have been replanted with gorse and broom, which has had a positive ecological impact. One such impact has seen the increase in nesting and feeding habitat for small birds. 1. Linnet (Carduelis cannabina) is a red data species noted nesting within the gorse. They benefit from a variety of habitats; from dune grassland to feed and scrub to nest. 2. Stonechat (Saxicola torquata) is an amber data species, which is another uncommon bird nesting within the gorse plantation at the 18th hole. The general theme of restoring an open links landscape and associated habitat has also seen an increase in and special importance to ground nesting birds including both the skylark (Alauda arvensis) and meadow pipit (Anthus pratensis).

The Open Greenkeeping Team

We have 11 permanent full timers, one part timer working two days a week and a member of staff on a short-term contract to ease the workload this year. However, an additional 24 Open tournament support staff supplement this for the week before and the week of the Open. We also have a small team of dedicated fitters and mechanics supplied by John Deere who are providing the tournament machinery support along with Hunter Grinders. So our numbers swell to 40+ during the week of the Open. And of course we have the invaluable BIGGA Support Team so the level of expertise at hand to help is quite astounding.

For some members of the permanent team it will be their last Open; three of whom Richard Atkin, Phil Medcalf and David Troup have provided the club with a lifetime of loyal and worthy service. Other recent recruits will be experiencing and relishing their first Open Championship. It will be special for everyone involved. One thing for certain is we will all take away some lifelong memories as we witness the most gifted golfers in the world pit their wits against the course, the weather and each other. That should quench anyone’s thirst.

Next Month’s GI - The Open Review

All the news and stories from The BIGGA Open Support Team at Royal Lytham and St. Annes

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The Open at Royal Lytham & St Annes Special

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Greenkeepers Past

It is a good thing if one can maintain a good sense of humour and have a good outlook on life; these attributes serve you well in greenkeeping, and is likely to help you to achieve success in your chosen career. I am sure that we can all relate to some humorous accounts or incidents in the line of our work. In 1907, John Burton was dismissed after 19 years of loyal service. He developed a habit of saying ‘I was going down to the 9th hole’ when in fact he nipped over to the Fairhaven Hotel across the railway!

Back on the course one day he was found resting the worse for wear by a member. Jim Marshall the Head Greenkeeper appointed in 1948, ran an outspoken and able Scot, moved a member’s cart, whacked hay, and lost his temper. He was a charismatic, friendly man with a good outlook on life and the best of dispositions.

A Historical Account

It is certainly true that he was the People’s Champion and that his career was defined not only by what he won, but how he won.

Memorable Open Moments

There was no easy road for Bobby Jones when he went onto his 1926 Open. He made a remarkable recovery shot with trouble all the way to the green, with a 175 yard carry at the 17th after he had pulled his drive into sandy wastes.

This moment of brilliance during the final round was the shot that won this legend the 1926 Open Championship.

Bernard Darwin was quoted as saying: “A teaspoon more sand would have made irretrievable ruin”.

During a course inspection with the committee the captain mentioned that there were problems with various weeds on the course. A man of few words Leslie replied: “I’ll do my best, but I know the greens best and the holes would be placed where they should be.”

Jim was succeeded by Leslie Davidson a man with his own mind. During a course inspection with the committee the captain mentioned that there were problems with various weeds on the course. A man of few words Leslie replied: “I’ll do my best, but I know the greens best and the holes would be placed where they should be.”

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Drainage was laid inland except from the 3rd and 4th fairways, where at the club’s expense, the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway constructed a drain under the 9th for an annual rental of 5/-.

Directors booked left and sliced right, his ball dipped and detoured through sand and scrub venturing into unseen corners of the course.

He executed some of the most memorable recovery shots in Open history and had the charisma that touched the hearts of spectators. This moment of brilliance during the final round was the shot that won this legend the 1926 Open Championship.

Back in time

The Open at Royal Lytham & St Annes Special
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In 1907 John Barnes was dismissed after 19 years of loyal service. He developed a habit of saying ‘missed after 19 years of loyal service’. He had been appointed in 1948, an outspoken and able Scot, moved a vice. He developed a habit of saying that: “Lytham St. Annes was not the most beautiful of courses but it’s not always the prettiest of women that make the best when they nipped over to the Fairhaven Hotel across the railway. When he planted some trees on course they appeared to be in poor shape: in fact, a doctor pronounced them dead. Subsequently when they blossomed forth, Leslie said with a wry smile, ‘Oh dear’. He was a charismatic, friendly and fun character always with a story to tell.

However, he landed himself in some serious trouble with Mrs MacDonald when he was quoted as saying that “Lytham St. Annes was not the most beautiful of courses but it’s not always the prettiest of women that make the best when they nipped over to the Fairhaven Hotel across the railway. When he planted some trees on course they appeared to be in poor shape: in fact, a doctor pronounced them dead. Subsequently when they blossomed forth, Leslie said with a wry smile, ‘Oh dear’.

A Historical Account

Hours of work have changed little since 1932. The course architect, worked alongside eight men, starting at 7am, stopping for breakfast at 9-9:30 and dinner at 12-1. Knocking off time was 5:30pm for the men, and 5pm for the horses.

Work records included carting, lopping, scrub cutting (which are still on with), thatching hay stacks, fodder (now vert drilling) and ploughing (now rotavating). Making bunkers (which we are still on with) thatching hay stacks, fodder (now vert drilling) and ploughing (now rotavating). Making bunkers (which we are still on with), thatching hay stacks, fodder (now vert drilling) and ploughing (now rotavating).

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In 1969 Tony Jacklin’s win was significant after so many years of overseas domination.

A man of few words Leslie replied: ‘You shouldn’t get up so early, man! I’m the head greenkeeper in 1932, an outspoken and able Scot, moved a vice. He developed a habit of saying ‘missed after 19 years of loyal service’. He had been appointed in 1948, an outspoken and able Scot, moved a vice. He developed a habit of saying that: “Lytham St. Annes was not the most beautiful of courses but it’s not always the prettiest of women that make the best when they nipped over to the Fairhaven Hotel across the railway. When he planted some trees on course they appeared to be in poor shape: in fact, a doctor pronounced them dead. Subsequently when they blossomed forth, Leslie said with a wry smile, ‘Oh dear’.

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Royal Lytham & St Annes Inventory over the years

Here is an account of the materials and machinery itemised in the club’s historical accounts.

W. Woodcock: Joining: Making stable harness racks
W. Toodle: saddles and harness maker: Harrowes and moving boots
Nixon Bros: Sleeping the horses and repainting mowers
T. Jackson: Veterinary surgeon: powders for horses and nuts and telescoping teeth
David Shaw & Co Manchester: Shovelrip and masure manufacture: 200 bricks of ground shoddle
Phoenix Mill two tonne of basic slag; phosphate mixture
Shapley Glass and Chemical Works: Shapley slag destroyer
T Bradfield & Son Belfast 1915 patent golf ball
Dickson, Brown & Tall Fines mixture of the finest grasses and clover (and the odd bag of two I suspect of the course staff)

W Thompson, Surgeon of Ipswich - Lotus Comicitatus Trilobites, Serpyllium. These plants all have modest water requirements, they dry out in poor soils and can survive harsh conditions. Some of which are low and spreading in growth habit and can tolerate pedestrian traffic (perhaps these can be reintroduced?)

On the 9th December 1896 the Lancashire and Yorkshire Railway constructed a drain under the line for an annual rent of 5/-.

In 1896 the Lancashire Steam Motor Company of Leyland sent a steam lawn mower with roller and fine pump, combined together with a man to work, on it a 14 day trial in September 1897.

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Rain stops play...

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Jim Cook completes our series on the PGA Seniors Tour, as the De Vere Club Championship concludes at Slaley Hall

“In all my years of greenkeeping, I’ve never squeezed rough before.” So said Slaley Hall Golf Club’s Course Manager, Steve Cram, when talking about the inventive methods used to ensure play could continue at the ISPS Handa PGA Seniors Championship in June.

When a deluge of rain caused play to be abandoned, tremendous work by the team at Slaley Hall led to the resumption of play and the eventual conclusion of the tournament.

Steve said: “We had the double shotgun pro-am on a Saturday before the tournament and we had a lot of comments from the players that the course was looking as good as it has ever looked.

“We had the greens running at 11 feet and get the Thursday done, which was the first tournament round, then on the Friday we had 25mm of rain and they suspended play at 11am.

“Then, on the Friday night into Saturday we had another 20mm, so we had 45mm of rain over about 24 hours.”

He continued: “So that was fun and on the Saturday we were using the squeegees on the greens and pushing water off the fairways, just to try and get play happening. It was a tough day.

“We had heavy showers all day and there were two or three greens that couldn’t take any more water so we had guys on those greens with squeegees all day, taking water off when the players were coming through.

“My staff and also the PGA and Senior Tour officials all mucked in, it was all hands to the pump. You’d get a radio message saying which green to go to and we were jumping around like that all day. It was a great team effort by all concerned; tremendous really.”

He added: “Our normal golf course set up routine for the tournament was gone on the Saturday and it was just a matter of making the course playable. The bunkers were big work because we had to get rid of every drop of water in them. We pumped it out and even used buckets to move the water. All through the tournament we started at 4am and we were finished at about 8pm, with a little break in the middle, but on the Saturday we worked all the way through as there was so much extra to do with the squeegees.

“This was when he mentioned about having to use squeegees in parts of the rough. He said: “The water was right in the landing area and there was nowhere for them to drop so we had to push the puddles away.”

Another inventive method employed was to lift up the turf and use the roller off their verti-drain to move water away from the roughing areas. “I’ve never done that before either, so that was another new one. But it worked and that was the main thing,” Steve said.

Previously they had used the verti-drain in its usual guise to help water drain from a few of the landing areas.

He spoke about how cutting became impossible: “Right up until the Thursday we cut everything every day, so greens were cut three times a day and rolled, fairways, tees and semi were cut every day, but when it got to Friday it was so wet that we couldn’t cut anything except the greens.

On Saturday morning though, we couldn’t even cut the greens because there were ball-markers everywhere from when play was suspended. Then on the Sunday we tried to cut as much as possible as the weather improved. So our schedule was severely impeded because whilst the course still looked good as we had put a lot of work into it beforehand, we couldn’t present it how we would have ideally wanted to.”

The tournament should have been 72 holes but was cut down to 54 holes.

Steve said that preparation over previous years had helped enable the tournament to be played: “If it had just been a general play day, the course would have been closed and a lot of the courses in the area were closed at the time. I think the big thing for me was that the work we have done over the last four years helped. Without some of the work we’ve done on fairways and especially greens, the tournament wouldn’t have been completed. Whilst it wasn’t great, it was still a success because we managed to get it played.

Their efforts were much appreciated by the players, as Steve highlighted: “The feedback we got was excellent. You always get good feedback from the player who wins, but all the way through the field people were positive and just happy that it could be played.

All the players had played either in the Wednesday pro-ams or had practiced on the Tuesday, so they saw what condition the golf courses were in before the rain. The greens were running really well and true. I think they felt a bit of disappointment on our behalf, but just pleased that it could be played.

A lot of them were thanking us on their way around when we were using the squeegees. ‘Well done lads, you’re doing a great job, keep it going, they would say.’

He summed up his thoughts about how the tournament went overall: “There is a mixed feeling really. On one side a bit of disappointment that we couldn’t present the golf course to how it should have been and how it was before the rain. On the other side though, there is that sense of achievement that we managed to get it played under adverse conditions.”

The next big tournament at Slaley Hall will be the PGA Cup in September 2013 and Steve said they were now busy working on what might need to be done to the greens in preparation for future downpours.

At every level in greenkeeping there are constant occurrences of fortitude in the face of adversity, often in the form of Mother Nature! The efforts by the team at Celtic Manor in 2010 would be a fine example. The endeavours at Slaley Hall were another such accomplishment.

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“In all my years of greenkeeping, I’ve never squeezed rough before.”

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Courses Manager
2012 was supposed to be the year when tear, stress and water-use restrictions, including the sports and amenity events including cricket matches and county shows are being cancelled. However, there is still time. Turf and sports turf in particular is the most reactive of all terrestrial green plant surfaces. Not only does it rebound and recover growth, colour and quality quickly, even after receiving the most severe hammering from intense traffic and high-temperature low-moisture conditions, but will just as quickly regress when such conditions return. Weather forecasters are predicting unsettled and very wet weather for the rest of June but the promise of a ‘proper’ summer from July onwards is on the cards. If this turns out to be true it won’t take long for today’s soaked and sodden turf to dry out. Following two too dry months all this water and green grass could be a distant memory by early September.

What’s more I suspect a lot of grass is still compacted, in spite of near record rainfall levels, from the prolonged winter and early spring drought. At the same time appraising weather conditions experienced since April will have disrupted a lot of ‘bread and butter’ turf management work designed to alleviate ground compaction and to promote grass growth.

Wider implications

The immediate implications of heavy wear and tear are heightened physical damage and physiological stress, accompanied by soil compaction and the formation of hard pan soil surfaces which simply add onto and aggravate grass plant stress. Heavy traffic and higher wear and tear is invariably accompanied by high-temperature, low-moisture conditions for the very good reason that sunny dry weather brings out sportsmen and sportswomen in their droves. Tunnel vision and vertical thinking has no place in the long term management of turf. Turf managers are required to understand and appreciate the bigger picture and wider implications of turf stress from wear and tear and heat and drought, and not least when it comes to turf disease and weed growth in professional sports and amenity turf.

Specific turf weeds and diseases which become prevalent during periods of summer stress are relatively easy to understand and appreciate. However, there will be other and often more serious long term problems, the ‘seeds’ of which are sown during summer stress but which do not show until autumn.

For turf weeds

As wear and tear builds up and turf progressively dries out the ability fine grasses as a award to compete with broad leaf weeds changes. Balance will be progressively and often violently tipped in favour of the clovers, tap-rooted antisetosette weeds that can penetrate and withstand the hard compacted upper layer, and inherently drought-resistant weeds like yarrow.

Grass effectively stops growing being unable to access sufficient water and therefore soluble nitrate for leaf growth. The clovers including white clover, yellow suckling clover, black medic and bird’s foot trefoil do not have this problem. They can fix their own nitrogen via bacteria in the root nodules and therefore carry on growing, flowering and setting seed at the expense of turf grass.

During periods of mid to late summer drought it is not unusual to see huge patches of these patch forming weeds in full flower. These clover biotypes are well adapted to turf by presenting a ground hugging prostrate habitat that allows flowering stems to escape the mower blades, and adding to the weed seed load that finds plenty of germination sites in the now threadbare turf.
Dr Terry Mabbett discusses the wider weed and disease implications of wear and tear on turf, a topic of interest to greenkeepers at all levels.

2012 was supposed to be the year when wear, tear and stress on UK sports turf would reach unprecedented levels from a population fuelled and fired up into frenzied sporting activity, inspired and encouraged by the Olympics being held on home grown turf. Considerations like hosepipe bans, on all and sundry water-use restrictions, including perfunctory période of summer stress are now a common occurrence for turf stressed out during mid season (Photograph 2) over and above the normal stresses of wear and tear on turf, a topic of interest to Turf manag-

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Hosepipe bans and monsoons

Having reached this high and dry point everything promptly started to go wrong or right whichever way you care to look at it, and in classic British style. Temperatures plunged in April so that sports and amenity turf along with every other growing system, including flowering shrubs and bedding plants, were placed in suspended animation for at least one month. Consequently what appeared in March to be one of the very earliest springs on record was transformed into one of the latest.

Recollections from this truly ‘upside down’ and inside out weather pattern subsequently spread far and wide not least there being hardly any May Blossom (hawthorn flowers) to celebrate May Day and garden ‘The Queen’s Jubilee it is not so much ‘Flaming June’ but ‘June Monsoon’ but without temperatures in the 75 to 85°F range that accompany the monsoon in the hot and humid tropics. Wear and tear on turf appears to be no problem and is the last thing on most people’s minds, simply because the weather is just too bad and playing surfaces too inundated to play sport. Indeed the grass looks lusher and greener than I can ever remember for mid June. Major and iconic sporting and amenity events including cricket matches and county shows are being cancelled.

PerENNIAL weeds and MONSoons

The ‘seeds’ of disease and weed are established in turf stressed and during mid to late summer (Photograph 3) from the ball game to horse racing, from cricket matches and county shows to the monsoon in the hot and humid tropics. Wear and tear on turf, a topic of interest to sports and amenity events including cricket matches and county shows are being cancelled.

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Bird’s foot trefoil has the added advantage of a sturdy and deep seated tap root enabling it to access water from a deeper position within the soil profile and to withstand the physical forces and physiological disadvantages (compressed spaces between soil particles unable to hold water) of an increasingly compacted soil. Other weeds with tap roots and indicative of dry compacted soils include the plantains family (Compositae (Asteraceae) including dandelion and cat’s ear, and even ragwort and sowthistles which thrive under conditions that are dry and therefore unable to compete for moisture in the soil. Other weeds with tap roots and indicative of dry compacted soil. Other weeds which thrive under conditions, would appear be among the most likely candidates. Heaviest infestations by yarrow will bounce back, but not as fast as yarrow with its head start because the yarrow plants never stopped growing. For this reason September and October are invariably the months when yarrow is seen at its highest incidence in turf.

For turf diseases

Much has been written about climate change and how this will change the spectrum and incidence of diseases on UK turf. Given the popular scenario for hotter and drier summers these particular climate change predictions appear to have gone astray. Best that can be said is that our current climate is 'changeable' under the influence of what has recently been dubbed 'global warming'. As such hot and dry, high traffic, spells putting turf under stress will continue to benefit the two most important classic diseases of UK turf (Fusarium patch and anthracnose). The pathogens causing these diseases are essentially put 'on their marks' in summer but don’t explode off 'the blocks' until autumn.

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Return of rain in September, often accompanied by heavy dew and mists, and the subsequent appearance of soft, succulent grass growth by an inherently weakened sward provides ideal conditions for these blights residing fungi to move up:

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Maximum utilisation by plants effectively reduces fertiliser use by up to 20%
Bird’s foot trefoil has the added advantage of a sturdy and deep seated tap root enabling it to access water from a deeper position within the soil profile and to withstand the physical forces and physiological disadvantages (compressed spaces between soil particles unable to hold water) of an increasingly compacted soil. Other weeds with tap roots and indistinguishable of dry compacted soils include the plantains and a range of weeds from the plant family Compositae (Asteraceae) including dandelion and cat’s ear, and even ragwort and sowthistles where unrepaird divots provide prime germination sites.

Other weeds which thrive under these conditions include creeping cinquefoil and yarrow, the latter of the Asteraceae (Compositae) family and a range of weeds from the plantain family which are more commonly associated with hot spells and summer drought stresses grass when wet and dry, high traffic and feeding. For turf diseases, would appear be among the most likely candidates. 

For turf diseases

Yarrow is perhaps the summer inspired weed problem with the greatest long term effect. During exceptionally hot and dry summers it is not unusual to see a completely dried out and browned off turf grass stand with increasingly large rosettes of yarrow still green and in flower. Come autumn, with rain and a dose of fertiliser for good measure, the highly reactive turf grass stand will bounce back, but not as fast as yarrow with its head start because the yarrow plants never stopped growing. For this reason September and October are invariably the months when yarrow is seen at its highest incidence in turf.

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Maximum utilisation by plants effectively reduces fertiliser use by up to 20%
Managing greens performance

Sid Arrowsmith MG (left) enjoyed a visit from Lawrence Pitthie, of Turf Master One Ltd, at Frilford Heath GC in Oxfordshire. The challenges faced and the work involved in implementing a measured greens improvement program, were on the agenda.

Frilford Heath GC, formed in 1908 lies seven miles south of Oxford and is one of a handful of clubs to offer three courses of genuine championship quality.

The site encompasses an area of some 500 acres (about 75% of which is designated SSSI) and is an oasis of light sandy soil underlying sandstone in an area surrounded by Oxfordshire clay.

Land that was deemed of little use for agriculture over a century ago was found to be ideal in the pursuit of gold by Frilford’s founding generation.

The original Red course was laid out by JH Taylor. Soon after the end of WW2, the Green course was added, first as 9 holes then eventually 18 by JH Turner and CK Cotton respectively and more recently Simon Oldham produced the Blue course which opened for play in 1994.

The club is a popular venue for tournaments and is regularly stages national championships and international matches. The English Amateur championship for tournaments and is regularly

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enjoyment to members and visitors always been to produce courses
discrete balance was successfully maintained, the issues facing the club never disappeared.”

Sid, who has been at the helm of Frilford since 1993 after spells in Paris and at Royal Porthcawl, continues. “Although the club was previously aware of many of these issues, it wasn’t until 2010 that plans were drawn up and a more concerted effort made to enhance the quality and reputation of the club.

“As part of the review process, the club sought external expertise to produce environmental reports which included trees, other vegetation and rare plants. This together with a more recent irrigation appraisal and bunker review has given the club the background information it requires in order to move forward and further develop the courses within their natural environment.

“In order to achieve the all-important requirement of excellent putting green performance, which would meet the necessary criteria for the forthcoming English Amateur, the STRI were invited to assist with this process.

The main objectives were to provide putting surfaces that were firmer and more consistent for longer periods of the year*.

GATHERING OF INFORMATION
Before embarking on any planned changes, it was necessary to have a base or start point as well as a target objective. The necessary data was collected to measure the organic content across each course via the LOI (loss on ignition) testing process, followed by firmness using the Clegg Hammer, moisture content using the Theta Probe and pace using the Stimpeter.

The final part of the process was to use the Simoethexis Meter whereby putting quality was accurately measured. This scientific approach has the advantage of reducing the degree of subjectivity and gives a clearer picture of what needs to be achieved. The following is a brief summary of the conditions present in the greens in 2010.

A presentation was made to the club followed by a member question and answer session hosted by the STRI. This allowed members the opportunity to ask and discuss the various options available before finally agreeing on a plan of action.

WORK PLAN
Following initial testing and gathering of data, the club purchased most of the measurement tools previously used by the STRI which has allowed Sid and his team to gather relevant information on a regular basis. This has helped to determine what work is required and also the important aspect of communicating results back to the club. With key objectives set out by the Board, all details of work planning are discussed and agreed by the management team, consisting of the General Manager, Professional and Course Manager, with the emphases being on surface quality and management of organic matter.

Once this objective is achieved then the focus will switch to a gradual change in grass species and greater sustainability. It was also agreed not to be overly aggressive with regards to surface cultivation since it was necessary to provide the golfers with an acceptable playing surface. This necessitated a more cautious approach but also a reflection on the fact that the greens were already in reasonable condition and not at a level whereby more severe treatment was required. The agreed program of work consisted of the following:

• Aeration: Two corings, spring and summer, using 8-10mm tines; Regular use of the Toro Hydroject throughout the summer. Using 13-16mm tines; Regular use of the Toro Hydroject throughout the summer.

• Top Dressing: An increase using 100 tons of medium grade kiln dried sand following each coring. This was also agreed not to be overly disruptive and although a

Fertiliser: Largely the same as before, using three applications of granular products supported by foliar applications of Farmura Porthcawl and other amendments containing seaweed extracts and humic acids throughout the growing season.

• Chemicals: No real change other than introducing phosphate applications as a mild form of fungicide and the use of Primo Maxx for award improvement and poa seed head suppression.

Having the benefit of three courses, it was easy to focus attention on one course at a time while it remained closed for one or two days. This allowed the work to continue unhindered and since most of the work was carried out during the growing season, recovery was swift which was greatly appreciated by the members.

Over the last three years, the Directors have been fully committed to this program of work and have not only allowed Sid to increase his staffing levels, but have also committed to putting the level of investment has remained consistent, to date this is in excess of £300,000. Further investment will follow when required. Recent purchases have included fairway and surrounds mowers, utility vehicles, a multi pro 5800 sprayer and a pro-core seeder, all from Toro as well as other essential items including turf irons, a spinner dresser and a contra-rotating brush.