Jacobsen and GEO Sign Global Agreement

Jacobsen, has signed a new global partnership agreement with the Golf Environment Organization. This will see the organisations broaden their collaboration jointly to promote awareness, understanding and solutions in the Americas and Asia as well as Europe, Middle East and Africa.

Through significant, long-standing support for GEO, Jacobsen is also investing in bringing practical and credible sustainability programmes for golf course management, renovation and new development to practitioners around the world.

GEO is a non-profit organisation entirely dedicated to sustainability in golf, building awareness, developing and administering golf’s ecocert, GEO CertifiedTM, and delivering programmes to help clubs and developments achieve the distinction.

Based on a long-standing relationship with Ransomes Jacobsen, which has supported GEO’s pioneering work to make good sense, further aligns our outlook and will multiply many new positive outcomes.

Alan Prickett, Jacobsen Managing Director for Asia Pacific, said: “We are delighted to work with GEO to further develop their golf’s ecocert programme, bringing practical and credible solutions to the golf industry.”

GEO’s Leena Vohra, Chief Executive Officer, said: “We are excited to work with Jacobsen on this agreement and to bring Jacobsen’s expertise and foresight to the implementation.”

Jacobsen and GEO have made a significant difference in the development, delivery, and awareness of the solutions we provide for the golf community.

David Withers, President of Jacobsen, responded: “Jacobsen is a global company and GEO has global relevance and solutions, with programmes accessible worldwide in a growing number of languages and a high quality, credible and increasingly recognised international ecocert for golf.”

Expanding our partnership to encompass all of the Jacobsen business units around the globe makes good sense, further aligns our outlook and will multiply many new positive outcomes.

Less is more

Managing with Less - Exploring the Economic and Environmental Benefits of a Sound and Sympathetic Course Management Policy, seminar being held at Temple Golf Club on Tuesday February 29, at 6.30pm.

Chairman Michael Bannatt the evening workshop is aimed at illustrating how best to meet the challenge of maintaining the quality and playability of the golf course while respecting and positively contributing to the indigenous social and natural environment. Since the mid 90’s Temple has worked hard to reduce course management costs and enhance biodiversity but without compromising on the quality demanded by today’s golfer.

Speakers will be Temple Secretary Keith Adeney, on the interface between the policy and the golf; Course Manager, Martin Gunn, on how a sound course management policy benefits the playing quality of the course and the indigenous natural environment; Gavin Barnett, of the B.B.C.Wildlife Trust, will discuss the benefits of less intensive land management on the property; and Michael Bannatt on the wider initiatives supported by the R&A Golf Course Committee.

Golf Park Edwards on 01628 834715 or by email to stan.deverson@templegolfcourse.co.uk

An enjoyable week in Harrogate

The enthusiasm and hunger to learn more is inspirational and I saw many young members who, I’m sure, have a bright future

George Barr, Worthing Golf Club, steps into the vacant Guardian role. His previous Board experience and many years of involvement at Region and Section level will be of great benefit to us all. Sir Michael Bonallack, the R&A, for serving as Guardian on the Board. Stuaz Greenwood, The North Berwick Golf Club, Scottish Board Director, who has served faithfully for five years showing great commitment and dedication in representing the members.

Chairman’s Word

National Chairman, Andrew Mellon, gives his thoughts for the month

I am not long back from an enjoyable week in Harrogate attending BTME. It was great to catch up with so many old friends, get lots of excellent education from first class providers and see first hand all the innovations coming to market from our many suppliers.

I have been invited by the Board to remain as Chairman for a further year in order to complete and implement the strategic review. It will also allow for some continuity between the Board and the CEO as Jim has not been in place for a full year. I will do my best to ensure that members’ interests remain at the forefront of all matters that the Board consider.

I’d like to recognise and thank my employers, Rixwood College, and my team at the golf course for supporting me while I undertake this role. It goes without saying, but I must say, that the support of my family is essential, as it is to so many of us working in this industry.

While we sometimes struggle to get the balance correct due to the commitments required of the job, our support and understanding of the demands placed upon you must never be taken for granted, and they should always come first.

The outstanding success of the exhibition was a fitting way to celebrate 25 years of the Association. Many of the Board members and attendees would help to explain the benefits of GEO’s ecocert programme, and we will be of great benefit to us all. Sir Michael Bonallack, the R&A, for serving as Guardian on the Board. Stuaz Greenwood, The North Berwick Golf Club, Scottish Board Director, who has served faithfully for five years showing great commitment and dedication in representing the members.

George Barr, Worthing Golf Club, steps into the vacant Guardian role. His previous Board experience and many years of involvement at Region and Section level will be of great benefit to us all. Sir Michael Bonallack, the R&A, for serving as Guardian on the Board. Stuaz Greenwood, The North Berwick Golf Club, Scottish Board Director, who has served faithfully for five years showing great commitment and dedication in representing the members.
As we celebrated 25 years of BIGGA in Harrogate, we wanted to register their trainers for a British qualification! That request is a clear indication to me that the British formal qualifications for greenkeepers have great respect and credibility throughout the world.

We are also aware that several of the GTC’s Quality Associated Centres and Training Providers are already involved outside of Britain and there is no doubt there will be further opportunities to export their expertise, training programmes and products over the coming weeks, months and years through the GTC and EGUE.

It is the experience of the GTC and its adviser network that is acknowledged throughout the project and we hope that the EGUE over the next few years, becomes recognised and established to promote best practice in all matters greenkeeping throughout Europe.

Visit the EGUE website www.egue.co.uk to see how Standards and Advice are the focal points of the organisation.

New Field Guide Additions
At Harrogate Week we launched additions to two of our existing field guides:

Trees & Shrubs on the Golf Course
The additional pages for the Grasses field guide include:

- Meadow Fescue
- Smooth-Leaved Timothy
- Quaking Grass
- Marram
- Purple Moor-grass
- Bent-Leaved Bent
- Upright Bromes, Yorkshire Fog
- Sweet Vernal Grass
- Cockfoot
- Red Fescue
- Sheep’s Fescue
- Bentgrasses

The additional pages for Trees & Shrubs now includes:

- Sea-Beachthorn
- Beech, Elm, Birch, Hornbeam, Guelder Rose
- Snowberry, Dogwood, Sweet Chestnut, Spindle, Wayfaring Tree, Blackthorn, Horse Chestnut, Ivy and Heathers.

The additional pages are available to members, free of charge. To get a copy of the new pages, please email rachael@bigga.co.uk.

Safety Management System
Last month we announced the launch of the new Safety Management System. BIGGA and the GCMA have spent several months updating the system to make it much simpler to use. Available through the Members’ area of the BIGGA website, the updated system allows users to download and save to their own computers, Risk Profiles, Risk Assessments and access to Hazard information for seven areas of the golf club: Greenkeeping, Activities, Maintenance Facility, Golf Course, Clubhouse, Kitchen, Pro Shop, Pro Shop, Pro Shop.

The original SMS will remain available for several months and users will be contacted with information on downloading and updating their Risk Profiles.

Golf Industry Show
For those of you attending the Golf Industry Show in Las Vegas at the end of the month, don’t forget to drop by and say hello. The BIGGA stand number is 2707 located near the International Resource Centre.

Wow, that was quite a Harrogate Week! This was a fabulous educational event that BIGGA has ever presented.

We were able to look through the doors of the Queen’s Suite, representing a 17.4% increase on last year’s Conference and we are all exhausted by the end of the week.

With many sold out workshops and seminars full to capacity - and beyond on several occasions! I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of the speakers and companies who delivered workshops and to support BIGGA in the future on our behalf. An event such as Continue to Learn would not be possible without the support of our exhibitors.

The initial planning for Continue to Learn in 2013 is now underway. If you have any suggestions please email them to sami@bigga.co.uk.

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Greenkeepers Training Committee

David Golding, GTC Education Director, updates us on his work with the European Greenkeeping Education Unit (EGEU).

As we celebrated 25 years of BIGGA, the recently completed Harrogate Week, it was very rewarding to see how far the greenkeeping sector of golf has progressed since those days when there was no professional body, only volunteers and honorary secretaries running the volunteers and honorary secretaries, with no professional body, only volunteers and honorary secretaries running the volunteers and honorary secretaries... The GTC and EGEU were invited to many events, and our advice would always be to support the GTC and EGEU, working closely with colleges and established to promote best practice in all aspects of greenkeeping... The new Safety Management System, BIGGA and the International Resource Centre, launched last month, don’t forget to register for the Harrogate Week! The last of the Earl’s teams energy was taken up doing a little jig following the launch of a wonderful education event that BIGGA has ever presented. We launched our new SMS through the doors of the Queen’s Statue, representing a 17.4% increase on last year’s count, and our online records of attendance. Working on the attendance figures and multiplying it by the number of hours we scheduled (152.25 hours) we delivered 3,894.50 hours of education over five days. It’s not surprising that Rachel, Jane Jones, BIGGA’s South West and South Wales Regional Administrator and Trainers, was so excited. She and her colleagues... A spin-off from the initial request was that the country is also looking to register their trainers for a British qualification! That request is a clear indication that the British formal qualifications for greenkeepers have great respect and credibility throughout the world. We are also aware that several of the GTC’s Quality assured Centres and Training Providers are already involved outside of Britain and there is no doubt there will be further opportunities to export their expertise, training programmes and products over the coming weeks, months and years through the GTC and EGEU. It is the experience of the GTC and its advisor network that is acknowledged through the project we hope that the EGEU will continue to grow in the next few years, become recognised and established to promote best practice in all matters greenkeeping throughout Europe. Visit the EGEU website www.egeu.net to see how Standards and Advice are the focal points of the organisation.

Safety Management System

Sami Collins, Head of Learning & Development, with an update on education issues.
BAILOY APPOINTS NEW TECHNICAL SALES MANAGER

Bailoy Products has announced the appointment of Phil Chadwick as its new Technical Sales Manager. Phil has worked with the Bailoy team for 17 years – 10 of which were spent in his previous role with the company’s product distributor Lely UK, where he offered technical support across both the Bailoy and Toro irrigation brands. But with Phil’s particular passion for Bailoy’s Gemini-Trident Irrigation (CTM) system, this specially-created position was a natural progression of his technical expertise and dedication to contractor and customer support.

Commenting on his appointment, Phil says: “I’ve always had a bit of a soft spot for GTI – in fact, I’ve been affectionately known as Mr GTI at times! This new challenge allows me to specialise in a smaller product range, as well as offer more direct, dedicated support to GTI contractors and end-user customers. I’m also looking forward to having more input into product development.”

Phil’s role will see him develop sales, service, marketing and customer relationships, and provide training and support to end-users as part of Bailoy’s active business-expansion programme. In the long-term he is also keen to extend the high standards of product knowledge and installation amongst UK and Ireland contractors into Europe and other countries worldwide.

FGM Claymore Ltd has been appointed UK Distributor for the Walker commercial, zero-turn, out-front, direct-collect mower range.

“FGM Claymore Ltd has been appointed UK Distributor for the Walker commercial, zero-turn, out-front, direct-collect mower range. We are delighted to have secured this agreement. The Walker range has a reputation as a premium brand offering quality, performance and reliability,” said Managing Director, Paul Butler.

Promotion for Nick

Having given 22 years service, Nick Dearing has been rewarded with promotion to General Manager of our Hydri-based Charterhouse Turf Machinery CTM are the UK arm of Redmain, the Dutch manufacturer, of many leading types of groundcare equipment, including the iconic ‘Verti-Drain’ aerator.

Nick, 41, began working in the workshop in 1989 and has moved up the sales tree through being a Demonstrator, Territory Manager and latterly Sales Manager.

“Nick has been our ‘man on the ground’ for over 22 years now and it is fitting that he steps up to General Manager status. His in-depth understanding of our unique product range has helped the company maintain its market leadership in Aerators, especially large scale ones that we have pioneered,” said Herman de Bree, Sales & Marketing Director.

In any spare time that Nick has he likes to play a round of golf and take in as many music concerts as he can.

“Now having the responsibility of being General Manager will provide great satisfaction, but will be worthwhile as we project CTM into the next phase of its history,” he said.

What’s your number?

Our regular and random profile of an industry figure continues with this month’s lucky number...

Name: Adrian Abbott
Company: MJ Abbott Ltd
Position: Technical & Sales Director
How long have you been in the industry?
I have worked for the company since 1988, but I didn’t get on a golf course until 1995.

How did you get into it?
I have recently changed roles and now head our direct sales division and oversee our recently launched webshop. This has taken me fully out of my comfort zone and I am really enjoying the new challenge, particularly the procurement of new product lines and the increased contact with our customers.

What other jobs have you done?
Mechanic, Workshop Manager and Water Engineer.

What do you like about your current job?
I have recently changed roles and now head our direct sales division and oversee our recently launched webshop. This has taken me fully out of my comfort zone and I am really enjoying the new challenge, particularly the procurement of new product lines and the increased contact with our customers.

What changes have you seen during your time in the industry?
The relentless progress in computer and pump technology. When I first started supporting irrigation systems, not every customer had a phone line at the maintenance facility, let alone an internet connection! Now I can support the irrigation controllers and pump stations of more recent clients from my smartphone.

What do you like to do in your spare time?
I have a young family of three girls and have become a taxi service to take them to a myriad of parties and other activities.

Where do you see yourself in 10 years time?
Hopefully still in the industry and with a full head of hair!

What do you consider best friends in the industry?
Over the years I have made numerous friends with both suppliers and customers. I have also enjoyed watching green keepers that I worked with years ago progress and become course managers in their own right.

What do you consider to be your lucky number?
Find out who Adrian has picked next month.
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How do you like to do in your spare time?
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What do you like about your current job?
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Position: Technical & Sales Director
How long have you been in the industry?
I have worked for the company since 1988, but didn’t get on a golf course until 1995.

How did you get into it?
Working for a family business, my career has pretty much followed the company’s progression. In the early days, I worked as a mechanic looking after the plant and equipment. I was then the Workshop Manager before working on one of our first irrigation projects at Disneyland Paris in 1991. I then headed up the local water engineering department before becoming the Technical Director overseeing system design and the aftersales support for all our irrigation customers.

What other jobs have you done?
Mechanic, Workshop Manager and Water Engineer.

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What’s your number?
Finding the key to progress

Scott MacCallum visits Chipping Sodbury and finds a club which is finding a way to move forward in difficult times.
Finding the key to progress

Scott MacCallum visits Chipping Sodbury and finds a club which is finding a way to move forward in difficult times.
Arriving in Chippenham
Golf Club’s car park on a
mid week morning in early
January, off season, what
struck me was the activity.

There was barely a parking space
to be found, while a glance out
to the golf course highlighted a course
full of players, comfortably working
around the duggers and 360s which
were doing the heavy work on a
large irrigation installation project.

You didn’t need to be Sherlock
Holmes to deduce that here is a suc-
cessful go-ahead golf club. But how
is it able to ride against the tide,
at a time when many clubs are strug-
gling to make ends meet?

Club Manager, Bob Williams,
doesn’t claim to have all the
answers, but he has been extremely
pro-active in identifying the
problems and coming up with
potential solutions.

One thing he is very sure of,
however, is the need for the Club
Manager and the Course Manager/
Head Greenkeeper to have a good
and close working relationship.

“The golf course is the most
important asset any golf club has,”
said Bob, who works extremely
closely with Head Greenkeeper,
John Keenaghan, as well as the
Club Chairman, Mike Darby.

“I do think this is where a lot of
clubs get into difficulties – when
the relationship between the two main
people in the club is not concerted
and they are not moving forward,
together and at the same level,” said
Bob, who added that the time the
club operated a straight forward full,
five-day, junior plus a number of senior categories.

“After reviewing the options and
looking at what was happening in
different parts of the country we
managed to persuade the commit-
tee and the membership that we
needed to review and change our
membership structure completely.
The main change was the introduc-
tion of the ‘Flexi-Play’ category,
which at that time, was £350 per
year, plus £10 for every round
played – an ideal opportunity for
the 35-50 age group who cannot justify
£800 and only play once every
weekend.

“We marketed this category as
‘F100’ with the intention of limiting
the membership to no more than 100.
It was important that this category
did not see themselves as being
discriminated against, hence the
‘F100’ members have always been
entitled to full voting rights.
Full membership was marketed as
‘F1’, and to emphasise that this
was the pinnacle of the member-
ship categories a number of add-on
benefits were created including
free range balls throughout the
week, two free lessons with the
teachers at weekends.

“We then created the ‘Golf Club
18-30’ category which is a reduced
fee that increases year by year
until the age of 30. The objective
to reduce the age profile of the club,
which at present is having positive
results. A lot of the younger guys
who are members of other sports
clubs in the area have joined, and
for the last few years we have run an
inter sports club golf tournament,
which has proved very popular,”
said Bob, who added that the club
had brought in 88 new members in
the last year.

But this is not a time to let the
green grow under their feet (excuse
the pun), the intention this year is
to profile their green fee charges
between high usage periods and off
peaks.

“We will have a peak time Wednes-
day and Friday when visitors will
pay the full fee. If you want to play
Monday, Tuesday or Thursday
you will pay another fee and after
2.30pm it will be another rate. In the
summer after 6pm you will be able
to play for just £12.

Having set about revamping
the membership structure the
on-courses issues could now be
addressed in earnest. John had been
coming with a failing irrigation
system for several seasons – the
early ’80s Watermation system
coming to the end of its useful
existence, helped along the way by
a freak weather event.

“We think we had a lightning
strike which took out the automated
system about three years ago. A
power surge burned the computer
right out and took out all the decod-
ers,” recalled John.

The consequences of this were
that for the last two years hand
watering or manually operating
the irrigation was the only way forward.

“We were able to use the sprinklers
on the greens but we had to turn
them on and off by hand and, as you
lose so much by evaporation doing
it during the day, we ended up work-
ing through the night just watering
the greens.”

John would start around
11.30am – driving to a green, turn-
ning on the sprinklers, letting them
do their stuff for around 10 to 15
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“Till get finished around 6am, go
in, brief the team before going home
for a sleep before getting back to the
course a couple of hours later. At
its worst I did it for two weeks in
the late spring early summer of last
year, these were desperate times
that needed desperate measures,
fortunately it wasn’t a dry summer,”
said John, a BIGGA member for 15
years.

Knowing this was not a situation
that could be allowed to continue for
too long, Bob, together with John,
began looking at ways of funding a
new system.

“When we had the blow-out we
didn’t have the cash to put in a new
system straight away and we took
that conscious decision to hand
water and hope that we didn’t have
a burning hot summer,” said Bob.

“We then had to make a decision
whether to go for another year
knowing that it was extremely
labour intensive and the system,
which was failing, might not hold
out for another year.”

To move the process along Bob
commissioned irrigation consul-

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**COURSE FEATURE**

**GI**

**FeAtUre**
There was barely a parking space to be found, while a glance out to the golf course highlighted a course full of players, comfortably working around the diggers and 300s which were doing the donkey work on a large irrigation installation project.

You didn’t need to be Sherlock Holmes to deduce that here is a successful go-ahead golf club. But how is it able to ride against the tide, at a time when many clubs are struggling to make ends meet?

Club Manager, Bob Williams, doesn’t claim to have all the answers, but he has been extremely pro-active in identifying the problems and coming up with potential solutions.

One thing he is very sure of, however, is the need for the Club Manager and the Course Manager/Head Greenkeeper to have a good and close working relationship.

“The golf course is the most important asset any golf club has,” said Bob, who works extremely closely with Head Greenkeeper, John Keenaghan, as well as the Club Chairman, Mike Darby.

“I do think this is where a lot of clubs get into difficulties – when the relationship between the two main people in the club is not cemented and they are not moving forward, together and at the same level,” said Bob, who also wears another hat as Chairman of the EGU Marketing & Sponsorship Committee.

That level of commitment has led to the investment in a new Toro irrigation system; however, it is the preparatory work that has gone into changing the club and making it all possible that is particularly impressive.

“About three years ago we got to a stage where we felt that things had to change or the club was going to be faced with serious problems. Membership was declining, and the lack of new enquiries was becoming a worrying factor. It was a trend that we just could not allow to continue – and survive!” said Bob, who added that at the time the club operated a straightforward full, five-day, junior plus a number of senior categories.

“After reviewing the options and looking at what was happening in different parts of the country we managed to persuade the committee and the membership that we needed to review and change our membership structure completely. The main change was the introduction of the ‘Flext-Play’ category, which at that time, was £350 per year, plus £10 for every round played – an ideal opportunity for the 35-50 age group who cannot justify £800 and only play once every weekend.

“We marketed this category as ‘F100’, with the intention of limiting the membership to no more than 100. It was important that this category did not see themselves as being discriminated against, hence the ‘F100’ members have always been entitled to full voting rights.

Full membership was marketed as ‘F11’ and to emphasise that this was the pinnacle of the membership categories a number of add-on benefits were created including free range balls throughout the week, two free lessons with the pro each year and a discount business card which gave discounts to local companies,” explained Bob, who also explained that a Family membership had been introduced with children up to the age of 14 becoming a junior member at no additional charge.

With the new categories in place for the last two years on-going research has revealed that ‘Flext-play’ members average approximately 15 to 20 rounds a year, which ultimately suggests that their membership is costing around £550 per annum.

In needing to counter the high weekend usage the club also reduced the membership fee for five day memberships as an encouragement to senior members to play between Monday and Friday, thus freeing up the weekends for those members that we managed to persuade to join.

“We then created the ‘Golf Club 18-30’ category, which was designed as an incentive for local companies,” explained Bob, who also explained that a Family membership had been introduced with children up to the age of 14 becoming a junior member at no additional charge.

But this is not a time to let the grass grow under their feet (excuse the pun), the intention this year is to profile their green fee charges between high usage periods and off peaks.

“We will have a peak time Wednesday and Friday when visitors will pay the full fee. If you want to play Monday, Tuesday or Thursday you will pay another fee and after 2.30pm it will be another rate. In the summer after 6pm you will be able to play for just £12.00.

“Having set about revamping the membership structure the on-courses issues could now be addressed in earnest. John had been coping with a failing irrigation system for several seasons – the early ‘90s Waterman system coming to the end of its useful existence, helped along the way by a freak weather event.

“We think we had a lighting strike which took out the automated control system about three years ago. A power surge burned the computer right out and took out all the decoders,” recalled John.

The consequences of this were that for the last two years hand watering or manually operating the irrigation was the only way forward. “We were able to use the sprinklers on the greens but we had to turn them on and off by hand and, as you lose so much by evaporation doing it during the day, I ended up working through the night just watering the greens.”

John would start around 11.30pm – driving to a green, turning on the sprinklers, letting them do their stuff for around 10 to 15 minutes before switching them off and moving on to the next green.

“Till get finished around 6am, go in, brief the team before going home for a sleep before getting back to the course a couple of hours later. At its worst I did it for two weeks in the late spring/early summer of last year, these were desperate times that needed desperate measures, fortunately it wasn’t a dry summer,” said John, a BIGGA member for 15 years.

Knowing this was not a situation that could be allowed to continue for too long, Bob, together with John, began looking at ways of funding a new system.

“When we had the blow-out we didn’t have the cash to put in a new system straight away and we took that conscious decision to hand water and hope that we didn’t have a burning hot summer,” said Bob.

“We then had to make a decision whether to go for another year knowing that it was extremely labour intensive and the system, which was failing, might not hold out for another year.”

To move the process along Bob commissioned irrigation consul-
“The golf course is the main product of a golf club. We had to make sure that the product was right”

Bob Williams

tant. Roger Davey, of Irritech, in 2010, to draw up plans and specifications for a new system.

“It meant that even if we couldn’t afford it at least we’d have the drawings in place and we’d be ready to go when the time came,” he explained.

The decision to go came last year and the contract was put out to tender.

“The view was that it was essential, we couldn’t fudge it for another year and we had to fund it somehow. We’d held the English County Finals in 2009 which was a great success. Chipping Sodbury was on the map and there was no point in letting it slip back,” said Bob.

“The golf course is the main product of a golf club and then everything else falls in behind it. We had to make sure that the product was right.” But finding the funding for such an extensive project was not a simple process and a degree of lateral thinking was employed to make it happen.

“We work closely with a local brewery and organised a loan in the form of a retrospective discount for the beverage that we would be buying from them.”

“We have a lot of leylandii planted to how it would be had it not been for the VAT partial exemption issue. A membership club doesn’t charge VAT on fees so therefore it can’t claim all of its VAT back that meant that we were going to be around £20,000 short. To compensate we went out and sold a number of Life Memberships which took us over our target,” said Bob. Having secured the finance MJ Abbott was awarded the contract, on a fixed price basis and work started in December.

“I was secretary at Long Ashton Golf Club when we did a similar irrigation project about ten years ago and I would say that potential contractors are an awful lot more competitive now. They have had to sharpen their pencils otherwise the work would be priced out of everyone’s market.”

With work due to be completed this month or early next, John is excited about the new system.

“It will transform the course. We are based primarily on clay and this has meant that our approaches are prone to cracking in dry weather. With the ability to water I’ll be able to top dress and overseed them and bring the height of cut down, which will be a huge improvement with the added bonus of being able to use them as temporary greens in the winter. At the moment they have had to go on fallow areas around the greens,” said John, who felt that it was far easier to hand water tees than greens and approaches without being interrupted or get in the way of golfers.

An infectious enthusiasm for the industry John arrived in it slightly later in life, having started out as a carpenter, but he has wasted no time catching up. “I took up golf at Filton Golf Club when I had to retire from rugby as a consequence of fracturing my skull twice. Head Greenkeeper, Nick Wilson asked if I’d build him a driving range bay which I did and then started help out on the course when I could.

“The building trade was quiet at the time and Nick asked if I wanted to join the green staff and that was it. I took quite a pay cut but I was put on Level 2 at Cannington and really found a passion for the work,” said John, who is now a category one player and playing off a handicap of 4.

His route to Chipping Sodbury, initially as Deputy, came via Filton, The Kendleshire, The Players and the Manor House at Castle Coombe, and he was promoted to Head Greenkeeper five years ago.”

He has also been a member of several BIGGA Open Support Teams and credits that for some of the course preparation he was able to employ for the English County Finals.

In addition to the irrigation project an on-going tree removal programme is being carried out. “We have a lot of leylandii planted to give quick definition in the 60s and they are coming to the end of their time and we are removing them and replacing them with indigenous trees.

“We have taken out over 250 leylandii and 30 poplars and planted over 450 native trees in the last five years,” explained John.

Chipping Sodbury Golf Club is a fine example of a regular members golf club where the management team is pulling together for the greater benefit of everyone. It shows just what can be achieved.