



TREES

on the golf course



THIS is the final article in this in-depth series about trees on the golf course. In it I'm going to help you to devise a management plan for your course.

by Tony Gentil

AS with any management plan, before you can start to plan you need to know what you have got already. It's not sufficient to know that you have 150 acres of grass trees. You need much more detail than that if you are going to plan intelligently and effectively.

Ideally you need a large-scale plan of the course on which you can plot information about trees. This is not a difficult task but it can be very time consuming. You might find the best way of tackling it is to do bits at a time, rather than trying to do the whole thing in one go.

The first thing to do is to plot the exact position of each free-standing tree. If you have areas of woodland simply plot the perimeter outline. Later on you can draw up an individual plan for each woodland if need be.

As you record the position of a tree try and identify what it is. Don't worry about Latin names or whether a tree is a sessile oak or a pedunculate oak, simply record it as an oak.

Then you need to have a guess at its age. Record this as young, middle-aged or old. Taking the example of an oak I would say that a tree up to 20 feet high and 20 years old would be young. One which was taller than 20 feet high would be middle-aged. A tree which was very large and falling to pieces would be classed as old.

It would also be useful to note the state of health of each tree. For this I would use two categories, good and poor. Using the example of a young oak, a good specimen would be

one that appeared to be alive and well. A poor quality specimen would be one which perhaps had been attacked by rabbits, fire or a mower and appeared to be very mediocre and unhealthy.

Trees on a plan could be identified with numbers related to a separate sheet on which you could record more details about each one.

As you gather the information about the trees on your course it will help you to identify your management objectives.

Objectives are the heart of any management plan. They represent the final destination at which you hope to arrive.

Here are some examples to give you an idea of what I mean:

1. You must realise that all your trees are healthy but are also all middle-aged. They will all grow old together and at some stage in the future might all die in a short space of time. Without them the course will become very bare and exposed.

This would steer a management plan towards a major replanting programme.

2. You might find that most of your trees are deciduous. In winter the course might be very bleak, windswept and uninviting. Do you need to plant some evergreens to provide winter shelter? The same problem applies to eyesores. Deciduous trees often only hide eyesores in the summer.

3. There might be quite a few old trees with dead branches in them. Do these represent a safety hazard to people walking underneath or are they a valuable wildlife haven for bats or woodpeckers?

4. Are some of the groups of trees becoming overcrowded? If they do, the trees might spoil each other. Is it time to think about the selective removal of some of the timber? Could any of this be sold to timber merchants to bring in some income?

These are the sorts of things



Young trees ...



Middle aged trees...



An old tree

that may go through your mind as you start to devise your plan.

Trees are a long term resource and so a management plan could theoretically stretch many decades into the future. I think though that you need to be realistic. Management committees change and so do fashions, fads and fancies. A grand plan you devise now might be thrown out of the window in a few years time.

So draw up your plan only for the next five years. If it is sensible and realistic people

As we illustrated in last month's issue of "the Golf Course" the hurricane that swept the south of England on October 16th has given all greenkeeping staff in the area a major headache. A survey of how courses have been affected, conducted by Jack McMillan head greenkeeper at Sunningdale, will be published alongside an article by Tony Gentil on what greenkeepers should be planning for the future. It is obvious from reports that day to day presentation has had to take a back seat and winter programmes have had to be abandoned, especially construction work. On the heavily wooded courses in Surrey and Hampshire upto 1,000 trees have been lost on one course, often the mature and majestic specimens.

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Badly damaged by fire



A tree 'attacked' by a mower

will develop confidence in your judgement.

Keeping the plan to the next five years only, means that it can be flexible if some unforeseen event crops up out of the blue.

If you have to persuade a committee to adopt your plan make sure you are well prepared. Remember that every committee is concerned about costs. If you can show that you have calculated the exact cost of planting 200 oak whips, you are much more likely to get approval than if you say, "I'm not sure what it will cost but it won't be expensive".

The essence then of a tree management plan is:- to find out what you have got, decide where you want to go, work out how you will get there, and keep on target but be flexible if need be.

O.K.? That's it then. I hope you have enjoyed this series and found it useful. If you have any specific queries write to me care of *the Golf Course* and I'll do my best to answer them.

Damage to sheds, machinery and personal property has been widespread.

Many head greenkeepers were able to open their courses for play within a matter of hours but others have still to be able to open their courses a month after the storm.

Clubs were ill-prepared for the tragedy, none have certificated men qualified in chainsaw work. Few even had saws adequate for the task and even less had proper protective clothing.

Some 1,500 accidents have been reported amongst 'amateur' chainsaw operators and sadly even one professional lost a leg.

One or two clubs brought in outside contractors, with more than one levying their members in order to cover the cost. But the majority appear to be leaving matters to their greenstaff.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

IN this game called GOLF, we find ourselves as greenkeepers bonded together for the first time. Before, we were separate units, but now breathe deeply with pride that we are one Association.

I applaud the commencement of BIGGA and I am heartened by the fact that the association has already held its first seminar and appointed Neil Thomas as Executive Director.

Greenkeeping is one large family and like most families, its members from time to time will beg to differ, but no doubt the differences will be resolved through healthy debate. As greenkeepers we can take much pleasure in our work, striving to produce the best conditions for the greatest game in the world. Maintenance problems pose a day to day puzzle, although not nearly so bewildering as the historical puzzle as to where the game began. Its roots seem untraceable as there are so many versions that it is impossible to be certain.

Although a game in the form of golf did exist as far back as Roman times which had the name "PAGANICA" and in ancient England called "CAMABUCA", in Belgium it was called "CHOLE" and in Holland "KOLVEN". I must say that I prefer the Dutch name, but in France as ever the

description was more flowery, "JEU DE MAIL".

We can safely say that Scotland was in full 'swing' long before 1427, the year the first edict, of which there were three, banning golf in favour of archery practice was proclaimed. From this time until the forming of the various societies and companies there appeared to be a constant battle between the Church and the players of golf, who had excused themselves from the then frequent two or three hour sermons, perhaps to avoid falling asleep!

Golf continued during these years in an unorganised fashion. No one had created any hard and fast rules and no clubs had been formed. Eventually some gentlemen from Edinburgh formed the Edinburgh Golfing Society now known as the Royal Burgess Golfing Society of Edinburgh, whose home is at Barnton.

The Royal Burgess pre-dates the Royal and Ancient by some nineteen years and the Honourable Company of Edinburgh Golfers by nine years. The latter were the first to lead the way by drawing up a set of rules that laid the foundation of the game as we know it today. But it was the Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St Andrews that the leading clubs looked to for an authoritative and uniform version

of the rules which they could all adopt.

One of the first golfers to achieve fame was Alan Robertson from St. Andrews who by all accounts was peerless as a golfer, never having lost a single match playing level. He could not be called the champion for no Championship existed, all his matches being head to head encounters for a side bet. One of the stories as to how the Open Championship started at Prestwick was the desire to find the best golfer in the land after the unbeaten Robertson's

death. The first Championship was played on Wednesday 17th October 1860. It had eight entrants and was played over three rounds of twelve holes at Prestwick. The winner was Willie Park with a score of 174 and the runner up was the legendary Tom Morris with a score of 176. This then was the platform on which the modern game was built, with ever greater heights being reached as this year's Ryder Cup win proved.
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