

# JUST CAPITAL

**T**hey reckon old James Braid knew a thing or two about the architecture of golf.

He was a great golfer who, though designing was always an avocation, took the game very seriously, stubborn to the point that he refused to change a feature once it was planned. It was Braid in 1920 who designed the gem that is Tyrrells Wood, an 18 hole course built high in the Surrey hills, some ten or so miles from the bustle of London and now very much part of what is known as 'the stockbroker belt'.

Though Braid was never privy to the changes that have taken place around this blessed acreage: the 24-hour traffic jam that is the M25 a mere mile away, the urbanisation of nearby Leatherhead, the sheer hectic nature of life in the fast lane, I fancy that were he to peer down from Valhalla he would smile knowingly

The city of London is only just around the corner, but it's far enough away for Bert Watson and his team – with 117 years' combined experience – to make Tyrrells Wood the perfect golfing haven

and approvingly, probably casting a friendly wave toward course manager Bert Watson, proud to see that Tyrrells Wood is lovingly tended and counted still as one of Braid's unspoiled treasures.

Leaving behind the snarl of the motorway, Tyrrells Wood may be found by taking a country lane off the A24, just a few hundred yards from twentieth century madness and confusion. Yet as one turns into the drive leading toward an expansive red brick clubhouse the feeling strikes – the clock has turned back to the roaring twen-

ties of PG Wodehouse, the place a veritable oasis of tranquillity, reeking of class and exquisite taste, though playground now as much to the Mercedes and BMW brigade as the country squire. Nevertheless, the occasional visitor might be forgiven for expecting to see Bertie Wooster waiting on the first tee.

Tyrrells Wood is also Bert Watson territory, the domain of a man who has spent the past 35 years caring for Braid's eighteen blessed examinations of golf. Bert began working here as a 19 year old

greenkeeper under St Andrews stalwart, Andrew Corstophine, progressing over the years to become head greenkeeper and thence, 12 years ago, to course manager.

The title 'course manager' can mean different things to different people, this writer inclined to the view that it is often used somewhat frivolously and with scant regard for the true meaning of the word 'management'. 'What difference did the title make to you, what does it really mean?', I asked, Bert's reply swift and to the point. 'Simply stated, the course is my absolute domain, I manage it in its entirety, deciding and controlling my own substantial budget. I make the decisions, control the purse-strings, balance the books, decide machinery and supplies purchasing, staffing, pay structures, and policy on course maintenance. I work hard ➔ 22



# ORGANITE

WORKING NATURALLY WITH NATURE

4~4~0.2

The natural organic fertiliser that is designed to give your turf all the feeding it needs.

Easy to apply in granular form ORGANITE gives a positive natural slow release green up without excessive growth. It is safe to use and can be applied at any time of the year.

ORGANITE fits into any fertiliser programme. Ideal for sportsgrounds, fairways and tees.

ORGANITE granular is also suitable for use on all fine turf areas and is designed to meet the demands of the modern turfgrass manager.

ORGANITE is a premier fertiliser available at a fraction of the cost of competitive products.

For prompt information about ORGANITE, and a sample, contact Liquid Sod by returning the coupon.



## ORGANITE COUPON

Name GI. 2.93

\_\_\_\_\_

Address

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Position

\_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_ Fax \_\_\_\_\_

I am interested in using ORGANITE on:

Golf Courses  Sportsgrounds  Amenity

Please ask a Liquid Sod representative to contact me

Liquid Sod Inc.  
Linden View, Redwing Road  
Milborne Port, Sherborne  
Dorset DT9 5DB  
Tel: 0963 251129 Fax: 0963 251168

# Changing the

21 in glove with George Shiels, my agronomist of some five years and a friend with whom I enjoy great rapport, and I report only to the club's green convenor on matters arising from my management and my decisions, he in turn reporting to the board. Those decisions are mine alone - that's course management! Everything routinely done on a daily basis is logged in a diary, everything major goes into the computer, there to be unearthed whenever a technique is queried, a question needs answering or a problem needs solving'.

There is no hierarchy in Bert's greenkeeping team, no first, second or third assistants. All save the young apprentice share equal status, all are greenkeepers to a man. The team, Bert included, boast a combined total of 117 working years at Tyrrells Wood: Ian Huggett 32 years, Keith Harris

and Jack Street 25 years apiece - indication that it's a good place to work and a good place to play. I had come specifically to learn something of Bert's spring maintenance programme, though the word was out that some rather major developments were afoot and I was eaten with curiosity - we walked the course.

The first noticeable thing on the bright January morning of my visit was the dryness of the place: built on a rich chalkland seam several meters deep, the course drained like a sieve. Second (and I'm sure, seventy years on, James Braid would have approved), there was a whole lot of construction going on, new and substantial tee areas being built, Hymac's shifting earth and creating tees as large as 540 square yards, practical and much more in keeping with 1990s volume of play. This programme is centred currently

## AERATION & DRAINAGE SERVICES

For

### VERTI-DRAIN HIRE

Large and Small Machines available  
with Experienced Operators.  
Contact Peter Mannington Tel: 0580 200205

And

### CONSTRUCTION/ALTERATION DRAINAGE and SANDSLITTING

Greens, Tees, Fairways and Bunkers etc.

Also

### TORO HYDROJECT

available For Hire

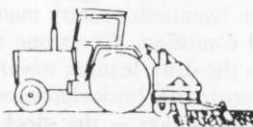
Contact: Paul or Lesley Wright  
Aeration & Drainage Services

48 Brightland Road, Eastbourne,  
East Sussex BN20 8BE

Tel: (0323) 411660

Mobile: (0860) 838241

Fax: (0323) 411980



AD  
REF  
43

AD  
REF  
394

# soil structure

around the fifth, eleventh and twelfth tees but will in the next five years incorporate every teeing area and replace often piddling small areas with massive, easy to maintain tees that will take extra wear whilst further enhancing appearance and maintaining the status quo. We walked to the highest point on the course, the panoramic views toward London and Middlesex quite awe-inspiring, despite a haze that prevented me glimpsing the Post Office Tower. I could quite imagine Braid those many years ago getting goose pimples just thinking about the majesty of it all.

Another major programme involves the gradual changing of soil structure on the greens. A compaction layer around four inches has been tackled first by Vertidrain, followed by slit tining, alternating between four and six inch slitters and making 26

passes over each green. In addition, each spring (autumn too) hollow tining is carried out twice, the core holes filled with an imported Norfolk 80/20 mix, some 160 tonnes being used each season. Within the top four inches this exchange is now about one third complete (an inch and a half), achieved over three seasons. Slit tining had already been completed on all greens at least eleven times (once each week) and more of the same was scheduled as weather dictated.

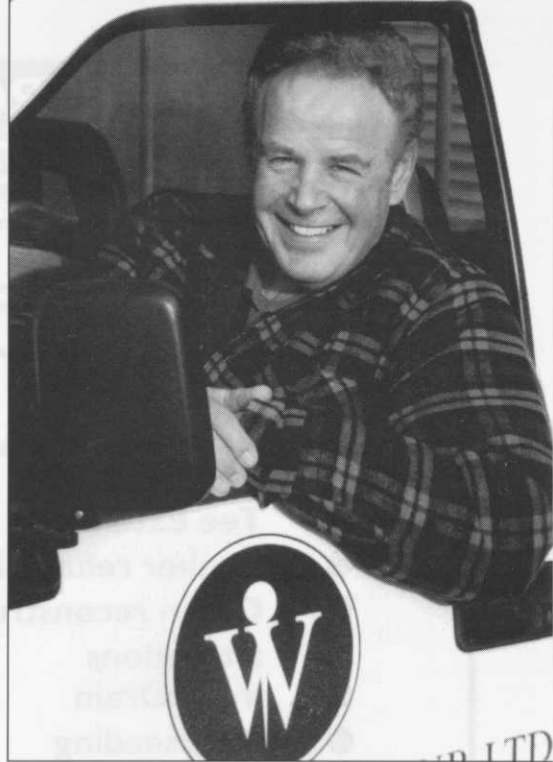
The course at Tyrrells Wood may be tranquil for its members, but the amount of activity I saw suggested that it is a positive powerhouse for the team. Bunkers were being emptied of old material and replaced with Kingsley washed sand – Sunningdale style – and many bunkers were being revetted, edges trimmed and tidied, whilst a new zig-zag path

was being formed to make life easier for members when hauling up the slope from first green to second tee.

'So many things that take place on the course, routine things, are never noticed by the average player, though they would soon become apparent if we didn't do them', opined Bert, suggesting that such routine accounted for upwards of a third of the greenkeepers working week. 'In March I like to get things moving, aiming for a little colour and a tickle of growth by applying a turf tonic – sulphate of iron based – on the greens, whilst on the fairways I'll put straight tines on the Amazone, just at turf

level, to take out any old rubbish and dry divots. Then we'll set to repairing those old divot holes with seed and soil and wait to see positive germination from the repair before passing the mower blades over. As soon as I see some signs of positive growth on the greens I'll hollow tine, twice over each green, two ways, looking to remove 5% on each pass, before brushing the Bailey's well ➔ 25

In the driving seat: course manager Bert Watson



*What's New And Very Effective in Aeration?*

## **Terraspiking**

*from Wiedenmann (UK) Ltd*

For more information on the range of *Terra-Spike* and the name of your local dealer, please contact:



**Wiedenmann (UK) Ltd**

STONEYBRAE, POTTERHILL, PAISLEY PA2 7TG

Tel: 041-884 2552 Fax: 041-884 6252

AD  
REF  
326

# SEWARD

## TURF MAINTENANCE

CONTACT THE PROFESSIONALS WITH OVER 10 YEARS EXPERIENCE

★ TO MAINTAIN YOUR GREENS WE CAN

**VERTI DRAIN  
HOLLOW TINE  
TOP DRESS**

★ TO MAINTAIN YOUR FAIRWAYS WE CAN

**VERTI DRAIN  
OVERSEED**

RING MICHAEL SEWARD FOR A QUOTATION

SUTTON ROAD, WIGGINTON, YORK YO3 8RA

Tel: (0904) 761221; Fax: (0904) 760016

Evenings: (0904) 765949

AD  
REF  
45



# Tees get pellet fertiliser treatment



**Tees that please: sensible dimensions will spread wear, whilst making maintenance easier**

23 ➔ in – following this a little later with a 12-0-9 fertiliser application, one which has worked well over the seasons’.

Worm casts were conspicuous by their absence, in the main down to Bert’s tackling the problem ‘before it arises’. Each autumn he carefully applies flowers of sulphur in an attempt to reduce the pH, naturally occurring at around seven, trying to turn the conditions around. Water on the course, applied through a Watermation irrigation system via the club’s recently excavated deep borehole, comes ready filtered through the chalk, thus alkalinity is in the water as well, though by turning the acid balance they seem to have the worm problem licked, or at least under control. Bert is of the opinion that creating such conditions means that worms find Tyrrells Wood less than comfortable!

February will see the club’s tees and approaches treated with a slow-release pellet fertiliser, with

the new tee bases being turfed over a tasty looking root-zone mix and utilising something approaching 1400 sq. yds of material. In addition, work continues on restoration following the gales of 1987, when Tyrrells Wood suffered considerable losses. Some six years on the losses were not apparent to this observer, though deep in the undergrowth of bordering thickets an occasional uprooted tree may be seen if one looks closely. Bert’s team have tackled these systematically (there were scores of fine trees felled by the hurricane) in the time honoured fashion – removal by chainsaw of all branches before dropping the naked root back into its vacant hole. Some live trees are also being moved, under the direction of Civic Trees, in particular a Yew from behind the twelfth to the right of the eighth to replace an old favourite lost in the big blow – the whole programme suggesting that much thought had gone into ➔ 26

## GOT IT IN ONE!

With a Trilo you can scarify and vacuum, quickly and efficiently, removing thatch in just one pass. The new high-capacity Trilo SG 700, which has a flexible 2 metre Tripartite scarifier with fully adjustable depth control, is the perfect solution to grass maintenance problems.

# TRILO

Put it to the test. For more information about our ‘Hire to Try’ scheme contact:

### MJT Contracts Ltd

21 Newton Road, Cambridge. Tel : (0223) 355796

AD REF 372

**Britain’s leading Top Dressing supplies**

**PRICES HELD FOR 1993**

## All Seasons Dressings

**Top Dressings • Sands • Top Soils • Fern Soil. Suppliers of Soils for Golf Courses.**

**TOP DRESSING**  
Grade 1, 2, 3 to a high specification

**ROOT ZONE MIX**  
Individual mixes USGA specification, Lime free sands used

**SCREENED SOIL**  
3mm and 6mm Screened soil for divoting and construction. Naturally organic

**SANDS**  
Free draining. Lime free sands for bunkers and top dressings

**CONSTRUCTION**  
Tee and Green construction undertaken by our own professional tradesmen



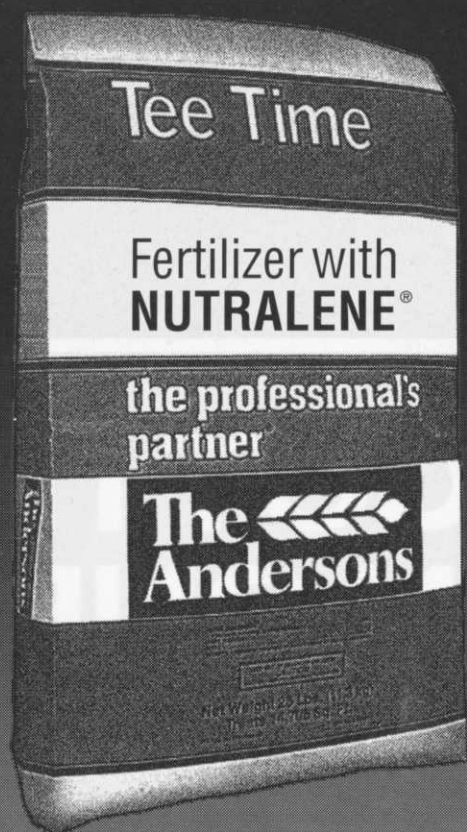
We at ALL SEASONS DRESSINGS have researched long and hard to achieve a Top Dressing to a very high quality product. All our soils and sands are tested by local agronomists and chemists to obtain the best results for your greens and tees.

**119 London Road, Kingston upon Thames, Surrey KT2 6NH.**

**Telephone: 081 546 3960 • Mobile: 0831 871939 • Fax: 081 547 1923**

AD REF 375





## It's Tee Time With Nutralene

For greens, tees and fairways, use Tee Time fertilizers with slow release nitrogen, Nutralene-formulated using our unique, microgranular process. Get effective, uniform performance even on closely mowed turf.

### ask us about:

- Tee Time 22-0-22 with 65% Nutralene for greens and tees.
- Tee Time 21-3-16 with 97% Nutralene for greens and tees.
- Tee Time 25-5-15 with 50% Nutralene for tees and fairways.
- Tee Time 22-4-18 with 92% Nutralene for tees and fairways.

For more information call:

**0963 251129**

the professional's partner®



Liquid Sod  
Linden View  
Redwing Road  
Milborne Port  
Sherborne  
Dorset DT9 5DB

© Nutralene is a trademark of Nor-Am Chemical Co., ©1993, TeeTime is a trademark of The Andersons

# 'My aim is to see that blatantly unfair shots are not part of my course'

25 → the process, the idea being as much one of caring for future golfing generations as of those playing today. Finally, Bert and the team are involved in a 'spring special', albeit a one-off, the removal of three Corsican Pines from the left of the tenth green, together with a reduction in height of an overpowering Beech, all this with the commendable idea of letting in more light and air, especially allowing winter sun to find its old target à la Braid, for too long overshadowed.

There is one overwhelming theme that pervades in listening to Bert Watson, his unswerving enthusiasm for Tyrrells Wood. He calls it 'his' golf course, which is only right for such a dedicated craftsman who sees these golfing acres as the canvas he paints, sensitive as only an artist can be to both criticism and acclaim. He's an avid eight handicap golfer and finds that playing helps enormously in preparation of the canvas: 'I'll sometimes hit a ball, not a bad shot, and see from where it has come to rest that there is something that offends – an overhanging branch maybe – an unfairness not just for me but for any golfer, which may not be apparent to the layman. Golf may not always be a fair game – it was never intended to be – but my aim is to see that blatantly unfair shots are not part of my course' – witness the artist at work!

'Any advice for young greenkeepers', I asked, Bert suggesting that the best move any young greenkeeper could make would be to remove any fear that a visiting agronomist works against him. 'Get him on your side, show him what you're made of, discuss everything you've ach-

ieved in detail, build up a friendship. George (Shiels) and I enjoy such a friendship and we work as a team, our thinking being that two heads are better than one. When George makes a recommendation it is usually the result of two minds with but a single thought – and means that the proposals are nearly always accepted – seen to be right for the course, right for the members and right for my regime'.

Each month Bert produces a detailed report of work either carried out or scheduled, which in edited form is produced for his members. He is also something of a writer, producing a short article on a pertinent matter which appears in the magazine 'Tyrrells Times', explaining in layman terms the reasoning behind a particular activity. His latest, 'Why Aerate', was a wee gem and I was left with the thought that Tyrrells Wood members are fortunate indeed – not only do they enjoy an exquisite course but, through this simple form of communication, they know why.

### Major machinery at Tyrrells Wood

- 1 Ford Dextra tractor
- 2 Kubota tractors (models 345 & L3250)
- 1 Amazone flail mower
- 1 SISIS overseeder
- 2 Cushman Turf Trucksters
- 1 Cushman attachment
- 1 Ransomes Fairway hydraulic 5
- 1 Ransomes 180 mower
- 1 Ransomes Whirl blower
- 1 Jacobsen greensmower
- 1 John Deere 2243 greensmower
- 3 Atco 24 mowers
- 2 Toro Greensmaster mowers
- 2 Stihl Farm Boss chainsaws
- 1 Trailer