The reduction of compaction can be best achieved by the use of hollow tines which remove a core of soil or extraction by the effective Deep Drill aerator. Alternatively compaction can be relieved by the use of equipment which heaves the soil, such as vertidraining.

5. To encourage root growth - if done at the correct time of the year. The slicing of the grass roots stimulates the plant to produce new root material increasing its mass and depth. The holes left by aeration also offer an easy route for the turf grass roots to progress downwards into the soil.

6. To stimulate aerobic soil bacteria which are vital to soil health. By virtue of increased oxygen levels in the soil, bacteria in the soil break down fertilisers for plant growth as well as breaking down organic matter (thatch). It is also thought by many that soil bacteria can be beneficial in controlling some damaging fungi in the soil.

7. To aid the penetration of irrigation water. This is particularly important when compact dry soils occur on a sloped area where run off of irrigation water is a problem. This is often done by the use of sarrel spikers.

8. To help in the control or reduction of thatch in the turf. The use of hollow tines is well suited to this role as a plug of thatch is physically removed during the aeration process.

9. To help in the process of rootzone improvement. After aeration topdressing can be applied to the turf surface and can then be worked into the aeration holes to help improve drainage. Fertilisers and chemicals (such as wetting agents in granular form) can also be worked into the rootzone in the same way. In addition seed can be worked into aeration holes at the same time as topdressing where they can germinate (this is best done with equipment such as a sarrel roller as the seed is not worked in too deep to germinate effectively). In recent years the advent of "Drill n Fill" machines have enabled greenkeepers to drill to a depth of 31cm and backfill these holes with free draining materials such as sand and/or an amendment that brings soil improvement to new levels.

10. To help maintain all round soil and turf grass health, thus reducing turf grass problems such as fungal diseases and certain weeds and moss which thrive in the presence of high moisture levels.

I have noted there is a tendency for some greenkeepers to aerate less than they used to and I am often told it’s due to complaints from the membership. However, the thing about not aerating is the effects are not obvious straight away. Everyone notices if you don’t cut the greens or water them but lack of aeration takes a while to bite and it’s several years before things start to get out of control. Of course, it’s then harder to recover and you have explain why you suddenly have to carry out lots of aeration. Of course, it’s then harder to recover and you can also bet it will be the same people who complained about the aeration who will now be asking why you have not been doing it and why you let the greens get into such a mess!

So next time a golfer stops and asks why you seem to be ruining their putting surface you can reply “It depends how long you’ve got - I can give you ten good reasons if you have the time!”

**DRAINAGE OR COMPACTION PROBLEMS?**

**Drill n Fill or Deep Drill is the solution**

- Drills to 310mm, extracts and backfills in one action
- Ends puddling after downpours
- Minimises winter closures
- Percolation ducts connect to deeper drainage layer

**Deep Drill aerator**

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A family affair at Woolley Park

Phil Rowbottom combines running a busy farm with managing a proprietary golf club at Woolley Park near Wakefield. Steve Castle spoke to him to discover how closely the two work together.

Profile

Name: Phil Rowbottom
Position: Course Manager/Farmer
Born: Wakefield, 13 February 1960
Handicap: 12

Hobbies: Clay pigeon shooting (Has won a gold medal for Great Britain in the World Championships)

I arrived at Woolley Park on a grey April day, but with the course, clubhouse and farm buzzing with activity. After some thought, Phil gave his job title as “Course Manager and Farmer” but it’s immediately clear that everyone gets involved in both sides of the business.

Phil explained: “No one here is just a greenkeeper or just a farmer. There’s a couple of the greenkeepers here who don’t do a lot of farming but they’ll muck in when needed. One of them rolls all the corn, when we sow it in the autumn. My colleagues Andy Scaman and Richard Thompson came through the farming industry with me. Andy is a farmer’s son who wanted to work on a larger farm, so he came here twenty odd years ago. He’s vertidraining today. Myself, my son John and Andy are the key farm staff and the others – Stuart Mason and Peter Colley – help out.

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small mower or a large tractor and they can generally mend things, and Andy and Richard achieved their NVQ2 Greenkeeping at Myrescusa.

The farm’s main function now is drying and storing grain for merchants and local farmers. This started 25 years ago when father and son built a new grain store. It turned out to be too big for their requirements, so they stored some oil seed rape as a favour for a neighbour and it grew from there.

Two years ago they constructed another grain plant and 9000 tons of grain went through the drier there last year. Phil’s grandfather was a tenant at Mount Farm on the site, which lies close to the M1 in Wakefield. His late father David bought the farm in the mid seventies, and after years as a successful crop farm, David then made a decision which initially seemed surprising.

“Around 1992 my dad decided to build a parkland golf course. He didn’t play golf but the sport really was booming at that time. We had 150 acres of farmland which we earmarked for building the course. You have to bear in mind that none of the family knew the first thing about golf course construction. I’d studied Agri-culture at college but had no real interest in golf.

“We had a friend who was an architect, so we talked to him about planning. Before we knew it we’d bought £12,000 of grass seed to sow it all down and we got stuck in. When you looked at the landscape, it was actually perfect.

“We didn’t need to excavate or move any trees, we just got on with planting grass seed. We tried not to overcomplicate things and that’s the attitude we try and retain today where possible.

“We bought three shipping containers to act as an office, a shop and the maintenance facility. In reality one had some paperwork in it, one a coffee machine and one a mower.

“My mother took the course fees, my father mowed the fairways and my wife Jane - a schoolteacher by trade - was the first greenkeeper because I was busy running a fertiliser business at that time.

“I bought Jane a second-hand Toro mower at auction and she used that. We ran it as a family top to bottom, and that continues to this day.”

It wasn’t until four years after the course opened that they removed the shipping containers and constructed the clubhouse which houses a bar, dining area and pro shop.

“The family connection is continuing with Phil’s son John working on both the farm and the course. Phil said it’s been a pretty straightforward few years although he recalled one mistake which they had to deal with promptly.

“We did have an incident a good few years ago where some weed killer was accidentally sprayed on the greens, and we had to move play to winter greens in August. We reacted straight away by getting hold of three loads of top dressing, deep scarifying through the turf, resowing it in a week and they were back in play in three weeks. It was a genuine error and it’s all about how you react to things – life is never plain sailing as everybody knows.”

The undulating parkland course is now nicely complemented by a nine-hole par three course, which is close to the grain store and farmhouse.

Phil explained that Wakefield has a huge catchment area, and they decided to respond to the need for playing facilities in the winter, which meant minimising the greeness and good drainage.

“We get dads and lads playing, then they want to play the 18 hole course, and some become members. We opened it right in the middle of the recession but it’s been a real success and kept a steady stream of new golfers coming through the doors.

“So what about the future? Phil smiled and said: “My attitude is to tell the lads the golf course looks fantastic today, but I want it better tomorrow.”

“If they say they need a new piece of kit I will do my utmost to source the budget for it. “Any budget left over is spent on the golf course, not the locker room. The customers come through the door to play golf and you have to get repeat customers – so the golf course is the most important thing, and always will be.”

“The greens are loosely USGA, built with our own topsoil, screened then blended with sand to 60% sand, 40% topsoil. We felt 80/20, which is USGA, would leave us vulnerable to drought”

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Bernhard delegates

...where are they now?

If you’re still undecided about applying to join the next BIGGA Delegation to America, read on to find out how much influence the trip had on delegates from the last few years.

In August Greenkeeper International will again be asking for members to apply to become a member of the Bernhard’s Delegation heading to the States and the Golf Industry Show in January. It’s a fantastic shared experience, an opportunity to build new friendships and make new business contacts, but most importantly a priceless tool for learning, educating, training and growing. But don’t just take our word for it. GI spoke to some of the delegates from the last decade to find out how much the trip influenced them professionally and personally...

Jaime Acton, 2012 Delegate.
THEN: Head Greenkeeper, Worlebury Golf Club
NOW: Golf Course Manager, Rushmore Golf Club

I had no idea just how much the trip would impact on me both professionally and personally. I feel it has given me the confidence to hold my own professionally, to push myself more in new situations and to move my career to the next level. A few months ago I was offered a new job and took on the challenge of running a lovely proprietary club set in ancient parkland on a private estate. The Show, seminars and site visits we all attended in the States gave me a real thirst to improve myself.

Rob Sandilands, 2011 Delegate.
THEN: Deputy Head Greenkeeper, Elsham Golf Club
NOW: Head Greenkeeper, Grange-over-Sands Golf Club

I was the only deputy on the trip, and the group of Course Managers and Head Greenkeepers during the week in Orlando had a big influence on me at the time, and they’ve continued to have a major influence on me since. They gave me some great advice, including some really important tips you don’t always get in the textbooks! I really feel the experience gave me that boost to get my first Head Greenkeeper job, which I secured just two months later.

Richard Jenkinson, 2013 Delegate.
THEN: Deputy Course Manager G West
NOW: Same position

It truly was the most unforgettable experience I’ve had in my career. One real highlight were the tours around Torrey Pines and La Costa. It was fascinating to see the differences between them even though they are only ten minutes apart.

The management style is similar but the terrain and composition of the courses are completely different. I now understand why previous delegates described it as a very tough but life-changing week.

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A year after my trip, I secured my first Course Managers position at Muswell Hill and the Bernhard Delegation certainly helped - I was told it made my CV stand out. It's a fantastic, amazing experience. It opened my eyes to how professional they were in the States, and I returned determined to incorporate some of their ideas into my club. I learnt so much.

It's also fantastic from a personal point of view. My roommate was Greg Skinner, who's now at Forest Hill Golf & Country Club, and we had a real laugh and became good mates.

Not only that, we still speak to each other about issues on our courses and help solve problems - all this as a result of that one week.

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Matt Pleston, 2006 Delegate

The 2012 BIGGA Delegation
Sallie Taylor talked to the 2012 Delegates to find out how the trip impacted them at the time, and what lessons they have carried with them a year down the line.

The US visit is hugely important not just as a fabulous shared experience, an opportunity to build new friendships and make new business contacts, but most importantly as a tool for learning, educating, training and growing, as last year’s delegates are keen to testify.

Stuart Yarwood, Course Manager at Lymnn Golf Club said: “For the trip dispersed lots of myths. I realised that in the US education comes from the top down alongside their practical knowledge.

“I have been trying to apply this back home - to think like the person I want to be perceived as. In the UK we tend to start at the bottom and work up, learning on the way, so that for many people, when they find themselves in a managerial position they don’t have any of the basic skills to do that job. If you put lads in a horrible tin shed with the wind howling through it they will apply those standards on the golf course.”

Neil Ballingall, Course Manager at Fairmont St Andrews, said: “I found some of the seminars at GIS really useful.

“We had a long session on growth-rectangular which was great, very in depth.

“ knew it stopped the grass growing, but I didn’t know how or why. We learned that if you don’t reapply it at the correct time it can have the opposite effect.

“Such a small thing that had such a big effect, and I’ve had a really successful year because I am using it properly.”

David Gray, First Assistant Greenkeeper at Ladybank Golf Club, agrees.

“The trip gave me a greater drive for education. I loved the seminars and bouncing off the other guys. The trip will always benefit me”

“I actually learned new things and new ways to work. It was invaluable.

“Give you an example, just last month I had an engineering problem with something. I just couldn’t find an answer.

“In the end I called Stuart Hall, who was also on the trip, and he solved the problem in a few minutes.

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Ellen Birrell, Head Greenkeeper at St Andrews, said: “The trip is a fantastic experience, the scale of it was colossal.

“Another thing that sticks in my mind is one of the course visits to a course called The Bridges. They had 55 staff and 14 gardeners looking after an 18-hole course, and they couldn’t believe how few staff we had in comparison! “We had a real laugh and became good mates. “The trip spurred my education and encouraged me to pass on knowledge to fellow colleagues and discuss things with my boss.”

The ten years since I went has flown by but I still remember so many elements of the trip. A real highlight for me was the educational side, recall attending a GCMSA Seminar on Communications which I found particularly useful, and I referred back to it repeatedly as my career progressed.

I also learnt a lot from the guys I travelled with. We were all able to offer advice to each other, and we really built up a great camaraderie between us. Several of us still stay in touch now, either meeting at BTME or on Facebook or Twitter. I’ve no doubt that the whole experience really enhanced my career.

I went to Atlanta (right) and the key for me was the feeling that you’re getting involved not just in the American perspective on course maintenance, but the world. Lifetime friendships were made on that trip, you spend a lot of time with the other delegates and get to know them really well and exchange opinions and ideas.

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It’s also fantastic from a personal point of view. My roommate was Greg Shrimner, who’s now at Forest Hill Golf & Country Club, and we had a real laugh and became good mates.

Not only that, we still speak to each other about issues on our courses and help solve problems - all this as a result of that one week.

Lee Hawkins MG, 2004 Delegate.
THEN: Head Greenkeeper, Cleethorpes Golf Club
NOW: Course Manager, The Eden Course, St Andrews

I remember thinking on my trip that the US were much more advanced in certain areas, although I do feel we’ve caught up now. I recall we went to a seminar discussing absolutely everything about Primo, which at that time was unavailable in the UK. This meant that when Primo did become available over here, I had a head start over other greenkeepers and wasn’t afraid to use it because I was very well informed about it. The Golf Industry Show was also an amazing experience, the scale of it was colossal.

Another thing that sticks in my mind is one of the course visits to a course called The Bridges. They had 55 staff and 14 gardeners looking after an 18-hole course, and they couldn’t believe how few staff we had in comparison! You’ve looked after so well while you’re out there and I can’t imagine why a greenkeeper wouldn’t want to apply to join the delegation.

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Matt Pleded, 2006 Delegate

Gordon McKie, 2003 Delegate.
THEN: Head Greenkeeper, The Eden Course, St Andrews
NOW: Course Manager, The Old Course, St Andrews

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Ian Kinley, 2006 Delegate
THEN: Course Manager, The Glen Golf Club
NOW: Course Manager, Royal Porthcawl Golf Club

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18 steps to becoming a Golf Course Manager

Part Two: The back nine

Last month we ‘played’ the front nine of the career course, now for the crucial back nine...

10. Budgeting

For many this is often the most boring hole on the course and thus the one that receives the least concentration – a real card waster. Budgeting is a great discipline for any manager. If you carefully plan and build your budgets you can make them work in your favour, making your aims easier to achieve. If you can draw up a management policy for your golf course and quantify the resources they require, then you can be sure that your budget will be realistic and that you will have the resources you need to execute your manager’s vision. For example, if you plan to upgrade the course’s putting green, you will need to include the cost of the materials, labor, and any additional maintenance needed. It is important to be realistic about the budget, but also to make sure that you have the resources to complete the project.

11. Negotiation

You will need to develop good negotiation skills, not just for purchasing purposes, but also for management purposes. When negotiating, ensure that you have a clear understanding of the other party’s needs and interests, and that you are willing to compromise. It is important to be confident and assertive, but also to be respectful and considerate.

12. Getting That Job

“Too much competition”, “jobs being filled internally without advertising”, “I don’t have the skill set for the type of course”, “no private club or proprietary business experience”, “I have never been a Course Manager”, “I lack interview experience”. These are just some of the obstacles identified by prospective Course Managers during our Continue to Learn Workshops. If you are not alone, you have to overcome these obstacles by process of elimination. Whatever the barriers are, reduce them.

By the way, I am not suggesting you leave your spouse! Make a sideways move if necessary to gain specific experience. If you hear of a vacant position be proactive, submit a CV and explain why you wouldn’t be a good choice, don’t wait for an advertisement. The main thing that will overcome these hurdles is confidence, a lot of the perceived obstacles above are born out of a lack of confidence in your ability. The more experience, knowledge and skills that you gain the more confident you will become. If you are not sure, you can always go back and get your CV redone.

13. Marketplace

This is included because if you are going to move up in your career you have to know the market you are in.

Do your research and look for jobs in the marketplace that fit your skill set. If you feel the marketplace is crowded for certain course management roles, be prepared to go for a job that you may find less appealing but also has less competition.

It is about getting that first manager’s role that sets you on your way. Aim at clubs that might be looking for new ideas and enthusiasm, find out what the job involves and formulate plans to help them. Most of all make sure you are ‘marketable’ and are able to meet the prospective job’s specification.

14. Networking

Get yourself out there in the industry, get to know course managers, club managers, professional, consultants, association officials and staff. Trade members and peers. Get yourself known (professionally) on social media such as Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter. Get on greenkeeping and turf management forums and ‘turf clubs’. It is often not what, but who you know. Aged 20 I was the secretary of the BB&GAA all things that got me noticed. At least two of my major career moves were facilitated because of personal recommendation from industry professionals. I didn’t see these relationships as networking at the time but there is little doubt they could be described as such.

15. Curriculum Vitae

A CV won’t get you a job but it can get you that all important interview.

Firstly it needs to be read and that means it must be engaging. Make sure yours is professional, up to date with no time gaps, succinct, and get it proofread by someone who can spell. There is so much information on the internet on how to prepare a CV and plenty of seminars from BB&GAA too, so there are no excuses. A CV equals a professional profile, so make sure it presents you in the best possible light.

Break down your CV into the following sections:

- Personal details – Name, address, age, marital status, contact details
- Education
- Employment
- Professional body membership
- Key Skills
- Accomplishments
- Reference
- Details of seminars attended
- Any extra-curricular courses

A CV equals a professional profile, and gives you confidence in your ability. It is about getting that first manager’s role that sets you on your way. Aim at clubs that might be looking for new ideas and enthusiasm, find out what the job involves and formulate plans to help them. Most of all make sure you are ‘marketable’ and are able to meet the prospective job’s specification.

16. Interview Ability

A good handshake, smart appearance, eye contact and a quiet but assured confidence works every time. I know this because I have been in many interviews on the employer’s side of the table so I know what engages me. Note all of this information is gained before a question has even been asked, so first impressions count.

You are short on interview experience practice with someone with experience, carrying out roleplay is the only way you are going to be ready yourself for the real situation. Yes there will be the dynamics of the interview room to deal with as well as the ‘killer questions’, so get yourself prepared and be well versed in your answers. This means researching your prospective employer, you want to find out the following:

- Club information
- Type of business
- Type of course
- Future aims
- Staff levels
- Membership numbers
- Financial position
- Course condition
- Resources

One unforgivable mistake I’ve seen repeatedly at interview is the candidate not walking or playing the course. What sort of interest in your prospective employer’s club do you think this demonstrates? To again is about preparation and research.

17. Implementation

At the end of it all, once you have a Course Managers job, you are employed to implement. Using the resources at your disposal you have to implement your plans within budget and in line with the agreed course management policy. In other words you have to deliver on all of the skills and knowledge you have gained in steps one to sixteen. It is one thing finally getting a Course Managers job but it is through efficient implementation that you will keep it.

18. Review

Lastly reflection. You should review all of the implemented plans and work, checking progress, learning, benchmarking and adjusting accordingly. This review does not just apply to the work produced by your staff and yourself but of your progress as a manager and the progress of your chosen career. You will often find that you need more learning, sometimes you may find that you have made the wrong move, or that you need to test yourself in a more demanding role. A review will ensure your career as a Golf Course Manager stays on course.