventional coring as the layers re-seal themselves soon after treatment. These thin layers can inhibit the free passage of water through the soil profile and encourage lateral rooting and differential drying amongst the layers resulting in the loss of surface uniformity. This is wholly undesirable as free draining, homogenous soil profiles that can support deeply rooted, uniform grass swards are one of the fundamentals of turf management. Therefore it is vital to remove these layers and the deep scarification operation is proving to be effective and popular among greenkeepers to achieve this goal.

The 2 mm blades used during late August/September, when grass growth is still active, is providing a very effective approach to removal of these layers. This operation should then be combined with the top dressing of a good quality sandy material so that surface level disturbance is minimal. For serious thatch problems, or management of creeping or velvet bentgrass greens, use of the 3 mm blades through the main playing season will also provide the greenkeeper with an effective tool against continual thatch build up and removal.

The concept

The concept of a deep scarification is a good and exciting one. It has been popular in the U.S. and Australia for a while now and early assessments in the U.K. are very encouraging indeed. The simple fact that more thatch material is removed, allowing more air and therefore natural thatch break down to result makes it very popular amongst Greenkeepers. These desirable attributes are further complemented by the fact that disruption is minimal and superb grooves for top dressing and over seeding are left behind. Therefore the concept of deep scarification provides the greenkeeper with a valuable tool in the constant battle against the arch enemy that is thatch.


Richard Windows is an STRI Turfgrass Agronomist covering South Scotland. Richard and the rest of the STRI team can be contacted on 01274 565131, email: info@stri.co.uk or visit our website http://www.stri.co.uk/