

Short cuts to efficiency

Part 3 Work recording

One of the more difficult tasks for a new chairman of green is to understand the various jobs that are done on the course, their frequency and work content. It is absolutely essential for him to have a full grasp of this information when preparing annual budgets, manning level calculations and costing for specific projects.

I discussed the problem with Jim, the greenkeeper, and asked for his advice. He maintains a personal diary and from this and his knowledge of work done on the course he prepares a written report once a month for the committee. This type of report requires the extraction and selection of details together with some input from memory. Although well prepared it requires valuable greenkeeper time to produce.

I feel sure that no chairman or any member of his committee can remember the detail of, say, the previous two years reports. When detailed information is required the written reports have to be analysed. We decided to short circuit the analysis stage and devise a reporting system that was easy to understand, required minimum effort to complete and gave us meaningful answers at the end of each reporting period.



The maintenance schedule: Proving to disbelieving members when greens are cut and other vital work undertaken...

We settled on the idea of a tick sheet with job descriptions down the side and days across the top. Entries should be made each day or on the completion of a job, a weekly total would be entered in a column on the right.

Our discussions soon led me to understand that course work was covered by three headings, Maintenance, Project and Other, which we defined under each heading as:

Maintenance: That work necessary to maintain the existing features for them to be displayed to their best advantage. We agreed that this work may absorb 100% of available manpower during the Summer but may be as little as 30% during the Winter period. As an additional refinement we identified certain operations, such as mowing greens, were always or nearly always done at all 18 holes while other operations may be done at one hole.

Project: The modification of existing or the development of additional features on the course. This work would be done during the autumn, winter and early spring.

Other: Those jobs not included under either the Maintenance or Project headings would include Hollow Tining, Vertidrainage, Arboreal work after a gale and the repair and maintenance of plant and machinery. While it may be possible to identify some of this other work and its work content we recognised that there will always be contingency work which cannot be evaluated but we must make some allowance for it in any calculations.

By trial and error we determined a description for each work item that has stood the test of time and includes:

At all 18 holes

Mow	Greens
Mow	Tees and Surrounds
Mow	Fairways
Mow	Rough
Switch	Greens
Cut	Holes
Rake	Bunkers
Slit Tine	Greens
Slit Tine	Tees
Fertilise	Greens
Fertilise	Tees

At one hole (write hole numbers)

Maintain	Bunkers - Annual - including cut new edge
Maintain	Bunkers - Periodic - including strim edge
Fungicide	Greens
Top Dress	Greens
Scarify	Green

Other work - give details

After a trial period we introduced a Weekly Report Form capable of accepting daily entries. Individual weekly totals would then be entered on to a Quarterly Report Form. We also recognised that subsequent similar quarters could be compared to determine an average frequency for each job during a particular quarter. An immediate benefit would be that the greenkeeper would spend less time preparing his written report.

Information gathered would be meaningful and used to determine both the quarterly and annual frequency of regular and irregular maintenance work, together with examples of the other unscheduled work. The detailed data would also be used to produce more accurate budgets and manning level calculations.

After one year the results gave us quantified common sense answers. While we knew that greens were cut more often in the summer than the winter, we now know that the frequency varies during the quarters from 6.9 to 0.8 times per week.

To date this method has had two side benefits, we can now prove to disbelieving members when the greens were cut and to suit certain competitions we have modified, weather permitting, actual cutting days during the darker months of the year.

As well as being used for both the preparation of budgets and manpower calculations the results are also used to discuss the frequency of operation during the annual visit of the agronomist from the Sports Turf Research Institute at Bingley.