The timing was right because if I had stayed at Moor Park I wouldn’t have had the time to get involved with BIGGA or the other work I’ve been able to do since,” said Gordon.

When it became a reality in 1987 Gordon, ably assisted by wife, Marion, who has been a constant companion, became a volunteer Regional Administrator for the SW and South Wales and remained so until the role became a salaried position in 1997.

Gordon is particularly proud of the Westurf Show, at Living Ashton Golf Club, which ran for 10 years and which ensured that the Region was financially secure for many years.

Another success was the creation of the Cannington College golf course for which he was a key mover, along with Jim Arthur and, another close friend, golf course architect, Martin Hawtree.

“I went over and he looked familiar but I couldn’t place him,” said the man who still plays three times a week and who has been known to take up golf again and Churston. “I’m the guy who saved your life and I’ve been hearing about your golf so I must have done a good job!”

Marion had encouraged him to take up golf again and Churston, in the early 1990s, had initially given him a handicap of 12. It was cut in half by the end of the first season and he is currently standing at 4, with his 80th birthday in May. “My final golfing ambition was to be playing to single figures when I hit 80 so I think I’m going to make it,” said the man who still plays three times a week, often 36 holes in a day, and only on a rare bad day does he fail to beat his age.

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“As he prepares to enter his 80s Gordon will have another shot to play with so that achievement will go on for some time to come.

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Marion Child

Indeed, the quality of his golf saw him play off -2 in his prime and compete in two Open Championships - the Centenary Open at St Andrews in 1960 and five years later, appropriately at Royal Birkdale.

As he looks back on a life full of enjoyment and achievement is it any wonder that smile is never far away?
Focus on Fusarium

the foremost disease of UK turf

At first sight turf appears to suffer from surprisingly severe foliar disease given the relatively small proportion of grass shoot and leaf displayed on frequently cut and well-managed swards.

However, with wider and deeper consideration it is easy to see why a perennial ecosystem perpetually wounded by mowing, stressed in summer from drought and heavy traffic then flushed with fertiliser under moist misty autumn conditions is susceptible to fungal infection and disease spread.

Fungal pathogens are present year round in thatch and spread by traffic and turf machinery to gain easy entry through cut leaf surfaces and develop more rapidly on physiologically under-par turf grass.

Sports turf in the United Kingdom suffers from around a dozen different foliar diseases but one stands head and shoulders above the rest in spread, severity, damage and cost of control.

Fusarium is a fast moving disease and once established can only be eradicated by the use of fast acting curative fungicides.

However, there is still a lot the greenkeeper and groundsman can do to minimise infection and reduce the rate spread and damage caused should Fusarium patch disease appear.

Success lies in deep knowledge of the pathogen and the disease and by establishing through the seasons and over the years those management practices which minimise infection and development.

At this scenic golf course was carved out of natural forest but excessive shading of greens could encourage Fusarium.

Typical circular tan-coloured areas of Fusarium Patch caused by Microdochium nivale (Picture courtesy Vitax)
Focus on Fusarium

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Dr Terry Mabbett takes an in-depth look at the most prolific turf disease in the country.

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More than half of all professional football pitches are affected by Fusarium on an occasional basis and one fifth of local authority pitches where disease monitoring is generally less. As much as 80% of all fungicide applications to UK sports turf are targeted at Fusarium although other diseases are managed at the same time especially by broad-spectrum fungicides.

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This scenic golf course was carved out of natural forest but excessive shading of greens could encourage Fusarium.
GI

**Features**

Round on the thatch in saprophytic the fungus is present in turf year name. Grasses maintain the Fusarium infective association with M. nivale which are sometimes found in pathogens including Fusarium cul turf is particularly susceptible to M. areas with regular snow cover that stay.

UK knows the disease as Fusarium because symptoms may appear as a tionally called pink snow mould the name from Fusarium nivale Pink snow mould is still appropri

**February 2011**

- Poor drainage favours Fusarium especially in the autumn
- Annual meadow grass (Poa annua) is particularly susceptible to Fusarium Patch, while high availability and management practice provide ideal conditions for infection by M. nivale and its subsequent development and spread. They include:
  - Humid atmosphere, shade and surface wetness especially when accompanied by cool temperature conditions
  - Inadequate circulation of air above the grass aw

**Microdochium nivale**

Fusarium patch is caused by a fungus now called Microdochium nivale after mycologists changed the name from Fusarium nivale some years ago. The disease is addition ally called pink snow mould because symptoms may appear as a distinct pink colouration after perio
des of prolonged snow cover. There was talk of changing the common name to Microdochium Patch (as in North America) but everyone in the UK knows the disease as Fusarium Patch and that is the way it should stay.

Pink snow mould is still appropri because it reminds Managers in areas with regular snow cover that turf is particularly susceptible to M. vivale at this time. Closely related pathogens including Fusarium culurum and Fusarium avenaceum which are sometimes found in infeecive association with M. nivale on grasses maintain the Fusarium impact. Microdochium nivale success is multi-fold. First and foremost the fungus is present in turf year round on the thatch in saprophytic feeding on dead decaying organic mat ter or weakly parasitic mode. Secondly the pathogenic fungus is active over the wide range of temperature typically found in cool temperate climates during the cal en year that can be capable of growing at temperatures as low as 21 F (6 C) and up to about 86 F (30 C).

Thirdly the fungus is not too funny about the type of turf grass attacked and is found infecting all mainstream turf grasses including Agrostis, Festuca, Poa and Lolium species. Equally important is pathogen preference for fertile soil, especially where excess nitrogen has been applied in autumn during inappropriate attempts to boost grass growth and green up turf after summer drought and heavy wear and tear.

The fungus grows over a wide range of temperature but other conditions are required before it can move into top parasitic growth. Prolonged periods of high humidity and surface wetness coinciding with cool temperatures make Fusarium a high risk disease for spring as well as autumn, especially after over done nitrogen fertiliser application.

**Symptoms of Fusarium patch**

General descriptions of plant disease are largely subjective and in the eye of the beholder and that documented for Fusarium Patch is no exception.

General consensus has Fusar ium down as circular patches on the turf, first appearing as water soaked spots less than two inches (5 cm) in width, then quickly chang ing its colour from orange brown to dark reddish brown and eventually to tan or straw colouration.

If the disease goes unchecked small sized reddish brown spots may start to appear at water soaked areas during inappropriate attempts to boost grass growth and green up turf after summer drought and heavy wear and tear.

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**FEBRUARY 2011**

- Poor drainage favours Fusarium especially in the autumn
- Annual meadow grass (Poa annua) is particularly susceptible to Fusarium Patch disease although there are some marked differences which can be exploited.

Annual meadow grass (Poa annua) is particularly susceptible to Fusarium especially in the autumn when cool and moist environment al conditions bearing down on summer-stressed turf are ideal for disease development.

Poa annua is not a resilient grass, being highly susceptible to heat stress and drought stress and prone to cold injury, all of which clearly contribute to high disease susceptibility through autumn and into winter.

Agrostis species including Agrostis stolonifera (creeping bentgrass) are very susceptible to Fusarium Patch. Brownspot bent (Agrostis stolonifera ‘Highland’) is more prone than cultivars of Agrostis capillaris. Lolium perenne (perennial ryegrass). Poa praten (smooth staked meadow grass) and Festuca species are somewhat less susceptible.

They have a low to medium thatching tendency compared with Poa annua and Agrostis species which is medium to high.

There appears to be positive correlation between high thatching tendency and frequency of bilar disease including Fusarium Patch. High nitrogen availability which generates soft succulent growth increases turf susceptibility to Fusarium Patch, while high available soil potassium has the reverse effect.

**Factors pre-disposing to Fusarium Patch**

- Poor drainage favours Fusarium especially in the autumn

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**Symptoms of Fusarium patch**

1. General descriptions of plant disease are largely subjective and in the eye of the beholder and that documented for Fusarium Patch is no exception.
2. General consensus has Fusarium patch as circular patches on the turf, first appearing as water-soaked spots less than two inches (5 cm) in width, then quickly changing its colour from orange brown to dark reddish brown and eventually to tan or straw colouration.
3. The disease may grow and spread slowly at first with some weeks passing before detection, but under wet and overcast conditions and within a wide range of temperature (freezing point to 60 °F [16 °C]) will start to spread rapidly.
4. Huge numbers of conidia produced at this time are readily and rapidly spread along and around the green on wheeled equipment (mowers, spreaders and sprayers) on boots and the feet of animals.
5. The pathogen shows down and becomes inactive during periods of warm sunny weather which cause the grass to dry out.
6. Slow growing turf with deep thatch provides the ideal substrate for M. nivale. Such situations exist during cool wet conditions (32 to 46 °F [0 °C] and when turf grass is covered with snow.
7. Specific conditions that encourage spread of the fungus include drizzle, fog, frost occurring night after night and alternating thawing and snow cover.
8. Poor drainage favours Fusarium Patch as does long uncut grass leaves becoming matted down to create a humid microclimate within the canopy.
9. When cool and moist environmental conditions bearing down on disease-stressed turf are ideal for disease development. Poa annua is not a resilient grass, being highly susceptible to heat stress and drought stress and prone to cold injury, all of which clearly contribute to high disease susceptibility through autumn and into winter.
10. Agrostis species including Agrostis stolonifera (creeping bentgrass) are very susceptible to Fusarium Patch. Brown top bent (Agrostis palustris ‘Highland’) is more prone than cultivars of Agrostis capillaris. Lolium perenne (perennial ryegrass). Poa annua (smooth stalked meadow grass) and Festuca species are somewhat less susceptible.
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**Factors pre-disposing to Fusarium Patch**

- Damaged turf grass due to high climate, weather, soil conditions and management practice provide ideal conditions for infection by M. nivale and its subsequent development and spread. They include:
  - Humid atmosphere, shade and surface wetness especially when accompanied by cool temperature conditions.
  - Inadequate circulation of air above the grass sward
  - Rapid, forced, soft and succulent growth especially in autumn from late application of fertiliser especially nitrogen
  - Soil pH in the neutral to alkaline range (pH 7+) and inappropriate use of lime that raises pH to alkaline levels.
  - Oversubstantial use of fertiliser especially if poorly balanced.
  - Damaged turf grass due to high
FEBRUARY 2011

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WILLIAM: But turf management practice is tricky to judging incidence, spread and severity of Fusarium patch (Picture courtesy Vitax)

BOTTOM: Fungicide spraying is needed to minimising incidence, spread and severity of Fusarium patch but sound turf management practice will minimise the frequency and intensity of application required.

BOTTOM: Fusarium patch and tiny leaves (courtesy Vitax)

WILLIAM: Fusarium patch is ever more prevalent due to increasingly sophisticated claims by manufacturers on activity and action. However, there are several salient points greenkeepers can use as markers to assess whether a fungicide product will deliver.

Fungicides are essentially protectant or curative in action. Protectant fungicides remain on the leaf surface and protect the grass plant against infection and as such deposits must be on the leaf surface before infection is attempted by the pathogen.
Curative fungicides can move into the grass plant to eradicate established infections. Fungicides may enter the plant through the leaves, the roots or both, and move around the entire plant in which case they are said to be truly systemic.

Some which do not move out of the leaf they pass into are termed trans-laminar. Curative fungicides may also deliver significant protection depending on how long they remain on the leaf surface before moving into the plant.

Protectant fungicides and systemic fungicides that only enter through the leaves are essentially lost once they drip off (or are washed off) the leaves and into the soil. Those which can additionally enter via the roots may be taken up and used to good effect.

There may be a grey area for some essentially protectant fungicides that migrate a short distance into the leaf and therefore provide some marginal curative action.

Products which contain two or more different active fungicides may deliver protectant and curative action depending on the nature of the individual active fungicides they contain.

Greenkeepers (and groundsmen) are in a unique situation with regard to fungicide application and foliar disease control.

Every time turf is mowed grass plants are ‘wounded’ thus facilitating easier entry for pathogen.

Microdochium nivale is ever present on the thatch component of turf, ready and waiting for the right physical conditions (temperature, humidity, leaf wetness) and biological conditions (inherently susceptible and physiologically stressed turf grass plants) to move into full parasitic disease mode.
WEIGHT COUNTRY STEEL BUILDINGS

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wear or irregular cutting which may cause ‘shaving’, too low cuts result-

ing in ‘scalping’ and insufficiently sharp blades that tear rather than cut and therefore cause leaves to have cut jagged edges which are more prone to infection.

Best practice

Many good management prac-
tices minimise opportunities for M. nivale to infect grass plants and spread and spread across the turf. Examples of good practice are:
• Remove early morning dew and other surface water by sweep-
ing or swishing and improve air circulation above the sward by good pruning and management of adjacent hedges and overhanging trees. Maintain good air circula-
tion within the turf and ground by regular aeration. Minimise shade but where shade is unavoidable adjust (reduce) fertiliser levels accordingly.
• Maintain thatch at optimum height and density for the particu-

lar sports surface situation. Box off and remove grass clippings and do not smother turf when applying top dressing by making sure it is well worked into the turf.
• Establish a regular programme of mowing with correctly set and adjusted blades for height of cut and self-sharpening.
• Appraise seed mixtures and turf composition for maximum resistance to Fusarium Patch dis-

ease and minimise annual meadow grass content.
• Maintain surface acidity using applications of sulphate of iron to toughen and green up grass for autumn and winter and to addi-
tionally deter casting earthworms and control moss.
• Take care to balance soil fertil-
ity and increase the proportion of potassium relative to nitrogen when going into high risk autumn situations.
• Apply nitrogen early enough in the late summer/early autumn period so that grass can harden off sufficiently before winter.
• Do not allow grass to go into winter too high and ensure drain-
age is adequate.

Fall back on fungicides

The foregoing management practices may not completely avoid Fusarium patch but will decrease incidence and severity should it appear.

Fungicides are required to com-
pletely eradicate Fusarium patch but adherence to best management practice should reduce the required frequency and intensity of use.

There is a bewildering range of fungicides for Fusarium control carrying increasingly sophisticated claims by manufacturers on activity and action. However, there are several salient points growers can use as markers to assess whether a fungicide product will deliver.

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Greenkeepers (and groundsmen) are in a unique situation with regard to fungicide application and foliar disease control.

Every time turf is mowed grass plants are ‘wounded’ thus facilitat-
ing easy pathogen entry through the cut surfaces of leaves.

At the same time mowing is removing any fungicide that is on or inside the excised portion of leaf.

Microdochium nivale is ever present on the thatch component of turf, ready and waiting for the right physical conditions (temperature, humidity, leaf wet-
ess) and biological conditions (inherently susceptible and physio-
logenically stressed turf grass plants) to move into full parasitic disease mode.
Some people like to ease themselves into new situations while others are great at hitting the ground running. It is perhaps fortunate that Andrew Mellon, BIGGA’s 2011 Chairman, is of the latter persuasion.

Throughout his career Andy has shown himself to be someone who doesn’t shirk a challenge and, with much to do in the first few weeks of his Chairmanship, easing himself in was never going to be an option.

“We are entering a period of change as John Pemberton, our long-standing CEO, is retiring and it is crucial that we recruit the right person to take the Association forward and continue to manage our resources as effectively as possible,” said Andy, as we chatted in his office in the grounds of Elmwood College Golf Course.

“We have appointed a company to carry out the recruitment process and getting the right person is top of the agenda. We could be looking at having someone in place as early as April, depending upon the notice period the successful person has to give, but we will take the time to ensure we get the best person” he revealed.

A relative late-comer to the profession, 43 year-old Andy has made up for any lost time with a commitment to hard work and a will to learn which has seen him recently promoted to Golf Operations Manager at Elmwood Golf Course and rise through the ranks of BIGGA with indescribable haste.

“It has been a rapid learning process while Vice Chairman because I hadn’t been involved in the main Board prior to that, so it has been a year of learning how the Association operates – what goes on at BIGGA HOUSE and how it interacts with the members through the Regions and Sections etc”

What he has always known, however, and it is a view which has hardened over the last 12 months, is just what a superb organisation it is that he’ll be chairing.

“I do believe that BIGGA is a very strong, established Association and that its great strength is its membership. We are only as strong as our membership and the Association could not have been successful in getting to where it is today without that commitment from its members,” he said.

Andy is well aware of the issues facing the Association, and the industry as a whole, as we look to the future.

“We are in a more financially challenging situation than we have ever been and, of course, we are not alone in that. It means that we must ensure that we make the most effective use of our resources and, more than that, increase collaboration with like minded bodies, which can add benefit to our members.”

Andy was born in Glasgow but spent the first six years of his life in Kenya, the family having moved to Africa through his fathers work.

“I have vivid and fond memories of Kenya. It was a very relaxed lifestyle and a wonderful climate”

Another clear recollection was of his return to Scotland.

“I was in the car on the way back

Scott MacCallum find out what makes BIGGA’s new Chairman, Andrew Mellon, tick

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“I have vivid and fond memories of Kenya. It was a very relaxed lifestyle and a wonderful climate.”

Another clear recollection was of his return to Scotland.

“I was in the car on the way back...
from the airport and I’d never seen weather like it. It was terrible and I can still remember wiping the steamied up windows, probably wondering why we had left Africa” said Andy, who lived initially with his grandfather and aunts in Twechar, a small mining village near Kirkintilloch.

It was then that he displayed a rare ability to fit into his new surroundings. “Living in Kenya I’d picked up quite a posh accent but within two weeks I was speaking like a true Glaswegian. My parents said they had never heard anyone change so quickly! – Kids have a strong ability to adapt”

On leaving school Andy went to Strathclyde University to study Civil Engineering, but his desire to earn a living was never far away and he took a job in the summer holidays selling photocopyers and also joined the University’s Officer Training Corp. This saw him out on exercises most weekends. “I enjoyed the challenging outdoor, military lifestyle, so much so that I joined Glasgow’s Royal Marines Reserve Corp, and was seriously considering a full time military career.”

After having studied for two years Andy decided to take a year out and worked on a self-employed basis for an insurance broker. He was still serving in the Reserve Corp, but having met his future wife, Jane, the prospect of a full time military career and being away from home for long periods became less attractive and the demands of self employed Insurance Sales required his full time commitment. Having progressed to the position of Trainee Management he explored setting up his own company. “I was actually in the process of setting up my own brokerage when Standard Life offered me a job and I worked for them in Glasgow for two years,” said Andy.

“I took full advantage of the superb Standard Life’s Customer Service and Sales training programme which has served me well ever since”

“It was a fairly intense job and the money was good but there was something missing”

The opportunity to make a change came when his wife was offered a job in the Western Isles. “Jane had worked in the area before and had a lot of friends up there so I said let’s just go. I decided that I would go to college and study Business Admin and just see what happened.”

As it turned out, one of his lecturers also ran a local insurance brokerage and offered Andy a job so he found himself working in the same industry as the one he’d left behind in Glasgow.

“We settled in Stornoway for seven years and two of our children were born there. We had a fantastic house, looking out over a bay, and a great lifestyle, although it was difficult being so far away from family.”

Over the years Andy turned his hand to several jobs, seeking something which he would feel happy in. He played golf regularly and a chance encounter with the Greens Convener made him aware of a vacancy as a six month labourer. “I filled out an application form and one interview later I had the job. I can still remember my first day walking around the course with Alistair MacLeod, the Head Greenkeeper. The sun was coming up and I thought – I’m getting paid to do this. This is the life and what I want to do”

The job was only meant to be temporary but Andy threw himself into it making himself as indispensable as possible. He serviced machines, saving the club money, and never missed an opportunity to learn more about his new vocation, using holidays to visit other clubs on the mainland and learn more about the job. “Working in a small dedicated team, I learnt a lot from Alistair, and my desire to progress grew. The opportunity came along to apply for a Greenkeeper/ Instructor on Elmwood’s course. I applied for it, got it, continued my HNC and began working under John Quinns MG. Being apart was difficult and six months later my wife managed to find a good position in Cupar, and the family was back together”

Within a year he’d been appointed as Head Greenkeeper and another year on, when John left to set up his own business, he was appointed Course Manager. “I like to think that I was working hard and applying myself. I was able to take advantage of them. Elmwood College was a very supportive employer, allowing me to full my desire for further education. Carol Borthwick, my Director, encouraged me to develop my knowledge and skills, for which I’m grateful, and took full advantage.”

Before long the Course was to undergo a massive project recon- structing nine of the tees and building a superb new driving range and training academy and a state-of-the-art maintenance facility. “Remember applying for planning permission and being desperate to get it but when it came through, all of a sudden, thinking ‘Oh dear. How are we going to do this?’”

It was a fair question because, set up on a tight budget, Andy had to think big and smart. “We built on the great work done by the most proactive and successful members of the Association, focussed on providing education and networking opportunities for our members.”

Having completed the majority of the Elmwood project the call from Paul Worster asking him to consider vice Chairman came at a time when his work commitments had reduced a little and he could see that he could devote the time required to taking on a greater role within BIGGA.

“Having ensured he had the support of his employers and more importantly his family he accepted the position. ‘We are often asked ‘Why should people join BIGGA?’. I think we need to make the Association something for the future. The question should be, ‘Why would you not join?’’

‘The answer to that is one which only exists in my head but we need to get that across to all greenkeepers out there as well as Club Managers, Secretaries and the owners of golf facilities.

‘They need to be made more aware how their club would benefit from their staff being members of the Association which supports their staff and makes them the best they can be at their job,’ he said. “I honestly believe that being a member of BIGGA is worth its weight in gold because of the resources that are available to them. But I think we can improve in a lot of areas.”

“I’d like to see sections and Regions having more support and sharing good practice while we need to continue to develop our alliances with other bodies within the industry so we can work together for the mutual benefit of the clubs and businesses we work for.”

One thing I have learned in the time I have been involved is the growing respect there is amongst other industry professionals for the position of the greenkeeper. “I recognize that we have a very important part to play, as part of the team which supports this great industry.”

We had a great committee of dedicated experienced guys built on the great work done by John to make the section one of the most proactive and successful in the Association, focussed on providing education and networking opportunities for our members.”

“I decided to study distance learning but soon realised I would have to move to full time to fulfil my career ambitions.”

“I decided to take on a full time HNC course, which I thought would be a real sacrifice as initially I’d be leaving my wife and children in Stornoway. I did so with a view to eventually getting a job in Fife. I remained with Elmwood for just over 50 courses in Fife and that I couldn’t get a job after doing my HNC there would be something wrong!”

He was right, but that job came quicker than he could ever have imagined. “Within a month of starting there was an advert for a Greenkeeper/ Instructor on Elmwood’s course. I applied for it, got it, continued my HNC and began working under John Quinns MG. Being apart was difficult and six months later my wife managed to find a good position in Cupar, and the family was back together”

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Andrew Mellon