

# DYMOND'S LITTLE GEM



The view from the 14th tee out across the 12th century church to Daymer Bay

In 1888 there was just a small party of undergraduates playing golf at St Enodoc. By 1988 there were thousands trampling over the pretty little Cornish course. This year there are even more. Chris Boiling talked to Stuart Dymond about compaction and other problems.

With all eyes on Turnberry this month, it's not easy thinking of an introduction to an article on a links course at the other end of the country, in Cornwall.

I could write:

"Everybody has heard of St Enodoc but not nearly everybody who ought to has been there. It

represents a gap in the golfing education of far too many golfers. Personally, I had first heard of it 40 years prior to my first visit. When I did go, not only did the course fully live up to all the exciting things I had heard about but I realised that it was a very simple matter to get there, for Rock is only a few miles from Wadebridge.

"St Enodoc unvisited had always been portrayed to me in much the same terms. The golf had been described as eminently natural, amusing and dramatic in a country of glorious and terrific sand hills. All this proved to be perfectly true and yet when I saw it I felt that full justice had not been done."

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## 'If you haven't done your work by

That's how I could have started this article because, when I asked greenkeepers to name an interesting course, St Enodoc was the name that kept coming up. When I got there I realised why, but none had done justice to the sandhills and hollows, plateaux and tussocks or to the view from the 14th tee out across the pretty 12th-century church where poet laureate John Betjeman is buried to Daymer Bay, or over the Camel Estuary from the 16th fairway and 18th tee.

As I said, that's how I could have started this article - but it's

been done before, a long, long time ago. In fact they are the words (more or less) that celebrated golf writer Bernard Darwin used more than 50 years ago for his article on the 104-year-old course.

In those days he played with a brassey and mashie-niblick. And the greenkeeper, F Camps, was also the steward and club repairer being paid 25s per week for his services.

Now his jobs are done by a dozen employees of the club. There are seven greenkeepers, led by 51-year-old Stuart

## Aeration/decompaction: what the scientists say

by **WA Adams of the University of Wales and RJ Gibbs of the New Zealand Turf Culture Institute**

is there an underlying problem which should be identified and rectified.

The intensity of foot traffic on tees is comparable with or greater than on greens so the compaction problems are similar. One difference is that since the turf usually has a larger root system the soil macropores are better protected. Hollow tine coring is probably the most valuable treatment.

The most frequent need on golf greens is to improve (or restore) water infiltration and air entry into the rootzone. This does not require decompaction and can be achieved by physical penetration of the surface with solid tines which may be flat or round. Frequency of operation should be determined solely on need. In the growing season spiking should be required once per month or less often. A higher frequency is likely to be needed on golf greens from autumn to spring when rainfall is in excess of evapotranspiration. The depth of penetration required may be shallow (less than 40mm) but this will depend upon the nature of the rootzone.

Hollow tine coring is the most widely used technique to improve aeration and relieve compaction in the top 100mm of rootzones. On intensively used golf courses, treatment in autumn and spring may be necessary. On less intensively used golf greens annual treatment in autumn (with one or two passes) will suffice. Too frequent use results in a soft surface. An operation to relieve compaction below 100mm should not be needed on an annual basis. Indeed if it

Compaction problems are relatively minor on fairways except on restricted thoroughfares which may require special attention. Routine aeration maintenance using a slit tine spiker is normally confined to the period between late October and April. The purpose is to penetrate a surface which has become sealed. Decompaction at a depth exceeding 100mm is rarely necessary but, when it is, a moderate amount of surface disturbance can be tolerated so that mini-mole ploughing is practicable.

● *This extract is taken from a recently published book, **Natural Turf for Sport and Amenity: Science and Practice**. The book covers general principles and how they work on golf courses, bowling greens, soccer, rugby and cricket pitches. Aimed at students taking courses in turf science and sports ground management, the 416 pages cost £24.50. Tel: 0491 832111.*

# 10.30 you're struggling – it's just heaving'

Dymond. But there are now 36 holes – the 6,243-yard par 69 Church Course and the easier 4,142-yard par 61 Holywell Course, which was completed in 1982. For much of its history, St Enodoc has had 27 holes, although the short course had long periods when it was not used.

Club records show that in the early days the highest handicap for a round of 27 holes was 60, which suggests either the standards of play were low or the course was very difficult.

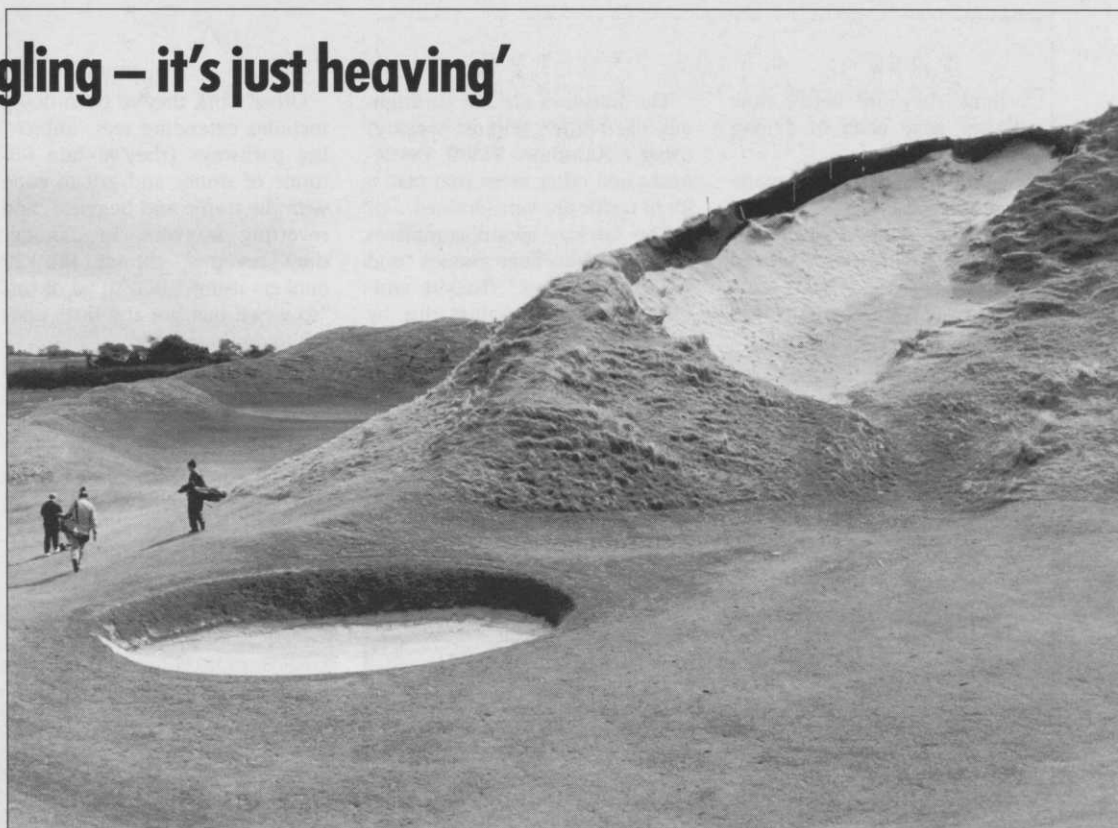
The courses lie in 250 acres of which 40 are fairways, two are tees, and three are greens. The rest is left to mother nature.

The James Braid-designed main course, only called the Church Course since 1987, hasn't changed much since Darwin's day, but it has seen a tremendous increase in traffic, which has necessitated a great deal of aeration work to relieve compaction.

## 75,000 rounds

In 1949 the club took 1,123 green fees, in 1989 the figure was 19,645. Now there are 1,200 playing members and 75,000 rounds played per year (over the two courses), the bulk of which comes during our short summer.

"If you haven't done your work by 10.30 you're struggling, it's just heaving," says Stuart, who came to St Enodoc after seven



Golfers who have conquered the Himalayas make their way to the 6th green

years as head greenkeeper at North Wilts and 15 years at Bude, of which ten were as head greenkeeper.

The greens are verti-drained once, in the autumn, using half-inch thick tines and left open. During the winter they are spiked every 7-10 days. In the spring they are hollow-cored to a depth of 4-5ins using quadro and solid tines and topdressed. This is the only topdressing they will receive. "Too much topdressing only causes problems," says Stuart.

The greens are scarified every

fortnight and aerated before receiving their monthly dose of liquid manure and wetting agent.

"It's something we tried last year and it seems to be working – the greens are looking beautiful at the moment," he says.

The greens are about 50 per cent annual meadowgrass, compared with the 99 per cent when he joined. This turnaround has been achieved by a lot of aeration work. "We've never overseeded them, we've spiked and prodded a lot but mostly we've left it to nature," he says.

Many of the greens are old – built in the days when £50 would get you four new putting surfaces – and have sunk in places. Stuart and his team have redesigned two of them since he's been at the course, and he hopes to do a couple more this winter, if he gets the go-ahead from members. Most of the redesign of the 13th and 14th greens has involved taking out the "silly slopes". For example, to remove the hollow on the 14th they had to lift it by nearly 3ft. They started the work on a Monday morning in November and had finished it by the Friday after taking off the turf and top soil, building up the hollow using nearby sand, replacing the top soil, remodelling it and putting the turf back. The green was in play again by January.

Stuart is quick to praise his men for their efforts: "They're a bunch of blokes second to none. They can do a week's work in a day and a half."

## Wear and tear

When he first joined they concentrated on the greens, now they are putting a lot of effort into the fairways. The problem there is a common one: wear and tear and lack of growth. "When I moved down nine years ago we decided to get stuck into the greens first and the fairways were only titivated a little bit. But recently we've spent a lot of time on the fairways – spiking them basically and a couple of applications of potash, which has made a fair improvement to them.

## Equipment update



■ The Jacobsen Aero King PT2448 is a tractor mounted aerator for large turf areas. There is a choice of hole patterns which will match aeration needs, and can be combined with a variety of tine sizes. Easy to fit, it can be used on any three-point hitch, 540rpm PTO tractor with 18hp or more. The Aero King T1224 is a self-propelled aerator which gives you a choice of five coring patterns to handle different aeration needs. There is also a choice of tines.



■ Sisis recently launched the Technicore, a vertical aerator for all year round use. The interchangeable hollow coring, slitting, solid and large diameter hollow tines have quick release fasteners. Multitine and Microcore heads are also available. A wide range of hole patterns can be obtained and a true 127mm depth of penetration. All Sisis tines now have an upgraded hardness specification.

"I think they are better now than they have been in a long time."

One little change that has made a big difference is switching from conventional gang mowers to Hayter gangs with rollers on the front and back, so they don't scalp the humps. "We've actually got grass now on the tops of the hills."

The fairways are slit throughout the winter (almost weekly) using a Ransomes TM80. Bottle-necks and other areas that take a lot of traffic are verti-drained.

The fairway sward comprises natural fescue/bent grasses "and rubbishy coxfoot". They're winning the battle against this by scarifying and digging it out.

Other work they've been doing includes extending tees, improving pathways (they've laid 90-tonne of stones and grit to cope with the traffic and buggies), and revetting bunkers. In January they revetted six of the 29 bunkers using 1,000 sq yd of turf "so we've just got the little ones left to do this winter".

The course's most famous bunker is the aptly-named Himalayas (according to Darwin, "the highest sandhill I have ever seen on a golf course"). It's about 80ft high and the top is blowing

away. The greenstaff know something needs to be done, but what?

"We put some netting around to protect it on a temporary basis and it has stayed like that now for five years. We're going to have to think hard and do something up there but what we haven't decided yet. It's going to be difficult to do anything because it's so far up. How do we get stuff up there?"

Fellow greenkeepers wondering whether they need climbing gear to rake it need not worry.

## EQUIPMENT

St Enodoc has a programme of replacing everything every five years but, because they maintain everything well, much of the 'old stuff' still performs well. "Good blokes and good kit make my job a doddle," says head greenkeeper Stuart Dymond.

1 John Deere 2243 Greens Mower	1 Massey 40hp Tractor/Loader
1 Toro GM3 Greens Mower	1 Iseki 525 Compact Tractor
1 Jacobsen Diesel Greens Mower	1 Iseki 2160 Compact Tractor
1 Ransomes 171 Surround Mower	1 Verti-drain
1 Ransomes 180D	1 Coremaster
1 Saxon Triple	1 Ransomes TM80 Fairway Spiker
1 Toro 70	2 Sisis Greens Spikers
3 Saxon Hand Mowers	1 Hardi 400L Sprayer
1 Greens Mower	1 Alman 300L Sprayer
1 Beaver Hydraulic 5 Gang Mower	1 Diesel Cushman
1 Jacobsen Trail 3 Gang Mower	1 Petrol Cushman
1 Beaver Articulator	1 John Deere 6x4 Gator
1 Massey 35hp Tractor	1 Cushman Topdresser
	1 Royer Shredder
	1 Royer Power Screen
	1 Suzuki 4x4



The 14th green, which the greenstaff rebuilt in five days



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They only have to rake it for a couple of major events each year, locals can pick their balls out under penalty.

Another unusual feature of the course is granite and slate posts in the semi-roughs. Presumably old boundary markers, they have to be trimmed around once a week.

Old boundaries were also marked by stone walls. One forms an obstacle on the third fairway and another is a feature of the 14th green.

But all these oddities add to what Darwin called "fine, vigorous, adventurous fun". And as you walk around the course it is easy to be reminded of the last verse of John Betjeman's poem, Seaside Golf, which was inspired by the 13th hole at St Enodoc:

*"Ah! seaweed smells from sandy caves  
And thyme and mist in whiffs,  
In-coming tide, Atlantic waves  
Slapping the sunny cliffs,  
Lark song and sea sounds in the air  
And splendour, splendour everywhere."*

A splendour enhanced by Dymond and his gems: pictured from left, Mike Lane, Charlie Bosley, Steve Evans, Mike Bosley, Graham Mitchell, Malcolm Bosley and Stuart Dymond.



**Above: Stuart Dymond admires one of the best views in golf - the Camel Estuary, Padstow and St Enodoc golf course from the 18th tee**



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