

# Unrelenting time in store for all

**G**ORSE, gorse, and yet more gorse is in store for BIGGA members when they encounter the formidable Ganton course – hosting their national tournament in August.

The unrelenting Yorkshire challenge that is Ganton is bound to bring out the grit in every competitor.

For besides the awe inspiring gorse, Ganton also "boasts" 111 bunkers, dotted menacingly around its heathland vista lying in wait to catch the wayward shot of the unwary greenkeeper golfer.

Head greenkeeper David Spurden and his four staff have their work cut out with this 6,900 yard course.

Its difficulty can be gauged in the fact that its regulation par 72 has an added stroke given to it for difficulty – one to bear in mind when the national tournament begins.

Fairways are narrow and there are a lot of semi-blind shots to play. Ganton may well prove a Waterloo for the 80 odd greenkeepers brave enough to tee off.

In his seven years at Ganton, David has learned how to master the maintenance of the course and among other things now has the reputation as an expert mole catcher – a necessary skill when one sees the damage they do on surrounding land.

In common with many of the greenkeepers, David has been hampered in his preparations this year by the early spring drought which has left several fairways distressed and subject to burning. He has counteracted the worst of the dry weather by applying wetting agents and quadratining.

And in order to avoid the danger of cutting too low, greenkeeping staff have been double cutting using two Toro's in sequence. It is surprising just how much the second machine picks up despite the fact they both have their blades set at the same height!

As the late great Henry Cotton once said of Ganton, "The bunkers are receptive, the greens are not." One thing is for certain, they are firm and true and a real test for the approach shot.

As with many private courses around the country, David is constantly working with his committee to avoid the worst excesses of that common phenomenon, overplaying. Judging from my guided tour of the course under the kind auspices of the club secretary, Air Vice Marshal R.G. Price CB, David and his hard-working team of one first assistant and three assistants are winning the battle.

Ganton does not suffer from sub-surface compaction, being blessed with quite a free draining soil. However, quadratining is important in order that wetting agents can be introduced into the soil.

The club has a ten-year rolling programme on equipment replacement us-

*Greenkeeping Management's editor Mike McClelland reviews Ganton – the course chosen for this year's BIGGA National Tournament.*

under par winner of the PGA Championship in 1981.

The last four holes provide a particularly testing finish and the 18th has provided some dramatic twists of fortune in several championships. To quote Robert H.K. Browning "This hole makes a spectacular and nerve-testing finish; many a match has been lost, or card ruined, by three putting this final green".



● *The regal Ganton Golf Club - ready to provide a true test of skill for BIGGA greenkeepers next month.*

ing machines from the major manufacturers, such as Toro and Cushman.

One of the on-going battles David and his team are fighting is to eradicate the remaining meadow grass on the course in favour of fescue bents. In this, as in all matters relating to the course, David has an ongoing and positive dialogue with both his Chairman of Greens and Secretary.

Ganton is not an easy course to manage but my whistlestop tour convinced me that the greenkeepers will have a testing but thoroughly enjoyable national tournament.

For the historians Ganton is of great interest. The club celebrates its centenary in 1991. It was fortunate enough to have the legendary Harry Vardon as its professional, followed by Ted Ray, both of whom won the Open Championship on each side of the Atlantic.

After the Ryder Cup in 1949 the course was tightened up and the 12th hole extended; no other major changes have been made and the full course now measures 6,882 yards. Since the war Ganton has hosted many major championships, both professional and amateur. The wind generally has a significant effect on scoring. Bernard Gallacher was 5 over par in winning the Dunlop Masters in 1975 while Faldo was the 10

## Ganton gorse waits for the stray shot