Effective aeration improves drainage, reduces turf compaction, thatch build up and boosts the health of golf course greens and fairways. Toby Clarke, Sales Manager for Dennis and SISIS, explains the basics of aeration, its advantages and which machinery you should look at.

Q What is aeration?
Put simply, aeration is a mechanical operation that creates more air space within the soil. This increases oxygen levels allowing for better percolation of water and nutrients thus promoting a healthier plant.

Q When should I use different methods of aeration?
All greenkeepers will have or should have an aeration programme in place. These will differ from club to club depending on soil structure, budgets, staffing levels, amount of traffic, climate etc. An example of a greens programme is shown inset right.

Varying the depths at which you aerate is important to avoid ‘panning’ - which is when a compacted layer forms below where aeration has been carried out at the same depth for a number of years.

The top 100mm is the most important. Hollow tine aeration used for the removal of thatch and soil exchange purposes is generally undertaken from late summer through to early autumn when drainage will be greater. However, using a small diameter hollow or solid tine to a depth of 50mm throughout the growing season will cause little disruption to play and will increase airflow and water/nutrient ingress during the drier months.

Q What type of machines should I look at?
There are many different types of aerator currently available and all are viable. If budgets allow of course (see box on right page.)

In these tougher economic times we have seen a noticeable upturn in clubs returning to our Multitiner tractor mounted aerator. The SISIS Multitiner is available in 1.2m and 1.8m widths and is a drum-type aerator, which is ideally suited to a range of applications. It has three drums with independent rotation and interchangeable tines (hollow/ solid and chisel) with a maximum depth of 100mm. It’s not only cost effective but also simple to use and maintain and is extremely reliable. Pedestrian slitters such as our AutoSlit are also proving popular when poor drainage becomes problematic and compaction issues present the use of tractor-mounted equipment. They can be used throughout the winter months with little or no disruption.

Q Why is aeration important and what are the benefits to the greenkeeper?
Low cut heights particularly on greens mean that regular aeration in vital. With cut heights as low as 3mm the plant needs a good well established root structure to supply the oxygen and nutrients needed to survive. Regular aeration will allow the plant to flourish. Obviously, a golf course that is well aerated and has a proven aeration programme will be a delight to manage. Golfers should be appreciative and more will want to play. This will increase revenue within the club which is beneficial to all.

Q What are the advantages of mechanical aeration and air combined?
Using compressed air at relatively low pressures has two main benefits - the first being the fracturing of the soil causing many fissures within the soil structure. The second is a large increase in oxygen levels over conventional aeration. This has the obvious effect of allowing a better flow of water and nutrients throughout so a green with traditionally poor drainage will improve with immediate effect. Surface disruption is kept to a minimum as large slitters, such as the SISIS Megaslit, used on a fairway would have a maximum depth of 300mm or when hollow tine aeraing a green maximum depth would, in normal circumstances, be no more than 125mm.

Q Why is minimal surface disruption important in selecting the right equipment?
Minimal surface disruption is vitaly important when selecting the right equipment. Getting your greens, tees and fairways back into play ASAP should be one of the first considerations on any greenkeeper’s mind. Timing is paramount as is choice and size of tine for example.

Hollow tining in late August will recover far quicker than hollow tining in late October. The golfer may complain more but they will have superior greens in the longer term. The simple rule is the later the time, the more disruption. When aerating, ask yourself is the machine fitted with a light pressure roller? This will not only help maintain levels but you are doing two jobs in one pass.

Q What depth should I aerate to?
Varying the depth is important to avoid panning. Aeration is possible anywhere from 10mm to 400mm if conditions allow. For example, a large slitter, such as the SISIS Megaslit, used on a fairway would have a maximum depth of 300mm or when hollow tine aeraing a green maximum depth would, in normal circumstances, be no more than 125mm.

Q In your opinion, what are the 4 most important topics/aspects of aeration?
1. Maintaining or improving the circulation of oxygen within the soil structure.
2. Remove or controlling thatch build up.
3. Relieve compaction.
4. Improve drainage.

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The incredible 22” INFINI System™ now has a big brother – a 36” wide version with all the same attributes. This wider model will increase productivity, whilst the floating head will ensure no compromise on undulating surfaces.

ADVANCED TURF TECHNOLOGY

• aerate • brush • de-thatch • groom • level • mow • scarify • top dress

Types of aerators

• Hollow/ solid/chisel aerator, pedestrian or tractor mounted
• Slit tine, pedestrian or tractor mounted
• Combination of air and solid tine aerator, tractor mounted
• Deep tine aerator, tractor mounted
• Linear action aerator, tractor mounted
• Water injection aerator, pedestrian

For more news and reviews, visit our website or follow us on Twitter @SISISMachinery and like the company’s Facebook page – www.facebook.com/SISISMachinery. You can also view the latest SISIS videos by visiting www.youtube.com/SISISMachinery

For further information or a no obligation demonstration, please contact SISIS on 0832 829 777 or visit www.sisis.com/SISISMachinery

For more information on compactors visit www.prestige-nz.com or call the company’s Facebook page – www.facebook.com/PrestigeNZ. You can also view the latest Prestige videos by visiting www.youtube.com/PrestigeNZ

A breath of fresh air
What about buying pre-owned machinery?

Bob Buckingham, Director of Operations at Global Turf Equipment, explores the option of buying pre-owned machinery

Most golf clubs continue to face financial challenges in a bid to balance the books. And, like all capital expenditure, funding the replacement of course maintenance equipment presents its own set of pressures on financial committees as well as turf care professionals.

For the majority of greenkeepers the key objective when looking to replace ground care machinery is to secure the best possible deal on the right machine for the job. More often than not, this means exploring all options available, including used equipment as well as new machinery. While buying a new machine may seem the obvious choice, it’s just not a practical reality for many golf clubs. Used equipment, on the other hand, can offer a much more affordable alternative, often saving customers over half the price of new models.

With the life expectancy of modern mowing equipment exceeding 6,000 hours, it is now possible to obtain late-model machinery that is less than halfway through its working life – saving as much as 60% against the cost of new and slashing the impact of depreciation experienced when buying new.

Furthermore, a specialist used equipment supplier can often find just the right machine, supplied to ‘almost new’ standard, and available for delivery.

One such specialist dealer is Global Turf Equipment UK Ltd which is the UK and European arm of Global Turf Equipment (USA), the world’s largest supplier of used turf equipment. Global Turf UK specialises in the supply of pre-owned golf course maintenance and turf management equipment. The firm offers carefully selected, late-model machines, from leading brands such as Toro and John Deere, at a fraction of the high capital investment costs associated with the purchase of new machinery.

Bob explained: “Global Turf UK was established to provide a local source of equipment for UK and European golf courses and sports turf facilities. Key to our success is our ability to source and supply good quality, low-hour machines. Most machines come to us from our partners in the USA, and are generally short-term lease return machines, typically around three years old.

“In the USA, Global Turf Equipment has well-established direct relationships with leasing and finance companies, allowing access to only the very best equipment available. Global Turf has been exporting equipment worldwide for over 10 years and, with a 35,000 sq. ft. storage facility in Florida, carries a stock of over 650 machines at any one time.

“We pride ourselves on selecting only the highest quality machines which come with verified hour meters, complete service history, and are fully CE marked and certified for sale and use in all EU countries. Most importantly, all machines are supported by a first class network of service dealers.

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Please email your notes to north-east-central-Gordon.moir@bigga.co.uk

**Scotland**

**News**

Central

21 teams entered the Pairs competition this year. Results on the website at the beginning of each month.

East

The section would like to wish Mark Campbell all the best with his new position as Course Manager at Deer Park GC. Mark has made the move from Niddry Castle.

North

Congratulations to Stewart Brown from Royal Aberdeen who has been picked to attend the FTMI 2014.

The 200 club tickets will be available soon, anyone looking for extra tickets can contact Paul Sharp at Peterculter GC. Let’s hope we get a good response as it is our main source of income in the section. We are increasing the cost of an outing to £25 as we’ve been running outings at a loss for the past few years. Please remember to book your club money ASAP and also your entry money for Moray, it saves Paul and myself taking money on the day.

Joanne O’Neill from Newmachar GC has left our industry to work at Aberdeen Airport so best wishes on her future career, and Dougie Elick also from Newmachar has moved to Murrar Links.

Richard Potts from Newmachar GC has been unwell for a few months but has returned to work and looking forward to another busy year on the driving range.

Johnny’s from McDonald GC has been in hospital having a new hip fitted so he is now on the road to recovery, keep an eye out for him as he walks round Elgin.

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Central

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**Welcome New Members**

Marc Elick, Affiliate Member, Plumps Ltd, Craig Barr, Deputy Head Greenkeeper, Maculharian Dunes Golf Club, David Miller, Greenkeeper, David Drummond, Greenkeeper, Michael Dyer, Greenkeeper, Richard Riddell, Mechanic, Murray Lorimer, Assistant Greenkeeper, all Murfield - The Hon Company of Edinburgh Golfers, Andrew Mooney, Student, SRUC (Elmwood), Mark Irvine, Student, SRUC (Elmwood), Lewis Guinan, Assistant Greenkeeper, but due to the fact the website will likely be changing and become a part of the Scottish Region website at some point in 2014, we will continue to run everyone’s details and links to each company’s own website for the remainder of the time the Section website exists. On behalf of the Committee and the members of the Central Section, a huge thank you to everyone who has supported us in this way.

**Events Coming Up**

Central

Entries for the Spring outing need to be in by 25 April at the latest complete with payment. We will be charged for any uncollected tee times.

East

Our spring outing will be at Goswick GC on 22 April, sorry for the spelling mistake last month. We still have spaces, currently we are limited, please book in advance through Gordon McKie.

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Gordon Moir has moved to Royal Aberdeen GC on 5 April. Contact your section correspondent with news, events or anything else for Around the green...

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Marc Elick, Affiliate Member, Plumps Ltd, Craig Barr, Deputy Head Greenkeeper, Maculharian Dunes Golf Club, David Miller, Greenkeeper, David Drummond, Greenkeeper, Michael Dyer, Greenkeeper, Richard Riddell, Mechanic, Murray Lorimer, Assistant Greenkeeper, all Murfield - The Hon Company of Edinburgh Golfers, Andrew Mooney, Student, SRUC (Elmwood), Mark Irvine, Student, SRUC (Elmwood), Lewis Guinan, Assistant Greenkeeper, but due to the fact the website will likely be changing and become a part of the Scottish Region website at some point in 2014, we will continue to run everyone’s details and links to each company’s own website for the remainder of the time the Section website exists. On behalf of the Committee and the members of the Central Section, a huge thank you to everyone who has supported us in this way.
News

Central  
21 teams entered the Pairs competition this year. Results on the website at the beginning of each month.

East  
The section would like to wish Mark Campbell all the best with his new position as Course Manager at Deer Park GC. Mark has made the move from Niddry Castle.

North  
Congratulations to Stewart Brown from Royal Aberdeen who has been picked to attend the PTMI 2014.

The 200 club tickets will be available soon, anyone looking for extra tickets can contact Paul Sharp at Peterculter GC. Let’s hope we get a good response as it is our main source of income in the section. We are increasing the cost of an outing to £25 as we’ve been running outings at a loss for the past few years. Please remember to send back your 200 club money ASAP and also any entry money for Morny, it saves Paul and myself taking money on the day.

Joanne O’Neill from Newmachar GC has left our industry to work at Aberdeen Airport so best wishes on her future career, and for Moray, it saves Paul and myself taking money on the day.

Richard Petrie from Newmachar has been unwell for a few months but has returned to work and looking forward to another busy year on the driving range.

Johnnie from McDonald GC has been in hospital having a new hip fitted so he is now on the road to recovery, keep an eye out for him as he walks round Ellon.

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Events Coming Up

Central  
Entries for the Spring outing need to be in by 25 April at the latest complete with payment. We will be charged for any tickets or meal fees we don’t use and for all meals ordered therefore you must pay in advance. Entry forms are available at www.biggacentreeducation.org.uk.

Our next educational seminar will be the Berhnards workshop on crew maintenance and grading on 14 May. Numbers are limited, please book in advance through Gordon McKie.

East  
Our spring outing will be at Goswick GC on 22 April, sorry for the spelling mistake last month. We still have spaces, currently we have a field of over 20 greenkeepers.

North  
Congratulations to Stewart Brown from Royal Aberdeen who has been picked to attend the PTMI 2014.

The 200 club tickets will be available soon, anyone looking for extra tickets can contact Paul Sharp at Peterculter GC. Let’s hope we get a good response as it is our main source of income in the section. We are increasing the cost of an outing to £25 as we’ve been running outings at a loss for the past few years. Please remember to send back your 200 club money ASAP and also any entry money for Morny, it saves Paul and myself taking money on the day.

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Results

North East  
Spring comp at South Shields Golf Club, many thanks to Phil Hargreaves and his team as the course was in superb condition. Lowest Gross – Jack Piarr 74. Shafflefield Winners: 1 Ben Potter 39pts, 2 Russell Black 36, 3 on c/b Richard Hood 35, 4 on c/b Paul Watson 35, 5 James Richardson 34.

Thanks to Sponsors  
Northern  
We are superbly well looked after every year by these guys and are truly grateful. Eversis, Rigby Taylor, PMW Distinct Homes, Abbey Movers, Bob Wild Grass Machinery and Mel Gay & Barbatehe Sandes.

Welcome New Members  
Gary Worrall, Affiliate Member, PitchWorks, Will Hibbs, Greenkeeper, St Annes Old Links Golf Club, Joe Gibson, Operations Director of Llangollen Golf Club. Thank to all who made our spring seminar such a great success. I apologise for my lack of output over recent months. Both my phone and computer give up the ghost, normal service has been resumed.

Contact your Section correspondent with news, events or anything else for Around the green...

Central  
Contact your Section correspondent with news, events or anything else for Around the green...

North

Contact your Section correspondent with news, events or anything else for Around the green...
Events Coming Up

Midland
We email all who have received an entry form for the postponed 2013 "Toro BiGGA Midland Regional Team Challenge", to be played at Trentham GC on 7 May. Entries to Sandra Raper on 07866 366966. The Spring Greenkeepers Day was originally planned for 14 May with a start of time 12.30, closing date 6 May. Please ring Rhys on 07774 161473, or go to our new website to download an entry form: www.biggamidlandsection.co.uk. Also don’t forget that the very successful long running Everris Doubles competition draw will also be held at Olton, please use either of the prior channels mentioned to register.

We thank you for your continued support with funds towards the Mid Anglia Section. Banks Amenity also sponsor our Golfer of the Year Trophy again this year so once again your support means a lot and please consider these suppliers for your requirements the coming months and beyond into 2014. If you’re interested in sponsoring Mid Anglia Section in 2014 please contact a committee member for details.

Welcome New Members

Luker Hall, Greenkeeper, Askridge Golf Club, Lain Ives, Greenkeeper, Mid Herts Golf Club, James Evans, Head Greenkeeper, Little Lakes Golf Club, Ashton Hall, Assistant Greenkeeper, Rudheath Golf Club, Simon Harding, Assistant Greenkeeper, Calcut Park Golf Club, Joseph Bungooy, Assistant Greenkeeper, Calcut Park Golf Club, Warren Tansier Assistant Greenkeeper, Trentham Golf Ltd.

Recruitment

Overseas opportunities in the Netherlands
April - October
An exciting opportunity has arisen for green keepers to work in our experienced and successful team. Applicants must be able to undertake all basic green keeping tasks and be qualified to NVQ Level 2 or similar.

Minimum 3 years experience
Experience on all mowers hand held or ride on is essential for this position.

The Club is maintained to a high standard and works on the course cover a wide range of duties so this position requires an individual who can apply their skills to all aspects of course maintenance. You must be a good team worker, highly motivated, be able to make decisions and be able to operate a full range of equipment associated with the post.

Accommodation is found and paid for assistance with travel is also available.

A full UK Driving License is required and own transport for these positions.

UK permanent address and National Insurance number

Must have a willingness to work away from home

Contact Denise Haines on 01612331564 or d.mugford@biggamidlandsection.co.uk or office 01638 721888. Website: www. biggamidlandsection.co.uk. Also don’t forget that the very successful long running Everris Doubles competition draw will also be held at Olton, please use either of the prior channels mentioned to register.

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Midland

Events Coming Up
Midland
We email all who have received an entry form for the postponed 2013 “TORO BIGGA Midland Regional Team Challenge”, to be played at Trentham GC on 7 May. Entries to Sandra Raper on 07866 366966, The Spring Grand Prix 14 May with a start of 12.30, closing date 6 May. Please ring Rhys on 07774 161473, or go to our new website to download an entry form: www.bigga.midanglia.co.uk. Also don’t forget that the very successful long running Eversis Doubles competition draw will also be held at Ashton, please use either of the prior channels mentioned to register. Wish I could tell you a story, but I’ve been banned, please let me know what you think, good or bad: sean.mcdade@homecall.co.uk

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Contact Denise Haines on 01612331564 or 07980 160024 email denise.haines@rovin.co.uk

South East

Events coming up

South East

Events coming up
Surrey
1 May - Texas Scramble Epsom Downs GC.
6 June - Spring Tournament The Drift GC Qualifier for National Tournament held at Liphook GC 6-7 October. 17 September - Hankley Common GC Section v Trade.
30 September - Surrey Bowl Final at Foshtills GC.
4 November - England v Scotland Hankley Common GC.
17 September - Match v Secretaries at The Berkshire GC.
19 December - Guildford GC Turkey Trot.
BIGGA ties as part of the dress code will be introduced this year, failure to wear the association colours will result in a £2 fine that will be donated to the BIGGA Greenkeepers Benevolent Fund.

Results
Surrey
Clive Osgood has made an excellent recovery from his hip operation, and beyond into 2014.

Welcome New Members

Contact your Section correspondent with news, events or anything else for Around the green...
Events Coming Up

South Wales
Two team event coming up v the north at Royal St David’s. Date and time TBC. Please contact the match captain Big D if interested.
Match at Chippenham GC on 29 May, ten man team start time TBC.

South Coast
On Tuesday 15 April we have our spring competition at Highcliffe Castle. £20 entry and this includes bacon roll on arrival and an evening meal, please contact Kevan Glass for more details.

South West
This year’s event calendar is coming together nicely with most venues and dates confirmed. Here are the early events so that everyone can get the dates into their diaries:
24 April: Am/Am at Enmore Park Golf Club
29 May: Inter-Section Match at Chippenham Golf Club
(South West, South Wales & Secretaries)
19 June: Summer Tournament at Farrington Golf Club

News

South Wales
Congratulation to Ceri Richards on joining Indgrov UK as technical sales manager after nine years at Avoncrop Amenity. His shoes have been filled by Hugh Morgan, good luck to you both.
Whitchurch golf club are celebrating their centenary, huge Mike Stokers and his team have a great year, also Royal Porthcawl are hosting the Seniors Open Championship on 24-27 July.

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(South West, South Wales & Secretaries)
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South West
Main news - the sun came out! Picture cards for the season’s upcoming events have been finalised and will be with all section members shortly.
Please keep an eye out for these. If anyone on your team is not receiving Section emails please ask them to contact me to supply their addresses (goodfalk@bowood.org).

Devon & Cornwall
Wednesday 12 February the Toro Cup was played, seven golfers braved the strong winds and wet at St Austell Golf Club.
Thank you to everyone who supported the section which goes from strength to strength even in such bad weather. The next section meeting will be held at Wrasagoton Golf Club which will include the section championship. Results in Results section.

Results

Devon & Cornwall
Toro Cup, stableford format. 3rd: Jim Sheehan, 2nd Andrew Prousie and first place went to Gordon Tannahill who is a previous winner of the Toro Cup.

Thanks to Sponsors

South Coast
Thanks to Banks Amenity, Hudy Golf and Farmura for sponsoring the seminar at Milton Abbey

South West
Many thanks to our South West Section 2014 Patrons: Greensman, Irritech, Headland Amenity, Cosmoswide, Farmura, Ecosolve, TH White and Sportsmark for their invaluable support.

Welcome New Members


Welcome New Members (N.Ireland)
N Ireland: Mark Creme, Kieron Delaney, Colin Daly, Owen Flemming, Niall Kelleher, Sean Lordan - all Students at Colaiste Stiofain Naofa.

Welcome New Members (Rep. of Ireland)
Events Coming Up

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News
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Wiltshire golf Club are celebrating their centenary, huge Mike Stokes and his team have a great year, also Royal Porthcawl are hosting the Seniors Open Championship between 24-27 July.

Welcome New Members

Welcome New Members (N.Ireland)
N Ireland: Mark Cream, Kieron Delaney, Colin Daly, Owen Fleming, Niall Kelleher, Sean Lordan - all Students at Colaiste Stiofain Naofa.

Welcome New Members (Rep. of Ireland)

Programme of Events
- 01/04/2014: About the Green with Andrew Hatcher on EaglePlex Ballwashers
- 14/04/2014: Order Today with Craig Turner on Point of Play Systems
- 26/04/2014: Order Today with Craig Turner on Point of Play Systems
- 28/04/2014: Order Today with Craig Turner on Point of Play Systems
- 28/04/2014: About the Green with Andrew Hatcher on EaglePlex Ballwashers

Count on Ransomes Jacobsen Genuine Parts!
- World class fulfilment rate on our fastest moving parts
- Manufactured to strict OEM standards, backed by our own 12-month warranty
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- More affordable and accessible than any third-party supplier with over 25000 active parts in stock
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*Terms and conditions apply. Next day delivery subject to parts availability

Contact your local dealer for details

ORDER TODAY - PARTS TOMORROW!
SAFE WORKER ONLINE LEARNING

Tony Abbott, MD of mylearnadfriend.com, explains their Health & Safety online learning programme

The Safe Worker online learning programmes for operatives, supervisors and managers (throughout ALL of the golf club departments) can certainly be complimentary to practical training.

Health and Safety training is not just a legal obligation but also a moral obligation. However, with significant changes in the way we work within the industry today, there is a need to have a benchmark to work to and a mechanism to demonstrate that the industry is adopting good practice. The HSE provides guidance on the requirements for basic training which includes the principles of health and safety.

The Safe Worker suite of accredited courses have been designed to comply with the HSE requirements and supports operatives, volunteers, supervisors, managers, officers, executives, owners and directors and are suitable for all staff within a golf club.

The Safe Director aims to provide those with overall responsibility for a company with an understanding of their legal duties and the financial and moral case for adopting a positive safety culture. It is designed for use by directors, governors, trustees, officers and their equivalents in the private, public and third sectors. It applies to organisations of all sizes.

The course aims to help organisations recognise the need to protect the health and safety of employees, volunteers or members of the public who may be affected by their organisation’s activities and that risk management must be led from the top.

The Safe Worker on the other hand aims to ensure that workers, whether voluntary, paid, full or part-time, can demonstrate an awareness of significant health and safety risks in the working environment and are aware of how to identify and deal with them appropriately.

Once they are registered, delegates can work through the course at their own pace and employers can track their progress from registration through to certification. All training records are retained for evidence of compliance. We believe that Certification is extremely important to motivate staff and so when developing the online learning programme we decided to ensure that this was automatically downloaded on successful completion by the learner.

With the ever increasing financial pressures being placed on many industries it was important to find cost effective solutions to meet their training needs. Making effective use of staff downtime, reducing their need to leave the workplace, providing training on demand and when it is convenient for the employers also helps reduce the costs of training.

Online learning can provide consistency and accreditation to what is being delivered and understood by the learner. Available 24/7 on demand and providing bite size learning means that employees can learn when it’s convenient. While online learning will never remove the need for face to face training it can go a long way to help reduce training costs.

One must remember, it is not just the cost of the course the employer pays for; they also have to take that employee away from their work to pay, travel and expenses costs must also be considered. By working together we can tailor online courses to provide a cost effective solution. LANTRO estimates that for every £1 invested in our employees development we can generate £8 in improved turnover. Someone once said to me “but what if I train my staff to be competent and they leave to go to another job?” My response was “but what if you don’t train them and they stay?”

For more information or to purchase programmes contact mylearnadfriend on: Tel: 0203 397 4349

www.mylearnadfriend.com

THE GTC AT NUMBER TEN

Donald Steel reports on a greenkeeping visit to Downing Street

A penny off a pint of beer was not the only good news emanating from Downing Street recently. The week before the Chancellor issued his budget, greenkeeping history was made with an invitation to the GTC from the house next door.

As part of the government’s new Apprenticeship trailblazer scheme, Ryan Bezzant, a current registered apprentice from Ealing GC, accompanied by David Crotton, proprietor of Cold Ashby GC, crossed the threshold of Number 10 for a ground-breaking cup of tea and cosy chat in company with other trailblazer companies or organisations committed to ensuring the Apprenticeship for their sector.

It was the notable culmination of twenty years of pioneering work spearheaded by David Godding in setting, improving and preserving the training of young greenkeepers from which everyone playing the game in Britain has benefited beyond measure.

The initiative is employer-led, the relevance being that the average golfer forms the band that pays the piper. Their education is largely funded by the private or proprietary Clubs, funding to which golfers contribute by way of a subscription to their county and national Union. Other valued contributors include the European Tour and the PGA whose members are equal beneficiaries of the important training.

What is more, the success of the scheme is that employers have the confidence to leave the experts to do the work. The fact that they like what they see is proof of the giant strides that the entire industry has taken over the last twenty years.

Condition and presentation of courses is a credit to all but it is a team exercise, in which BIGGA, in particular, are crucial players. It is one thing for recruits or apprentices to receive a theoretical grounding from the Colleges and training providers with online learning becoming an increasingly popular option.

However, the really crucial cog in the wheel is training theory in practice, through the hands of their skilled elders, many of whom started their careers as apprentices themselves. The frightening array of machinery on display at HTME 2014 was just one example of the responsibility they bear.

It is all a reflection of the dramatic change of attitude from the days when head greenkeepers could be grudging in imparting their secrets. Nowadays, the greenkeeping fraternity trades on friendliness and co-operation, a process of better communication and understanding. Apprenticeship trailblazing is recognition of how the world of greenkeeping has come to terms with modern needs but it doesn't stop there. The message has to filter through to the playing ranks which are also keen to learn the whys and wherefores. Their willingness not to interfere shows they are increasingly trusting and appreciative of what is being done on their behalf but they will be even more receptive if they are kept better informed. That is not the least of the current challenges in order that the promise of greater stature and authoritative freedom for greenkeepers is to be achieved.

By way of a footnote, work is now underway, through the GTC, to ensure the new Greenkeeping Apprenticeship Standard will suit both employers and apprentices alike. Ending where I began, I commend it to the House! 

Donald Steel