

Phil Chiverton is a Course Manager whose progressive ideas are ensuring that The Buckinghamshire becomes one of the best new clubs in the country.

The dates of Captain's Day, Club Championship, Pro-Ams and any regional and national tournaments due to be played at a club can usually be seen ringed in black ink on the office calendar. They are invariably preceded by an intensive programme of work designed to bring the course to its peak, looking its magnificent best, on just the right weekend.

At one new club, however, it is slightly different. The Buckinghamshire, in Denham, a few miles off the M25, is maintained at its absolute peak at all times with presentation given the number one priority.

The Course Manager is Phil Chiverton who masterminds the policy of ensuring the course is seen at its Sunday best, seven days a week, 52 weeks a year.

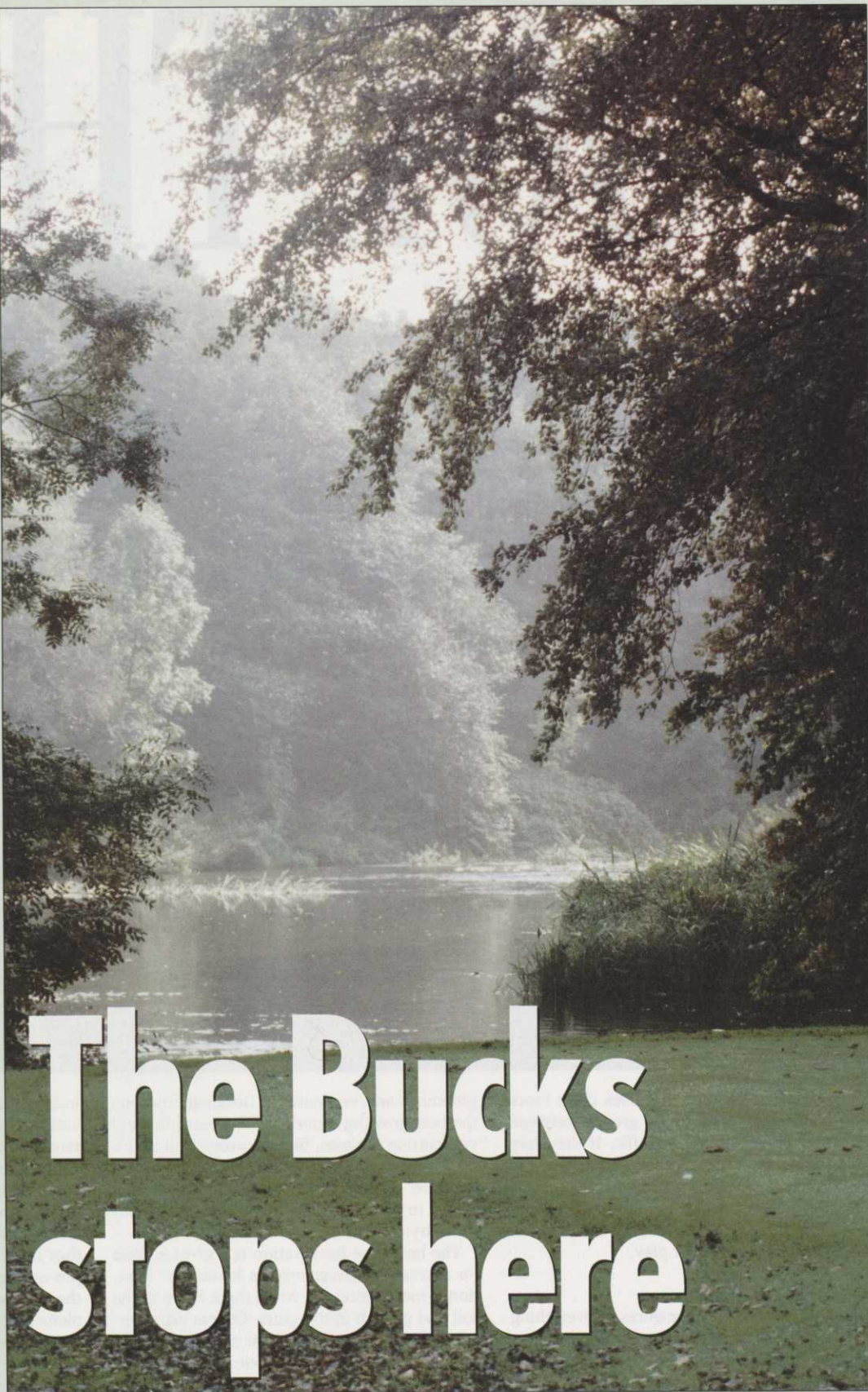
"We hand mow greens right throughout the summer and the winter to avoid triplex ring wear and tear. We also hand mow tees, collars and approaches and will have eight people out on walk behind mowers at any one time in the morning which takes four hours," explained 27 year-old Phil, who previously worked under Chris Kennedy at Wentworth, looking after the West Course.

The care is not confined to the greens, though, as it is normal practice to box off on fairways and collect all the clippings all year round.

"If we didn't hand mow greens and tees and box off clippings it would allow us to do a lot of the other jobs like bunker maintenance but presentation takes a high priority at The Buckinghamshire," explained Phil, who has a full time staff of 11 excluding himself.

"Luckily I've got the resources to maintain the high standard of presentation but I would still like two months to prepare for a big tournament. For a club competition a couple of weeks notice is all that we would need to polish off and get the course up to scratch."

Phil has been at the prestigious new Japanese-owned club since May 1990 just after it was constructed, and been involved all the way through as First Assistant under Kevin Munt, who has since moved up to be General Manager, before being promoted to Course Manager at the beginning of '94.



The Bucks stops here

"Initially I looked after the irrigation system, a Toro Network 300. We hope to update this to a CDS next year. We have wall to wall irrigation pumping about 400 gallons a minute. It's all mains water and we spend £25,000 a year on water bills."

Phil began his greenkeeping career at Bridport and West Dorset GC before moving to Wentworth where his immediate boss was Jim McKenzie, now

Course Manager at Celtic Manor.

The decision to move from one of the most illustrious, high profile courses in the country to a similar position on a course still to be built was one a lot of young greenkeepers would not have made. But Phil was tempted.

"This course was such a new development with new Bent grasses, high maintenance and I decided I wanted a change. I felt that I had spent long enough at

Wentworth there was not anything more to gain from being there. I wasn't really moving ahead quickly enough," he explained.

It is a decision which has certainly paid off and it has allowed Phil to do things his own way.

"It is a new course and there are lot of improvements to be made. There are a lot of scraggy areas which could be improved upon and Rye grass was the only



real option. There are not many grasses which withstand wear and tear better than the Rye grasses or Dwarf Rye grasses these days. It helps with presentation and uniformity of cut and even playing surface. The benefit to the golfer is that the ball tends to sit up more on the fairway. You don't get as a big divot with a Rye grass fairway as you do with a Creeping Bent grass fairway.

"The down side is that it grows a lot more, particularly if you keep the nutrition up as we do here. You have got to keep mower blades very sharp as Rye grass is very tough to cut but you can rip it very easily. However it doesn't need as much verticutting, top dressing and hollow coring as Creeping Bent grass does.

"My main priority at the moment is to put bands of Rye grass around the greens. We get a turf cutter and strip off round the green and turf with 100% rye grass and bring that back down to collar height. It prevents poa from creeping in from the edges and onto the putting surfaces."

'I do tissue tests regularly to determine the amount of nutrient on the leaf which allows me to determine when the plants need another feed.' PHIL CHIVERTON

"I've also been working on the root development on the greens and managed to get down to about six inches – we did have that down to an inch but we've got rid of that completely now. This was thanks to a more intensive verticutting and slitting programme and cutting out. We put on a light top dressing at least once a fortnight in the summer depending upon the conditions and instead of mowing the following day go over it with the turf iron.

"We also try to water the greens better and rather than do a little bit every night try to do a flood once a week and hand water in between so roots go down to find water rather than

sitting in a wet moist layer on top all the time.

Another policy which Phil has introduced should help to take the guess work out of the introducing of nutrition.

"This year, working with Scotts, we now know exactly how much nutrition we are putting on the course at any one time rather than doing it on an ad hoc basis. We're basing it on kilogrammes per hectare of nitrogen, phosphorous and potassium. I keep a record of how many grammes go on per square metre.

"For example I've just finished putting 389 kilos of nitrogen, 34 kilos of phosphorous and 397 kilos of potassium on the greens.

"The benefits are financial on

one side and I do tissue tests regularly to determine the amount of nutrient on the leaf which allows me to determine when the plants need another feed. I've got records of that right throughout the whole year so it's given me a much more scientific approach. It is the way greenkeeping is going now. It takes guesswork out of it.

It is quite a daunting prospect for a young greenkeeper to be managing a top golf course with a £500,000 a year budget and a staff which, with seasonal workers, rises to 18 in the summer.

"I found it difficult at first to move into a more sedentary, desk bound, job but I'm now beginning to enjoy it because it was more of a challenge. I was more of a hands on person but now I'm behind a desk or a computer a lot more.

"I do an annual programme, a monthly programme, have a senior staff meeting once a week to discuss the work ahead and give a sheet to the Head Greenkeeper and he gets on with it. I'm not involved in when the greens and tees get cut or the bunkers



are raked.

The Buckinghamshire boasts £500,000 worth of equipment with £140,000 worth bought this year as part of a five year replacement programme.

Jamie Bennett of Grass Roots Ltd sponsored him to go to San Francisco last year for the GCSAA Conference.

"I went on a two day James Beard course on Basic Physiology and Anatomy of Turf Grasses and that was just brilliant. Americans are much more advanced and professional in their greenkeeping although I think were getting better at it.

"I now have enough points to do the Master Greenkeeper Award so might like to do it next year.

"During my visit to California I hired a car and drove down to Pebble Beach and the Monterey Peninsula Spyglass Hill, links at Spanish Bay. I walked around Cypress Point and it was just

MACHINERY LIST

Three Jacobsen LF 100s	One Kubota 5450 with loader
Two Jacobsen Greenskings	One Kubota 4200
Two Jacobsen Trikings	One Kubota 1750
Four Toro GR1000 Pedestrian Greens Mowers	One Toro Fairway Aerator
Four Jacobsen 22" Pedestrian Greens Mowers (used for tees)	One Jacobsen Hollow Corer
One Toro 4500	One 2m Vertidrain
One Ransomes T51	One Sisis Twinplay with Brush and Spiker
Two Kubota F2400s	One Hardi NK600 Sprayer
Two Toro Sandpros	One Farmura Turf Iron
Four Jacobsen 810 Express Utility Vehicles	One Ryan Mataway
Toro Workman with deep slitter, Vicon Varispreader Top Dresser and box	One Ryan Turfcutter
Two Cushman Trucksters with Vicn Variaspreader and AMP 300 Hardi Sprayer	One Charterhouse 2m Overseeder
One Massey Ferguson 362	One Hayter Scarifier 308
	Two Sisis Drop Seeders
	One Richard Long Scarifier Collector
	One Woodchipper
	Two Fraser Trailers
	One Sorrel Roller

unbelievable, *Poa Annua* everywhere, including the greens, but the setting of the bay and the design of the course is just incredible.

"I pick up ideas from books and other greenkeepers. I keep in touch with Andy Wood at London GC and Martin Jones at The Oxfordshire a lot. They are similar types of golf clubs and operations – all Creeping Bent grass greens and fairways and we often get together and talk about the way we do things.

"Clubs are often too secretive. If we got together more perhaps we could help each other out a bit. Dealing with things like *Poa Annua*," he said.

Phil has become a close friend of Jamie Bennett and is a member of the recently launched Barenbrug/Grass Roots Go Parting team but he also appreciates the work that Grass Roots does.

"The benefit of working with

Grass Roots is great from a service point of view. When I first became Course Manager I was constantly on the phone to about six different companies chasing up materials, supplies, prices and quotes. I got Jamie in and talked through my whole programme in November '94.

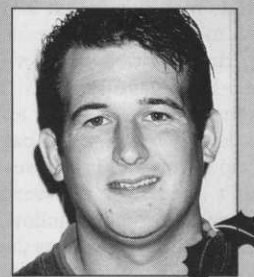
The benefits of working for a Japanese funded club are immense but they also lead to some extra work which wouldn't normally have been budgeted for.

"We're owned by Asahi Breweries in Tokyo and the Managing Director during one of his visits said he wanted the greenkeeping sheds painted because he didn't like the colour. We had to go ahead and get that done in a hurry," said Phil.



Phil (centre) with some of his team

WHAT I'D LIKE FOR CHRISTMAS



Dean Jones, Gerrard's Cross GC:

"Either a machine which can pick up every single leaf from a green or getting a fat cat water boss as a member of our course."

