

ON THE COURSE



Winter waves play havoc on West Kilbride

Jim Paton, head greenkeeper at West Kilbride talks to John Campbell about the problems and the benefits of managing a links course.

The golf course at West Kilbride, Ayrshire overlooks Ardneil Bay and beyond there are entrancing views across the Firth of Clyde to the Isle of Arran. The course is laid out on a narrow strip of land parallel to the shoreline and good use has been made of the ground to create an interesting test of golf. Evidence of the club's popularity is shown with a membership of 1100.

Jim Paton, 34, head greenkeeper, talked avidly about his job at the club and how he first came into greenkeeping. "After leaving school I attended Auchencruive Agri-

cultural College and then two years were spent working in landscape gardening. Being interested in golf I eventually got a job at Helensburgh Golf Club as first assistant greenkeeper. This was valuable experience for me then, my mentor was Eddie Boyce one of the old school of headgreenkeepers under whom I had a first class training. My next step up the ladder was the appointment of head greenkeeper to Machrie Golf Club, Islay. This was a challenging move to a typical seaside links where the course was laid out among the dunes whose towering banks flanked the undulating

linksland fairways."

"In 1980 I came to West Kilbride where I have settled down with my wife Jill and children, Jennifer, six and Jamie three. This is a very busy club with a large membership. The course layout is long and narrow so we tend to have quite a lot of walkways which creates compaction problems. Weekly repair of divot marks on fairways and tees involves valuable time and effort to keep the course tidy."

"A few years ago we had sheep on the course now they are gone it is interesting to see how the indigenous plants and vegetation is

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Jim Paton, head greenkeeper at West Kilbride

slowly beginning to predominate, one can see small clumps of gorse, heather and broom, etc., gradually getting established and in a few years time will add to the character and aesthetic beauty of the surroundings."

"Down at sea level we have problems at high tides when sea water backs up drain pipes and ditches but water levels drop quickly when the tide begins to ebb. Being so close to the sea we are often engaged in battles to repel it. Last winter was quite tough when two severe storms

resulted in washing away the front part of the 15th tee. To reclaim the ground 250 tons of rubble were dumped in front of the tee to close the breach and then it was rebuilt."

"Sea inundation during particularly high tides has been known to flood low lying parts of the course. I've seen the 14th green under water. When the sea recedes it's a hefty task for the staff afterwards sweeping up the flotsam and jetsam, bricks, stones,

wood, etc., and clearing up thick deposits of sand and silt. It means all hands on deck with brooms, shovels and rakes to restore the playing surface as quickly as possible."

"We have carried out quite a lot of drainage work but there are certain parts of the course where running sand is a problem when excavation takes place. In difficult situations like this when drainage is needed we prefer to employ a contractor with a Davis Ditcher to complete the work as quickly as possible."

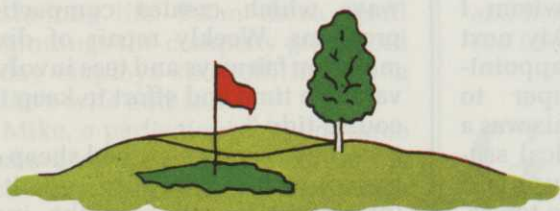
"Having an abundance of seaweed on our doorstep it is prudent and resourceful to collect some of this valuable source of humus for the compost heap. It is stored in the compost area and allowed to decompose for three years then it is moved into the shed nearby and gets processed during the winter with a Pneulec shredding machine and passed through a Royer Power Screen to make it ready for use on the course."

"During the past few years a lot of time has been spent revetting bunker faces and our long range programme is systematically to do them all. Total number of bunkers is 84, about one third have been revetted so far."

"The method of revetting is to strip down the old turf from the face, then rebuild the new wall from the bottom, packing up behind with soil as the height increases. Each row of turf in the wall is laid about 1/4

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inch back from the line underneath in a series of steps to build the sloping wall. Judging the correct pitch of the face generally requires some experience."

"We do not want to make the bunkers too difficult, there are a few good players in the club but many of the members are retired and we have a keen ladies section so we have to cater for all kinds of players and try to keep the hazards as fair as possible. The course can be extended to championship length when it is needed. Several years ago a few new trees were built to lengthen the yardage for the men so that the standard scratch was the same as the par of 71. That made the course a bit more challenging and there is a choice for all golfers."

"The average size of the greens is 500 sq. yds. Golf boils down to the putting surfaces and most courses are judged by the condition of the greens. So the aim is to keep the course in reasonably good playing condition all year round for the enjoyment of the members." Jim said, "When I first came to the club there was a policy to lift one green every winter, renovate the soil underneath and relay the turf to combat thatch and compaction problems. Now this is no longer done since the advent of the Verti Drain which we employ in tandem with our own regular programme of aeration and this is producing satisfactory results."

"Step banks around some of the raised greens are not easy to maintain with modern machinery. The course was built in 1893 when labour was more abundant and acute slopes and awkward banks were usually cut with hand machinery or even by scythe. We have had some problems with 'die-back' on these slopes and the approaches but

Jim Paton has been appointed a subject assessor in turf modules with scotec, the body set up to take over city and guilds exams in Scotland. This involves visits to the colleges which are offering the modules in his group to ensure that teaching and assessment is in accordance with the standards set out by the Scottish Vocational Educational Council.

Jim also says

"We have Dormie House Accommodation at West Kilbride and extend a welcome to any Greenkeeper or friend who may be attending the 1989 open at Troon to come and play the course here"



The 14th green with dry stone wall along the fringe

gradually overcoming this by hand forking and overseeding."

"An interesting feature of the course are the old dry stone walls. In this exposed coastal situation some of the stone is beginning to crumble due to the effects of weathering. This calls for occasional stone mason work by the greenkeeping staff to keep the walls in good repair and maintain a tidy appearance. We also look after our own boundary fencing along the shore. This work had to be done religiously when we had sheep on the course."

"Being so close to the beach its a popular spot for the many visitors and holiday makers who come to West Kilbride. Naturally they walk along the shore and there is always

the change of unauthorised intrusion. Horse riders and guys with motor bikes run up the sand dunes and contribute to the process of coastal erosion. We often chase them away but when there is nobody about their depredations still continue."

"For fairway mowing we have Ransomes trailed 7 gang units. Machinery wise there is a Toro G.M. 300, and a G. M. 3 which is used to cut tees and approaches. This year a new Toro 316 was purchased to mow the approaches much further out and keep the 7 gangs away from these vulnerable spots. We also bought a new tractor. A Sisis Hydro-main System is used for aeration and it works very well on our course which is relatively flat."

"I am a great believer in giving all

BIGGA

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

This will be held on Tuesday, 28th February, 1989
at 2.30 pm in
The Royal York Hotel, York
immediately adjacent to the Railway Station

ON THE COURSE

the greenkeeping staff a chance to do all the jobs on the course for variety and experience. Once a man has been properly trained he will have the ability and confidence to work on his own without direct supervision. We have quite a young staff who are enthusiastic and like to talk about the profession. Three of them have the potential to eventually become good head-greenkeepers."

"My club is very progressive and have always been considerate in all their dealings with me. For the past few years we have been running on a tight budgetary system. Last year we did very well from green fees and were able to give the staff an acceptable pay increase as a result."

"Each year I present the committee with a budget for running the course which has to be approved. After this it is virtually up to me to keep strictly to my estimates. The Treasurer's monthly statements tell me whether I am under or over budget but basically my financial forecasts have always worked out quite well."

"I have a good Green Convenor who keeps in touch with me on a regular basis about course matters, I am also in daily contact with the club secretary. The committee leave me to get on with the job of running the course and we don't have too many green committee meetings which is the way things should be."

"I had always been involved with the affairs of SIGGA and at one time held the posts of vice-chairman and chairman of the West Section. When I moved to Ayrshire I eventually became Secretary for this area. Being keen on greenkeeper training and education locally I have been working closely with Harry Diamond in setting up a programme for the technical college and we have had discussions with the managing agents for the YTS. There is always plenty to do and we all have a contribution to make to the success of BIGGA."

"Part of a contented life for any greenkeeper is having a nice area to live and work in and for that I have no complaints. Another consideration is a happy family life with good educational facilities in the vicinity for the children. We are fortunate to have a superb sports complex nearby which is an added bonus. I am contented with my life style so what more could one ask for!"

BIGGA/SUPATURF 1989 EDUCATIONAL CONFERENCE QUEENS' COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE, 4th-6th April, 1989

The programme for the conference will be distributed to members shortly, but in the next few months, THE GOLF COURSE will profile a number of the speakers, commencing in this issue, with Professor J B Beard of Texas A & M University. Members are reminded that places can be secured at this stage by forwarding payment of £15.00 deposit to headquarters office.

DR JAMES B BEARD

Professor Beard was born in Bradford, Ohio and is married with two sons. His academic record includes periods at Ohio State University (B.S. Agronomy), Purdue University (M.S. Turfgrass Ecology and Ph. D. Turfgrass Physiology), and a N.S.F. Post-Doctoral at the University of California - Riverside.

He has held a number of senior positions and since 1975 has been Professor, Soil and Crop Sciences Department, Texas A & M University in which post he provides leadership and co-ordination of the research programme in stress physiology and culture of perennial grasses. Professor Beard has pioneered investigations concerning: turfgrass evapotranspiration, rooting, drought stress, metabolic basis of indirect heat stress, shade adaptation, wear tolerance, and thatch biodegradation. Discovery of the spring root decline phenomenon in C-4 grasses is of particular note. Other research emphases have been on the prevention of winter injury, ecology of grass communities, roadside establishment, and sod production. He is the author of 114 scientific journal papers and 286 popular technical articles.

His teaching activities have included two undergraduate turfgrass courses plus graduate grass ecology and stress physiology courses. He has been active in graduate and undergraduate curriculum development, and currently advises approximately 25 undergraduate students and has served as major professor to 36 graduate students. He was previously involved in extension activities, and lectures widely throughout North America.

He is the author, in collaboration with his wife, Harriet, of four books and a laboratory manual, and had given numerous invitational papers and served as an advisor at international conferences and symposia in the US, Europe, Far East, Australia, New Zealand and South East Asia. He was instrumental in the initiation and organisation of the First International Turfgrass Research Conference held in Harrogate in 1969. Professor Beard has been Chairman of the departmental Undergraduate Curriculum, Graduate, and Advisory Committees, and has served on many national committees including the Roadside Development Committee of the Highway Research Board, National Research Council, Research Advisory Committee of the O.J. Noer Research Foundation, Musser Foundation Board of Directors, Southern Regional Task Force on Plants to Enhance Man's Environment, and the CAST Task Force on Chlordane and Heptachlor.

Professor Beard has written a number of books including 'Turfgrass: Science and Culture' (1973), and 'Turfgrass Management for Golf Courses' (1983). He is a Past President of the Crop Science Society of America and Past Chairman of the American Society of Agronomy.

BIGGA is delighted to have obtained the services of such a distinguished speaker for the Cambridge Conference and Professor Beard has agreed to give two lectures on

- (i) 'Current Trends in the Maintenance and Science of Golf Course Turfs in the United States' and
- (ii) 'Basic Turfgrass Nutritional Strategies'

We look forward to welcoming him to Cambridge.

