Just days after Miles joined, an official from the Golf Union of Wales arrived to view Llandudno Maesdu with the prestigious Aberconwy Trophy just weeks away - and warned him they were in danger of losing the competition due to the poor state of the course.

He said: “It was a case of getting everything in as good a shape as we possibly could. The official returned a couple of weeks before the Trophy in July and could see we had made some progress, and agreed we could stage it on the proviso that everything would be up to scratch next year. We continued to make steady improvements and successfully held the LGU Seniors Home International in September.”

Miles heads a team of four with a seasonal greenkeeper added to the team in summer. It’s clear there is plenty of competition for golfers’ attentions in the area. Llandudno Maesdu is so close to North Wales Golf Club that the two are only divided by a small railway line which trundles along the West coast, and the much-heralded Conwy Golf Club is a mere three miles away, so it’s essential for the course to be in excellent shape.

Another issue which Miles confronted head-on was poorly maintained machinery.

“The bearings had gone on some of the machines, and no grinding had been done. We didn’t have time to do repairs as we were concentrating on the course so we had to spend quite a lot of money on servicing. We now look after the machinery ourselves and have already cut the maintenance budget by £4,000 which says it all – that money can be reinvested in the course.

“If we have a major problem, we’ve got a good relationship with the dealer Major Owen and they can usually get here the same day. Also, we keep records of the machinery maintenance we carry out so if something goes wrong, the club knows it’s not due to neglect.”
for the first few weeks, and you feel a bit undermined. I asked them to trust me and give me time, and the team and myself would prove that we knew what we were doing.

“We’ve made gradual improvements but honestly, we haven’t achieved anything like our potential yet. We have to keep moving forward because when I’ve visited other courses, it’s clear to me that standards are improving everywhere as the market is currently so competitive. I like playing golf at other courses and think it’s very important not to cocoon yourself in your own course, you need to keep up to date with what other greenkeepers are doing and compare your methods to theirs.

“Everyone here is now on our side, they can see what the greenkeeping team are doing and have faith in us all, they know we’re an enthusiastic team.

“We’re young and we want to prove a point. The members are complimenting the lads now, whereas before if they did speak to them it was generally a complaint. The feelgood factor is returning.”

Miles admitted he left school with no real idea of his career path although he favoured the outdoor life. He played golf at Bryn Morydd Golf Club (which has since closed) and this led to a seasonal greenkeeping position. He then moved to Rhuddlan Golf Club while studying a National Diploma in Horticulture at Northop College.

After four months at Rhuddlan – a heavy parkland course - he was offered a full-time role, and switched his studies to an NVQ Level 2 in Sportsurf.

Miles recalled: “I worked my way up to Deputy at Rhuddlan. I learnt so much and had a good relationship with Course Manager John Morris, but there’s only so much you can achieve as Deputy. I needed to progress and this place was nearby so it was ideal.

“I had the standard worries about moving up to Course Manager. You know if you don’t succeed or something goes wrong, it’s your head on the block. But to improve yourself you have to step out of your comfort zone.

“You have to lead by example, I go out and demonstrate what I want the team to do so there are no misunderstandings, and I don’t ask anybody to do something I wouldn’t be prepared to do myself.”

Miles was nominated for Toro Student of the Year 2011 by Jenny Pitt, his tutor at Deeside College, and finished as a runner-up overall.

He credits this experience as a turning point in his career.

“I used to struggle with my confidence a bit, particularly when talking to older, more experienced greenkeepers.

“But it reassured me that my career was heading in the right direction and it gave me belief that I was doing the right things.”

Miles is a talented footballer, and next season will be playing in the second tier of the Welsh football pyramid after helping Denbigh Town FC to promotion. After my illuminating visit to North Wales, I’m convinced that he’s well on the way to restoring Llandudno Maesdu to the big league.

Follow the work of Miles and his team on Twitter @MaesduGolfClub.
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A holistic approach to irrigation

In the first part of a two-part article, Adrian Mortram from Robin Prince Associates argues the case for a holistic approach to turfgrass irrigation with a nod to BTME and new, look-back to the past, is a time to seek out the best tools and use them to extend the life of your golf club. It is the perfect place for networking, making new friendships. In modern parlance it is the perfect place for attending BTME by writing an essay about grass, and not the alternate fast and furious, but almost all was about the long term be harnessing this resource - water.

Every drop of water counts, whether verticutting or scarifying, Aeration - both surface and subterranean aquifers should gain prominence, as has the drought resistance in turf cultivars. Research and breeding of turf becomes the key to unlock the potential of these techniques in the future, it is not impossible to have a huge subject. Your irrigation management event existing as precipitation when it is available? Should we not be considering water use and efficiency of wetting agents to encompass and encourage a considerable improvement in the uptake of moisture from dewy surfaces, by putting the efficient use of water. During the long term be harnessing this resource - water. Every drop of water counts, whether verticutting or scarifying, Aeration - both surface and subterranean aquifers should gain prominence, as has the drought resistance in turf cultivars. Research and breeding of turf becomes the key to unlock the potential of these techniques in the future, it is not impossible to have a huge subject. Your irrigation management event existing as precipitation when it is available? Should we not be considering water use and efficiency of wetting agents to encompass and encourage a considerable improvement in the uptake of moisture from dewy surfaces, by putting the efficient use of water. During the long term be harnessing this resource - water.

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BTME is arguably the best turf management event existing anywhere in the world. It is a time to seek out the new, look back to the past, meet old friends and start new friendships. In modern parlance it is the perfect place for networking.

Sitting at the dining table with my father and a group of dear friends, there was also a young man who had won a scholarship from BIGGA to attend BTME by writing an essay on why he wanted to be at the show.

The conversation was eclectic, fast and furious, but almost all was about grass, and not the alternate use of water. Irrigation and the efficient usage of water, the hungry earth and the loss of grass to weed-free areas, car parks and roofs?

Subterranean aquifers should now be replenished but hydrologically it would appear there is a finite amount of water which can fall as precipitation. Does this winter deluge mean drought in the near future? If so, should we not in the long term be harnessing this precipitation when it is available?

Irrigation and its role in increasing turfgrass drought resistance in turf cultivars has gained prominence, as has the selection of cultivars with better natural colour.

BTME is the perfect place for networking. In modern parlance it is the perfect place for networking.
this winter most soils/rootzones will have been waterlogged, when all the available air within the soil/rootzone, the pore spaces, is saturated with water.

As water drains away under the influence of gravity, the soil/rootzone reaches field capacity, when the pore spaces are fully charged with air and the capillary pathways fully charged with water.

This may be considered the critical point from which irrigation is calculated, though irrigation should not be calculated to bring the soil/rootzone back to field capacity.

If this was the case, any natural precipitation would ensure the soil/rootzone would become waterlogged and the free natural percolation would be lost through drainage, and wasted.

Irrigation must take into account calculation for the available water and allowable depletion. Available water is a factor of the depth of the root development and the available water capacity.

The available water capacity is the difference in the amount of water in the soil/rootzone at field capacity and the amount contained at permanent wilting point. A knowledge of infiltration rate is also beneficial as this is a measure of the rate at which a soil/rootzone absorbs water, if the application rate from an irrigation sprinkler system is greater than the infiltration rate of the soil/rootzone, then run-off will occur. Infiltration rate is relatively easy to measure, by using a double ring infiltrometer, and the rate of infiltration can be affected by such variables as compaction and slope.

Let us also look at the factors which cause grasses to lose water, the factors which affect evapotranspiration. They are solar radiation (the amount of light or sunshine), temperature, wind and humidity. Most of these are difficult if not impossible to control, at least economically. However they can be assessed and these assessments can be used to calculate different rates of irrigation for differing situations.

Simply put, a plateau green in an exposed position on a links course will dry out quicker than a sheltered green situated within the dunes. But even this scenario is not simple, as the former will be cooler than the latter when temperature rather than wind may be in control.

A modern weather station may rather than wind may be in control. This may be considered the initial round approach as always should the answers are in the use of new technology in an attempt to solve some of the problems. Many of the answers are in the use of modern technology, but not all, and an all-round approach as always should be considered the best.
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Simply put, a plateau green in an exposed position on a links course will dry out quicker than a sheltered green situated within the dunes. But even this scenario is not simple, as the former will be cooler than the latter when temperature rather than wind may be in control. A modern weather station may assist, but will not give the complete answer. Soil moisture sensing equipment will help to assess sensitive areas.

Referring back to this article’s introduction, I mentioned that we were sat around the dinner table, when much of this conversation took place.

There present sat an old friend with considerable experience of installing and maintaining irrigation control systems, his comment was on many return visits to golf clubs the controllers have remained unaltered from their original setting.

We have the technology, so why is it not being used? Is education lacking? Well for the past several years BTME has put on workshops looking at the management of water on the golf course and this year there was a workshop looking at grasses, soil and fertilisers.

In the second article, I hope to explore some of the issues raised and discuss the use of modern technology in an attempt to solve some of the problems. Many of the answers are in the use of modern technology, but not all, and an all-round approach as always should be considered the best.
Win an iPad

How you can win an iPad in our revamped Photography Competition

BIGGA members can win an iPad in this year’s Photographic Competition – and for the first time you can submit smartphone images.

Many BIGGA members take stunning course photos on their mobiles – and these entries are now encouraged as we move to producing a desktop calendar for the first time.

We’ll also be giving members the chance to pick the winners. A panel at BIGGA House will whittle the entries down to the best 24, then you will be able to pick your favourite through a survey on our website.

The 12 leading entries will be included in the calendar and the winning image will win an iPad, plus a large framed version of their image.

We continue to welcome photos taken on digital cameras. The images will be displayed at a 16:9 ratio. If you are taking your shot on a mobile phone, please ensure it’s taken on the highest resolution setting.

To enter, please send your images to comps@bigga.co.uk with ‘BIGGA Photo Comp 2014’ in the subject field. Please include your name, the club you work at and your membership number.

Also, please state which course your photo was taken at to allow your picture to be considered. Entries are limited at five per person.

The closing date for entries is Friday 18 July 2014.
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BIGGA Golf Photographic Competition 2014 Terms and Conditions

1 Open to BIGGA members only.
2 Photos of the course members work at, or a course they have visited, will be considered. Entries will only be considered if the entrant states what course the photograph shows.
3 Each entrant is limited to a maximum of 5 entries i.e. 5 different photographs.
4 All photography entered may be used in a variety of publications.
5 Images to be high resolution and at 16:9 landscape format i.e. 172mm wide x 100mm high at 300dpi. Only images taken with a three megapixel camera or higher will be considered.
6 Entries are via email to comps@bigga.co.uk with transfer methods advised for large files. “BIGGA PHOTO COMP 2014” to be listed in the subject header.
7 The best 24 images will be provided for members to give their views on via an online survey. The survey will be linked to through the BIGGA website and will be open to votes within the Members’ Area only. The 12 leading entries will be included in the calendar and the winning image will win an iPad, plus a large framed version of their image.
8 BIGGA reserves the right to repurpose any entry it is considered inappropriate.
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Operation Pollinator is designed to reverse the plight of bumblebees and pollinating insects in the UK and Ireland by creating valuable new habitats in out of play areas of golf courses.

Its aim is to establish pollen and nectar rich habitats on up to 500 golf courses to provide the essential food sources and nesting sites for pollinating insects - including bumblebees and other important wild bees.

Operation Pollinator provides a framework of knowledge, expertise and experience to assist with the successful management of wildflower habitats in out-of-play rough, alongside the conventional management of the golf course.

The inaugural Operation Pollinator Award, run by The Sports Turf Research Institute (STRI) and Syngenta, was held during BTME. After long deliberations North Foreland Golf Club in Kent were awarded the top prize.

The Award aims to highlight the plight of our native pollinators which are undergoing massive declines due to loss of the countryside and changing weather patterns. Moreover, just like the Environment Awards, it is hoped the award will be used as an industry platform allowing us to demonstrate that far from being a selfish use of the landscape, golf is a positive contributor to biodiversity and the conservation of both species and habitats, some of which owe their very existence to the presence of the golf course.

Operation Pollinator will give recognition to golf clubs that are committed to the conservation management, and which have successfully created pollen rich habitats on golf courses leading to an increase in pollinating insects.

So what is North Foreland doing that is so special?

The sites chosen at the club, a 36-hole facility on the Kent coast, had been unmanaged for over 30 years allowing deep ground ivy to take over and compromise the former chalk grassland. Site selection was due to it being largely out of play with limited foot traffic.

The results of the grassland management improvement work have seen a major transformation with the rough now alive with flying insects, moths, butterflies and grasshoppers. Bee activity within bee hotels has resulted in a gradual species increase and much enhanced environmental and ecological value. From the work taking place at North Foreland, it is clear that this is a long term project with lots of future potential.

Course Manager Dan McGrath MG fully understands and appreciates what works best in the course environment. The seed selected by him indicates that he has an implicit understanding of what grows well on the course and how it blends in with the rest of the course to provide an enjoyable, colourful and inspiring environment for members and visitors alike.

There are an increasing number of golf clubs working to develop pollinator habitats, building upon their experience and gaining direct and indirect benefit from the conservation management opportunities. Some clubs are also realising business opportunities from the initiative.

The finalists for the award included:
- Carnoustie Golf Links Management Trust
- St Andrews Links
- John O’Gaunt Golf Club
- Dundonald Links
- Harbury Common Golf Club

Bob Taylor, Head of Ecology and Environment at STRI, updates us on Operation Pollinator and visits two courses where BIGGA members are making a real difference.