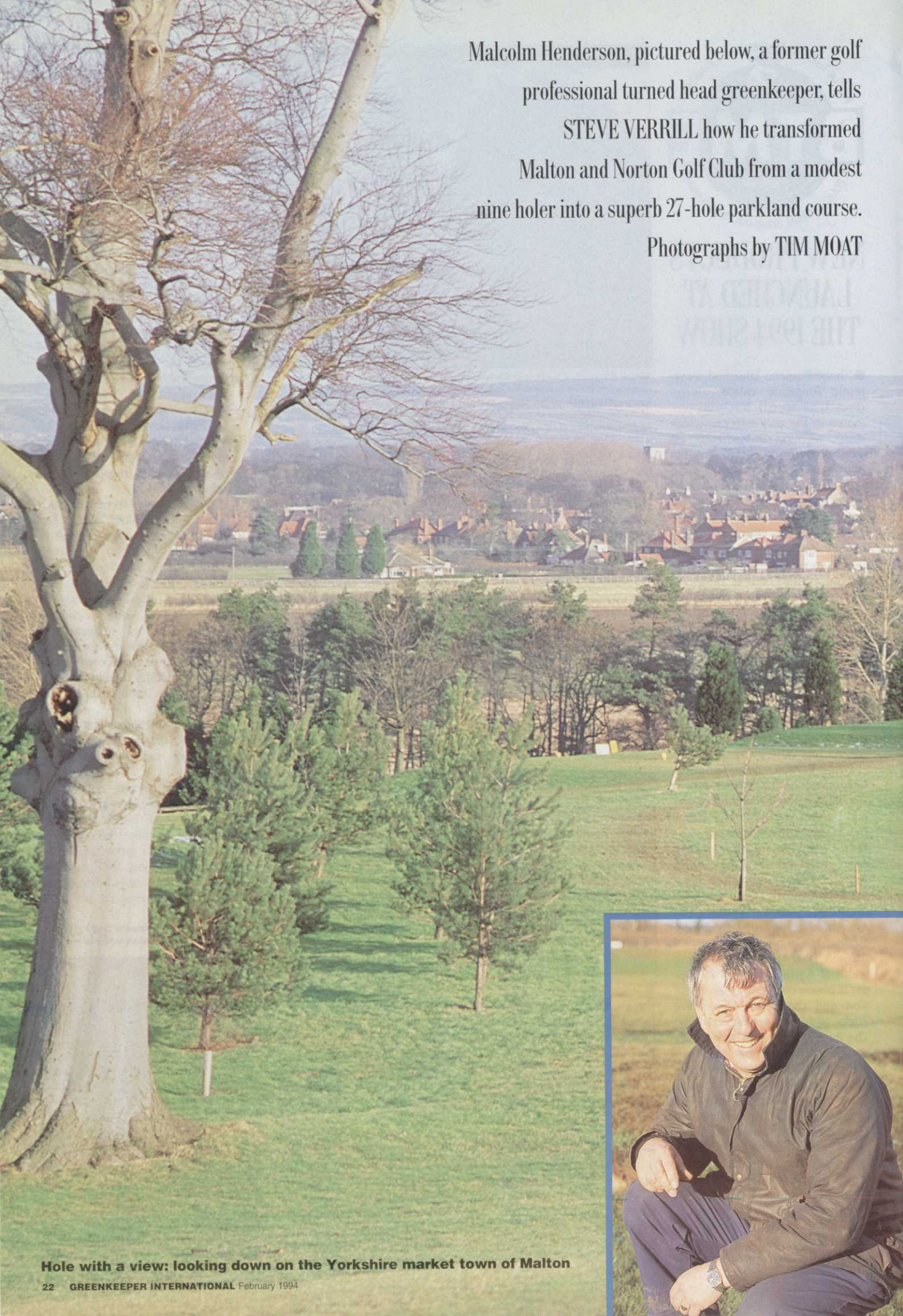


Malcolm Henderson, pictured below, a former golf professional turned head greenkeeper, tells STEVE VERRILL how he transformed Malton and Norton Golf Club from a modest nine holer into a superb 27-hole parkland course.

Photographs by TIM MOAT



**Hole with a view: looking down on the Yorkshire market town of Malton**

# Malcolm's YORKSHIRE



**N**estled in a corner of North Yorkshire more famous for its racehorses than golf courses lies a remarkable greenkeeping success story.

Every greenkeeper worth his salt would leap at the chance to design his own course but sadly few ever get the opportunity. Usually it is the greenkeeper who has to make the best of someone else's baby be it beautiful or otherwise.

So Malcolm Henderson, head green-

keeper at Malton and Norton Golf Club, can – and does – count himself a fortunate man. Malcolm's design skills have turned what started life as a modest nine holer into a superb 27-hole parkland course.

Malcolm must rate as one of BIGGA's more unusual members because he is also a qualified professional golfer and until three years ago was employed as both club professional and head greenkeeper.

Yet despite his playing talents, Malcolm's

first love has always been greenkeeping, a vocation which gives him immense satisfaction.

Job satisfaction can manifest itself in a variety of ways but for Malcolm it comes from seeing golfers out enjoying the fruits of his labours.

Malcolm, 51, learned his greenkeeping trade as an eager 15-year-old at the illustrious and exclusive championship course at Ganton near Scarborough. But tending

# 'He has carved out a layout for the thinking golfer'



greens and playing on them ran hand-in-hand in Malcolm's youth and after passing his PGA examination at Lilleshall he was appointed as professional/head greenkeeper at Malton and Norton.

Among his first tasks was to design and build a new nine holes, which are now the front nine, aided by the late Malcolm Roberts, chairman of the greens committee.

That this first venture was a success is there for all to see and the fact that the club is attracting record numbers of visitors is a testament to this modest greenkeeper's artisan artistry.

He has carved out a layout for the thinking golfer from the heavy Yorkshire meadowland

constructing a course that many a famous designer would be proud to put his name to.

It kicks off with a marvellous 564 yard par five and sweeps up and over the rolling countryside providing not only challenging golf but a panoramic vista across Malton and along the Vale of York. Greens are big and slick, despite having to work with some of the coarser meadowland grass varieties, and the course is studded with impressive mature chestnut and oak trees.

Such has been the popularity of the course that Malcolm was called upon three years ago to design a further nine holes with the assistance of greens committee chairman Bob Mansell.



The brief for the new nine was to match the class and excellence of the existing 18 with a budget of around £8,000 a hole. The job was duly completed to budget and the new course opened for three months last

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\* The STRI 1994 list shoot density figures.



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AD  
REF  
46



summer and will go full time this spring.

The course was hewn from an unappetising piece of land – part agricultural, part jungle. It now bears Malcolm's trademark of large undulating greens and big impressive tees with plenty of space for the daily repositioning of tee markers.

The new nine involved the improvement of two ponds and provided the opportunity to bring about Malcolm's favourite innovation – a superb Watermation system. The whole course is kitted out with the computerised watering system which incorporates Malcolm's pride and joy – a pump and filtration system which automatically draws water out

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# 'Tree planting programme is now paying dividends'

of a naturally supplied pond and replenishes storage tanks some 1000 metres away. "It really is a fabulous system. It allows me to programme all the various stations, either greens or tees, to come on at whatever time I want for a duration of up to 99 minutes," said Malcolm.

"My usual set-up is for the system to start at 1am for five or six minutes at each station and because the pump starts two minutes before the start time the water pressure is the same for each green or tee.

"The system was installed by T and G Installation Services of Ripon at a total cost of £40,000 but it has proved to be a great investment and has certainly paid for itself over the last couple of years."

While on the topic of good investments, the club's tree planting programme has also started to pay dividends. About 60 trees which were planted more than 10 years ago have recently been transplanted throughout the new course giving a mature feel which belies its infancy. In the best Yorkshire traditions the exercise also saved the club at least £12,000 with trees costing less than £2 at planting now worth more £200 each.

"It has worked a treat and is such a simple operation. We used a contractor to transplant the trees and the whole operation took just four days in total," said Malcolm.

"Three hydraulic spades are slipped underneath each tree, it is then lifted out and dropped into a pre-dug hole. So far it looks to have been 100 per cent successful."

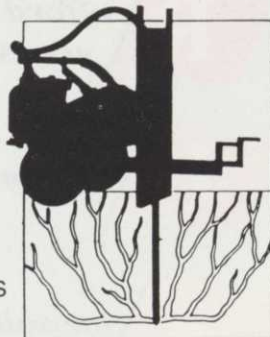
One tip is to make sure you incorporate a water feeder pipe down to the roots. Malcolm gives each tree about 40 gallons of water once a fortnight during drier conditions.

"I can certainly recommend transplanting. It allows you to do the impossible and actually buy in time to give the course maturity." ➔

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## 'Investment in drainage has made my life easier'

Shortly Malcolm and his four strong team will begin their spring maintenance programme in earnest, the biggest job being the spreading of about 80 tons of Rufford top dressing on the greens.

The Malton course is built on a heavy sub soil which can cause drainage difficulties so the greens get a good dose of sand.

"We slit the greens every month in winter to about seven or eight inches to aerate and aid against compaction and every other year we vertidrain but that was carried out last year. Once the greens have been deep slitted we shall spread up to four tons of dressing made up of 50 per cent sand and 50 per cent soil on each green.

"We use a Sisis green slitter on the back of a compact tractor and then once the dressing dries we brush it in. Usually the whole process takes about four hours per green.

"The greens are principally meadow grass because they were cut out of the fields at the turn of the century and we have just kept on with them. It is rougher grass than we would like. We haven't the finer grass that new courses have but we use turf groomers on the back of Jacobsen machines everytime we cut which helps the grass grow finer."

Once the growing season starts, usually mid-April, Malcolm will treat the greens and approaches with a mixture of lawn sand and moss killer. Tees will be repaired where necessary and those on the short holes will be top dressed.

Fairways will get a little pick-me-up in April from an outfield fertiliser and any bare patches will be turfed over.

Malcolm explained that an investment in drainage had made his task easier. "Flooding of fairways was quite a problem until about eight years ago when we installed plastic drainage system backfilled with stone on the 9th, 10th, 14th, 15th, 16th, 17th and 18th fair-

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ways. It was certainly money well spent."

Worms have never been a problem on the original course but Malcolm will be spraying greens, tees and fairways on the new nine in May using Castaway Plus through a Hardi sprayer.

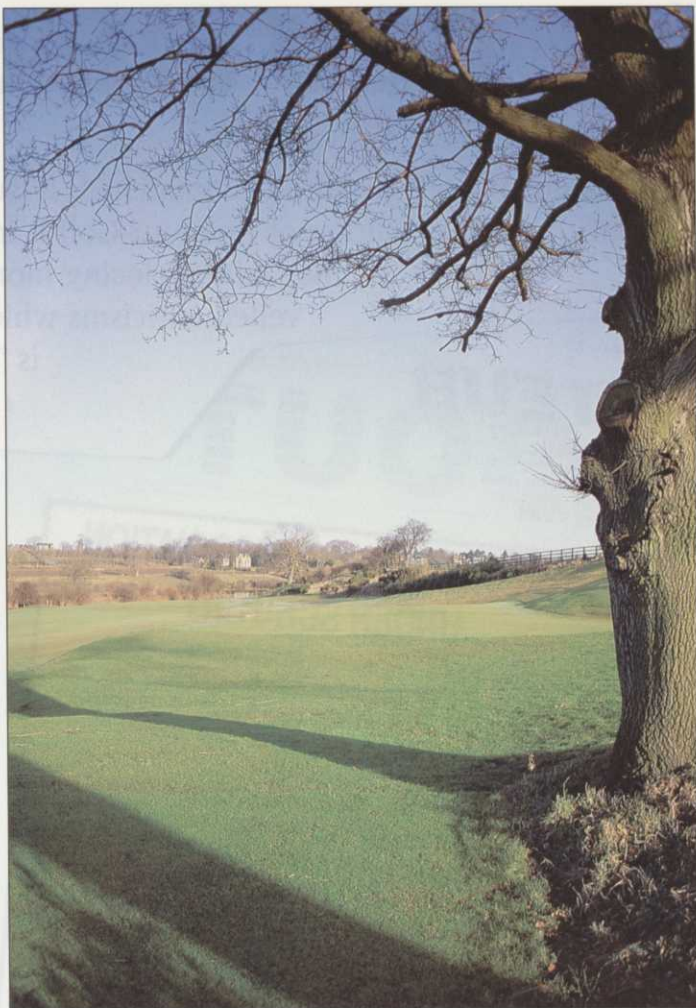
Moles have also made their unwelcome presence felt on the new course but a few poisoned worms dropped into their underground runs should take care of them – but don't tell the lady members.

It looks like being a busy time for Malcolm, who after playing less than half a dozen rounds over the last three years, is keen to re-start his playing career – as an amateur. He has applied to to be released from the PGA and expects his amateur status to be confirmed in July.

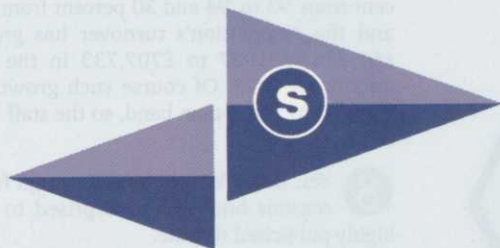
"I am quite looking forward to playing with a handicap – about eight or nine will do nicely," said Malcolm with a gleam in his eye.

### Equipment at Malton and Norton Golf Club

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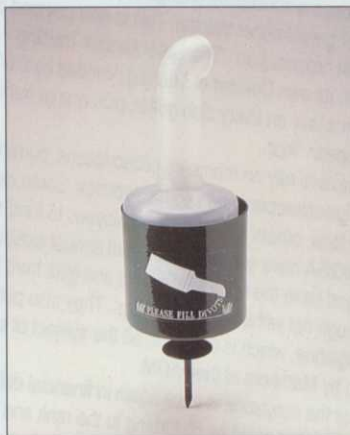
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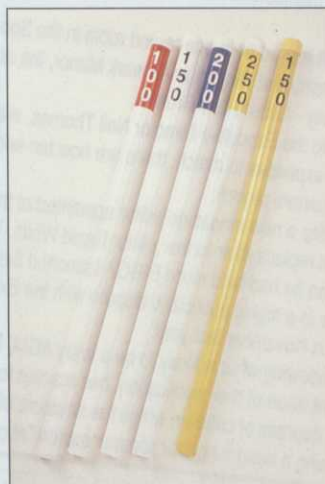


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