

Horses and hang gliders add to the hazards on Baildon Moor

John Lelean meets David Hannam, the inventive greenkeeper with plenty of problems to solve.

Bradford, the heart of the woolen industry, was one of the wealthiest parts of the country just before the turn of the century so it was inevitable that areas of sheep grazing on the residential outskirts, but still in sight of the satanic mills would become, what was then the rich man's hobby - golf courses.

Nine courses were constructed within a ten mile radius of the city between 1891 and 1900 among them Baildon Golf Club, once known as Bradford Golf Club until the accolade was transferred to their neighbour across the valley at Hawksworth.

The Baildon course was con-

structed on common land on Baildon Moor. It is still common land despite the private golf club. Adjoining land-owners have the right to graze cattle and sheep, dog owners are free to wander at will, horses are ridden daily and on a warm Bank Holiday it is not unusual to find a family picnicking on one of the greens. Fortunately there are not too many warm weekends on Baildon Moor.

The latest hazard for golfers are trainee hang gliders who use the elevated slopes to launch themselves into space in the hope of making a soft landing in the moor mat grass or thick sedge at the edge of the

fairways.

Baildon's most famous neighbour is show jumper Harvey Smith, whose extensive stables overlook the ninth green. He exercises his horses across the golf course daily, but keeps away from the playing surfaces as far as possible.

The custody of the course is in the capable hands of the new Northern Regional Administrator, 40 year old David Hannam, for many years secretary of the Northern Section.

He came to Baildon as Head Greenkeeper nine years ago from the Sports Turf Research Institute

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where he was an experiment ground superintendent, following six years at Ilkley Golf Club as an assistant greenkeeper.

David is one of the few greenkeepers in the country with management qualifications obtaining a NEBSS certificate in Supervisory Studies in 1975, together with a City and Guilds Supervisory Management.

He also holds an Intermediate National Diploma from the Institute of Groundsmanship and obtained a distinction at the Cheshire College of Agriculture, where he was voted best student of the year. Latterly he has lectured part-time at Wakefield and Shipley Colleges.

We met out on the tenth green where he was re-modelling the bunker to the front of this par three. As my arrival on foot across the moor, guided by distant landmarks, coincided with the onset of rain, neither of us needed a great deal of persuasion to adjourn to the comparative comfort of the tractor cab.

David said his club, founded in 1898, has never been regarded as wealthy, but always well supported by a mainly artisan membership.



Stripping turf prior to re-modelling Baildon's eighth green.

There are around 700 altogether and their fees have to finance most of the expenditure as the surrounding courses cream off much of the green fee paying visiting parties.

Last Easter, a fire gutted most of the interior of the club-house, but this has now been refurbished at a

cost of £120,000. Part of the original wooden building clad in masonry still remains, brought it is said, at dead of night by horse drawn wagon from the Leeds Golf Club at Cobble Hall. No one is sure whether the journey during the hours of darkness was to disguise its eventual

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destination or to facilitate the move.

Most of the greens, regarded as the driest in Bradford, have a pre-dominance of bent, some annual meadow grass with fescue on the better drained greens. One, the newly constructed fourth, has more fescue than any other because it was sown that way and now after struggling for a couple of seasons has produced a fine sward.

The greens drain well throughout the year despite a lack of constructed drainage. David puts this down to a programme of intensive aeration throughout the winter starting with hollow tining in October, leaving the holes open.

He then deep slits about five times with a "home made" 12in converted Sisis DP48 split in half, just one of the pieces of maintenance equipment he has invented for use with a compact tractor. During the playing season aeration continues with a 7in slitter, as frequently as possible.

The soil is acid with a predominantly clay sub-strata, though David believes it is a "friendly" structure, allowing roots to penetrate quite deeply through the fissures.

During the season he aims to apply four top dressing applications with his own mixture of two to one sand and compost, supplemented with ground peat and a touch of charcoal.

As a traditionalist, Hannam makes his own compost from an abundance of local horse "muck" and quality top soil, in the firm belief that a good organic balance must be maintained for the benefit



A newly delivered Lloyds Paladin adds credit to Baildon's new fourth green.

of the soil, micro flora and a healthy sward.

Fertilizers are applied twice in the year, a spring dressing of Slow Release Nitrogen, followed by a later application of the same feed.

Like most other Yorkshire greenkeepers David needs to watch for fusarium. As a preventative he alternates between Vinclozolin and Iprodione and gives his greens a periodic iron spray.

There is no irrigation system at Baildon, but plenty of water is close at hand, a whole reservoir full, backing on to the greenkeeper's sheds! When necessary he can dose 400 gallons on every green in a day by filling a tank on a trailer, driving out on the course and pumping it on with a petrol engine.

Naturally time consuming, very labour intensive, hardly to be recommended, though a lifesaver in

times of severe stress, that is why he puts such emphasis on deep green aeration to increase the root growth.

All the greens at Baildon are cut with hand operated mowers, adjusting the height of cut and mowing frequency consistent with the prevailing climatic conditions, the amount of play and current green treatment.

David has four Lloyds Paladins, with two Ransomes Marquis to cut tees. Last year the club invested in a Beaver 508 with floating heads to cut the fairways to replace the mounted triple set.

This has been a wise buy as the course can be cut weekly in just over the day compared to the two days of work a fortnight it took previously. All agree the fairways have never looked better.

David has been a firm believer in the compact tractor since it was first introduced to the market, Baildon being the first course in the UK to go "compact" for total greens maintenance. He bought his first in 1980 and a second three years later. He said "As a general workhorse for this course there is nothing better."

Power is regarded as essential at Baildon and as well as the 12.5hp compact he has one 4WD-17hp, another of 37hp and a 4WD-60hp for heavy duty haulage.

Winter construction projects involve the building of at least three tees each year despite the limitations of only three greenstaff other than himself, but this has not stopped him building a

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new fourth green from scratch on ground previously in the category of scrub, as well as remodelling another.

Ninety-six loads of rooting mix went into the area, pulled across the course by tractor and trailer. It was sown at the beginning of October with an 80/20 fescue/bent mixture rather later than planned because of bad weather, but now in its third year is developing a thick and healthy sward.

Although Baildon has a Green Committee, David said he is given almost a free hand to maintain and develop the course as he sees fit. The club have adopted a very liberal attitude to the work carried out and have the utmost confidence in the ability of his management and the skill of his greenstaff.

They also subscribe to a sound progressive policy for greenstaff education and training and are to be commended for what Hannam believes is a very healthy attitude, unlike some clubs who still remain ignorant or apathetic to the professional development of their greenstaff.

One of his staff, Scott Thompson,

holds a full City and Guilds certificate in greenkeeping, another Stephen Gardner an ex-YTS student from nearby Otley golf club, is on the first year course at Shipley College. His first assistant Nick Faram has been at Baildon for 13 years. All are encouraged to attend greenkeeping lectures and exhibitions.

David's new role within the Association as Regional Administrator is expected to be even more time consuming than that of Northern Section Secretary. There will be more meetings to attend, greater distances to travel, particularly because his kingdom extends from Merseyside to Teeside, and South Yorkshire to the Scottish Borders.

Asked how he saw his new job developing, David said his predecessor David Golding would be a hard act to follow, but he did have some new ideas which in time he hoped to implement.

His primary objective would be as a link between member and management, feeding views from the five Sections through to Headquarters. Meanwhile he still had the bunkers around the tenth green to finish as soon as it stopped raining.

OBITUARY

Mr John Field, one of the most respected members of the golf course distributive industry died at the end of January after a short illness, aged 66.

Among the mourners at his funeral were many friends from the world of golf, including greenkeepers, business associates, fellow members of local golf clubs as well as a large number of personal friends and relatives.

As a young man John represented Franks Keeps an old established firm supplying golf and sports clubs in the South East. Later he joined Maxwell Hart, becoming their Technical Sales Manager a position he held for many years.

Through his association with greenkeepers he became closely involved with the BGGGA attending local lectures and tournaments, taking an organizing role each year at the National Tournament, where his service proved invaluable.

As a mark of the Association's appreciation he was appointed a Vice President at National level as well as a Vice President of the Southern Section.

After a lifetime associated with golf courses it was inevitable he would take up the game, joining his local club, Langley Park. His wife Audrey also shared his interest and they shared many happy hours on British courses.

John will be sadly missed by his wife, son and daughter as well as the many friends he made through the game of golf.

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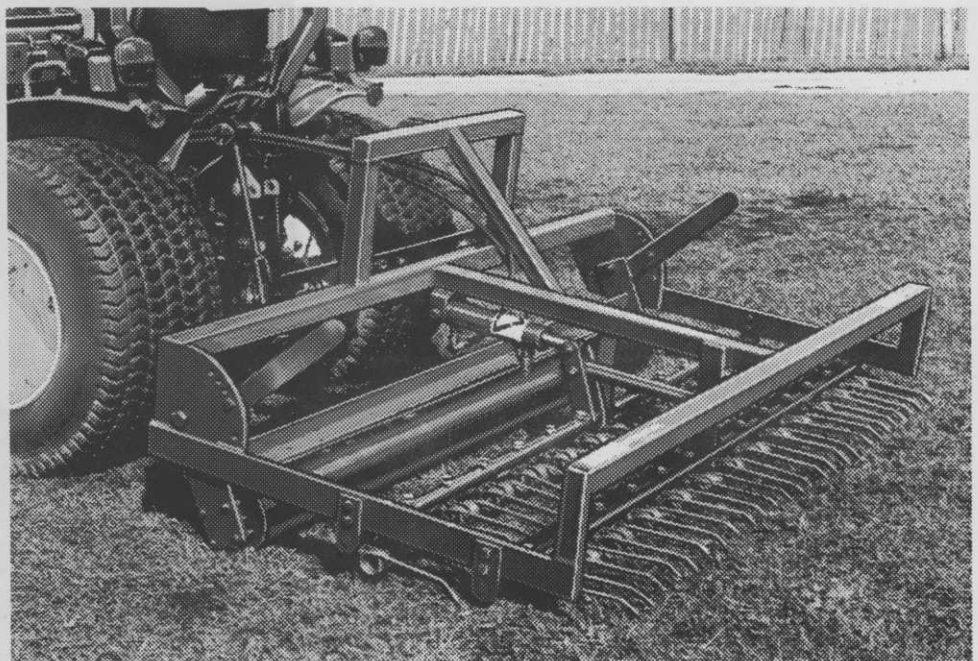
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