

# Flying Divots

## Character returns

On a stormy night in February 1990, an enormous gale-whipped sea broke through the shingle bank protecting the Westward Ho! course, which is the oldest English links course, established in 1864. The inundation of low-lying areas was extensive but furthermore, serious damage was caused to the huge sleeper-faced Cape bunker at the 4th, undermining the timber facing and causing serious erosion.

One of the first tasks of RNDGC's new general manager, John Linaker, was to restore the links character of the course, and especially to reinstate the bunkers to their original design. Many had been damaged by grazing animals (which had free access under commoners rights), had grown in, broken down and become smaller.

Clearly, reinstatement of the Cape bunker was a huge and immediate challenge. Aided to some extent by a grant, half the bunker was refaced starting early last winter, using not sleepers, but 28' long timber piling from Gravesend jetty, the hardest wood imaginable, Indian oak, which cost the club countless chain saw blades.

Apart from hiring a JCB and driver for eight days, all the work was done by the greenkeeping staff under Ted New. The timber piling was sunk a minimum of 6' into the sand and laid back at an angle calculated to avoid balls rebounding. The result is dramatic, giving an instinctive comparison with the right hand half in its original state. One thing is certain, the Cape will outlast us all and it is surely not tempting providence to say that it will give as good as it gets if the sea ever invades again.

It is especially gratifying to see how quickly the true links character is returning to the greens under a programme based on traditional greenkeeping, implemented with enthusiasm and conviction by Ted and Robert New, under the guidance of that old team going back twenty years or so, John Linaker and Jim Arthur, including such as Fulford, Gullane, Moor Park and Castletown.

## Good ideas department

Here is a little idea which may be of interest to fellow greenkeepers. I purchased a metal drag mat which I use when top dressing, essentially to break up hollow-tine cores. A problem arose with the metal bar fixed across the front of the drag mat which, when dragged across our undulating linksland, scuffed the ground.

To alleviate this problem I obtained a old baby push chair, cut the axle in half, and bolted a single wheel to each end of the metal bar – thus raising the bar level by about two inches. Since fitting the push chair wheels I have found the mat much easier to use, especially when pulled by hand around confined areas such as raised tees.

– John Phillips, Head Greenkeeper, St David's City GC., Dyfed.

## How's your back?

A new campaign aimed at lightening the load of those who manually handle goods at work – the biggest single group who suffer work-related accidents – has been launched by the Health and Safety Executive.

Announcing the campaign, Dr Tony Leach said: "Over a quarter of all accidents at work... arise from manual lifting, handling and carrying. Each reported injury results on average in 20 days off work – estimated at over 3 million working days per year in total... This can affect almost every employee in any working environment where handling a load presents a risk. We are aware that employers need simple, accessible guidance on the relevant legal requirements and on how to avoid the costs which can arise from risky, and often inefficient, manual handling practices."

Dr Leach added: "This new campaign draws employers' attention to their responsibility for assessing the potential problems, avoiding them where possible and making the workforce aware of how to approach manual handling tasks. The employer that does this will be protecting both staff and the business." The information pack includes a free booklet, 'Getting to Grips with

Manual Handling', which describes the main legal requirements and gives guidance on when risk assessments are needed, on simple and cost-effective steps that might be taken to reduce risk and on handling techniques. The pack emphasises that assessments need take only a few minutes' observation and the use of common sense. An employer will have to write down the assessment as a record only if it is too complex to repeat when necessary.

Copies of the pack and booklet are available free by calling (freefone) 0800 500565.

## Cleaning up

Paul Worster, head greenkeeper at Minchinhampton GC, sent the following: Recently I was reminded of an incident at a previous club of mine, and now the people concerned have moved I feel safe to recount it. At this club we were fortunate in having a fine steward and stewardess who built up the catering from nothing until the restaurant was the envy of all others. They were universally popular in the club, not least with me, as I enjoyed as much as I could eat every lunchtime at very modest cost.

The only blot on the horizon was their teenage son, who had a penchant for loose women and fast cars, and in the latter department he was forever tuning, servicing and tinkering. It was nothing to come into work and find his latest car in pieces in my shed. When I diplomatically halted this state of affairs by banning his vehicles from the shed, he promptly started borrowing tools – until he had more tools than we did! One particular morning we were alarmed to see him ambling towards us, causing my deputy to remark – 'This looks serious, you might as well give him the socket box so the complete set is together again'. I stood, arms akimbo, blocking the entrance, and setting aside all pleasantries I gruffly inquired what he wanted. His mumbled answer was to borrow a shovel. I thrust one into his hand, demanding to know why the Hell he wanted a shovel at that time of the morning. He looked at me with tears in his eyes and said "I've got to scrape the cat up off the road". Whoops!

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