

**Serious hollow-coring comes to the rescue for Nefyn Golf Club, whenever their troublesome neighbour – a stormy sea – decides to pay a visit. Chris Boiling reports from North Wales.**

**N**efyn and District Golf Club has bought a new Kubota tractor. Driving through North Wales to the course I wondered if a boat might not have been a better buy. The roads through the Snowdonia National Park were more like rivers and the fields looked more like lakes. Villages just six miles from the course were on a red flood alert. Yet when I arrived at the 27-hole club, the new Grandel L4200 was on the 17th green, driving across it at creep speed with a Verti-drain pumping away on the back.

Some of the credit can go to Kubota, for developing a 45hp tractor that will let you do this, but a lot more must go to course manager Pat McAteer and his intensive aeration programme.

And when I say intensive I mean I-N-T-E-N-S-I-V-E: Verti-draining his oldest greens four times from September to December and doing his nine new USGA-spec greens twice since they opened in April '94. "It gives them a good profile," says 38-year-old Pat, who has worked on the course for 13 years, five as course manager.

The programme starts in September using 6in solid tines on the old greens. A month later they Verti-drain again with 9in tines. Then, at monthly intervals throughout the winter, they continue with 12ins tines. The new greens, which opened when they were 16 months old, receive injections from 7in and 8in tines.

The tees are treated similarly to the old greens but to a maximum depth of 8ins. On the fairways, which are done once a year, his staff of four qualified greenkeep-

# Against the odds

ers use 10ins tines on the oldest holes and 8in tines on the new course. Twice in the middle of October he used a Ransomes TM80 to spoon tine and slit them, then followed it up a couple of days later with the Kubota pulling a Sisis Brush to brush in the dried-out sand and soil from the cores while a Jacobsen TriKing and Toro 216 were used to box off the fibrous parts. The fairways are also slit-tined 15 times through the winter and hollow-tined.

Providing there is suitable weather, the greens and tees are

*Extract from Nefyn and District Golf Club minutes (1939)*

"It was decided this winter to employ only one man. JP Hughes was selected. His duties will be to look after the sheep on weekdays and Sundays. In addition he will be required to keep the first nine holes in playing order and maintain mowers and other implements in good condition. He will be supplied with a dog and his wages will be increased to £2 a week to cover the cost of feeding the dog."

slit-tined every week, alternating four, six and nine inch tines. Often the greens are hollow-cored before being Verti-drained. Pat has been doing this for the past six years and is pleased with the results. "It closes the hollow-core holes

vertically and leaves a good putting surface," he says. Sometimes he will leave the holes open to wash out salt water blown onto the cliff-top course from the nearby Irish Sea.

In 1991, after a bad storm, so much salt water swept up over the cliffs and onto the 87-year-old course that Pat lost six greens, six

fairways and 17 tees. To win the greens back they washed them down, slit-tined them, washed them again, hollow-tined them three times, washed them down, and then filled in the holes with topdressing and seed. The seed germinated well but there was still too much salt deep down which killed the grass. So they saturated the greens with water, hollow-tined them seven times, top-dressed them and seeded them with pure bents. Six months after the storm they were back to normal.

The fairways took a

little longer because the green-staff couldn't totally remove the contaminated structure as they had with the greens. But they slit-tined, hollow-cored, washed, scarified and overseeded them back to health, although a few scars remain on the 13th hole.

These fairways have also been receiving annual applications of Gem Professional 12:4:6 with 1.2% magnesium and 1% iron, a 17-week slow release fertiliser that, according to Pat, "works wonders". As the damaged fairways get back to normal this will be cut down to an application once every four years.

However, some good did come out of all this heartache. The storm and subsequent damage prompted the club to buy some adjacent land and to build an extra nine "inland" holes, designed by the STRI's DD Wishart. These opened last spring and have been widely acclaimed. The Welsh Golf Union has already booked them for the Welsh Over-25 Amateur Championship this year and the Welsh Boys Open in 1998.

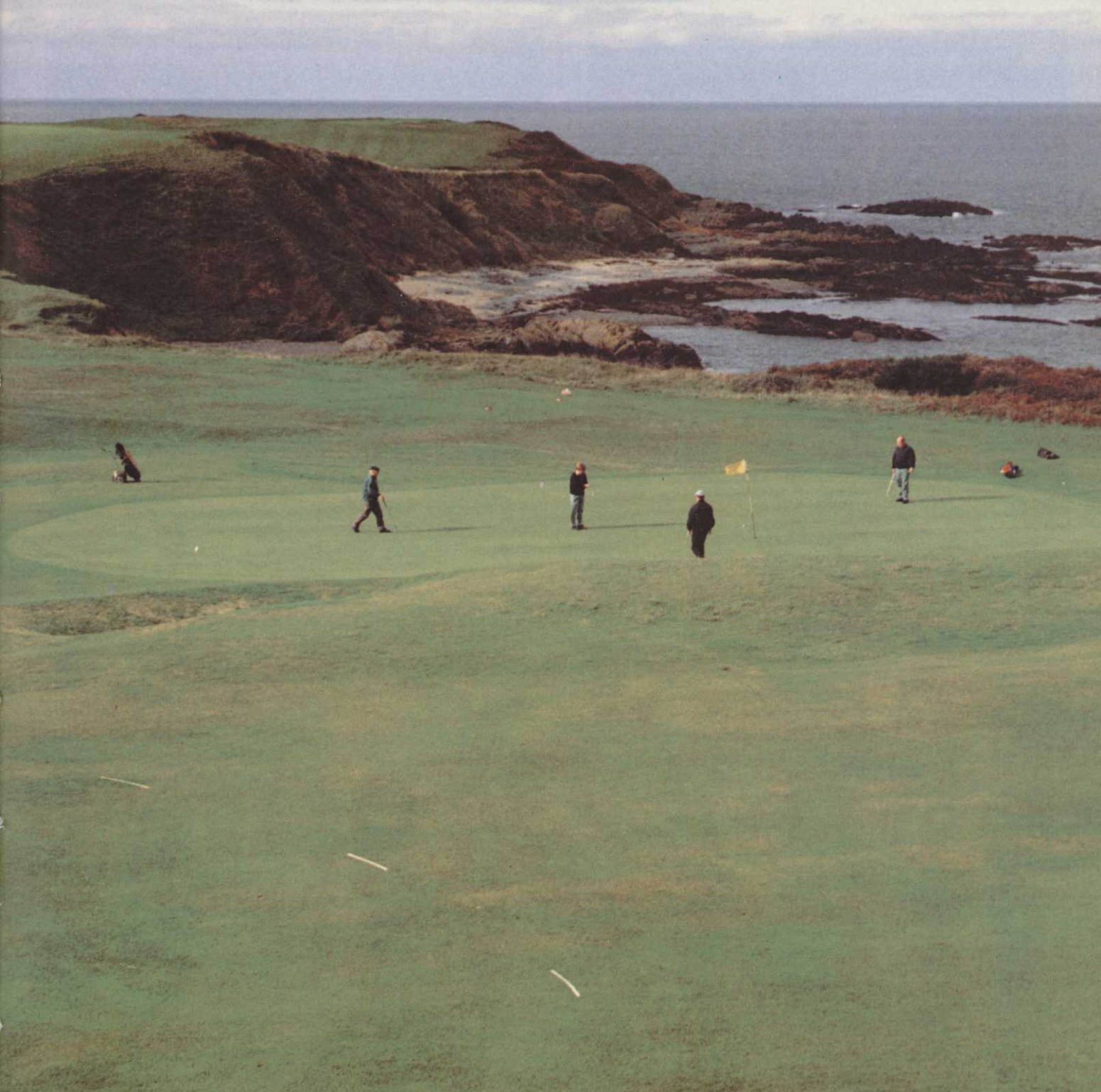
The storm also prompted the club to upgrade its Toro irrigation system which is used more to wash away the salt than it is to water the greens and tees. As part of this upgrade, all the remaining tees and all 27 fairways will be connected up later this year.

### Three types of green

The Nefyn greenstaff have three different types of green to maintain: there are the old ones which date back to 1907, the new ones and four built in 1975/76. Eventually all the greens will match the new ones as the old greens



Pat McAteer, Nefyn's course manager, left, with his team



The rugged coastline provides a picturesque backdrop to the 1st green. But looks can be deceptive... storms have wreaked havoc at Nefyn Golf Club

**Britain's  
leading  
Top Dressing  
supplies**

## *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  
divotting 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**

# Supaturf go one step beyond at...



SEE US ON  
STAND

**A4**

... with **NEW**  
performance  
products for  
every water  
management need.

Products that are  
a step beyond  
all other water  
management  
products  
currently  
available to the worlds turf industry.



## Supaturf

**SUPATURF PRODUCTS LTD**  
AMENITY HOUSE · 2 MAIZEFIELD  
HINCKLEY · LEICESTERSHIRE LE10 1YF  
TEL: 01455 234677 · FAX: 01455 234714

AD  
REF  
164



Results of Verti-draining after hollow-coring

are being rebuilt to a USGA-spec at the rate of two a year. Nine greens are left to do in the next four years.

The biggest difference in maintaining such diverse greens, according to Pat, is shown in the use of fertiliser. The new greens receive 6:0:9 with iron and magnesium and the old ones are given 6:0:6 with magnesium and iron to start them off, followed by 8:0:0 with iron. To make sure he's on the right tracks, Pat sends soil samples to the STRI every year and soon will be receiving annual visits from the STRI's Roger Evans.

But Pat, who is studying for his City and Guilds phase 4 at Reaseheath Agricultural College, is pleased with the way it's going. "We're managing it quite well and hopefully we'll improve as the years go by. The people who play here have seen an improvement every year, and that's very rewarding," he told us.

As well as constructing greens, the five-man team has been busy reshaping bunkers (making them deeper to stop wind blow), making new walkways and putting railway sleepers in trenches ("so they need less maintaining").

Pat has a 'consumables' budget of £50,000 which is going on new signs, toilet block, shelters, fertiliser, topdressing, sand and seed. He also has a capital budget of £25,000-32,000 a year for the next five years. The Kubota Grandel L4200, which is mainly used for Verti-draining in the winter and mowing fairways up to twice a week in the summer, is the latest addition to the club's impressive list of machinery. His other star addition is a John Deere Gator 4x2 which he uses for general running around the course and to collect cores from greens. He reckons this machine, which is driven onto the green, saves him half an hour per green and one man - three instead of four of his staff are now used to clear the cores.

When you've only got five people maintaining 27 holes, every

saving like this is useful. Another cost-effective thing he does is hire Amenity Land Services in the spring to spray the fairways and rough. Their two machines take six hours to do the 130 acres. Pat says it would take his staff with their machines a week (and that's if the weather was kind to them!)

Judging by the weather I witnessed on my visit to this beautiful part of Wales, it's hard to imagine the Telford firm getting a clear six hours to do their job.

"It's not always like this, in summer it's beautiful. You can see Ireland and Anglesey from here, as well as the mountains and sea," says Pat.

"I'll just have to come back then. At least I know the greens will be dry - whatever the weather. And in case it does rain while I'm out on the course I'm told there is a pub, the Ty Coch Inn, in a picturesque cove two thirds of the way round the Old course. Another idea from Nefyn that other clubs would do well to copy.

### EQUIPMENT

- 2 Toro 3000s (one petrol, one diesel)
- 1 Toro 216
- 1 Jacobsen TriKing
- 1 Casey 485 tractor
- 1 Massey Ferguson 135
- 1 Kubota 1750
- 1 Kubota Grandel L4200
- 1 John Deere Gator
- 1 Ransomes Hydraulic 5 gang mower
- 1 Lloyd's gang
- 1 Verti-drain
- 1 Sisis Vemo
- 1 Vacume
- 1 Charterhouse Topdresser
- 1 Sisis Auto-Rotorake
- 1 Topper
- 2 Ransomes Autocertes
- 1 Trailer
- 2 Flymos
- 2 Strimmers
- 1 Mole drain
- 1 Sisis Brush
- 1 Charterhouse slitter
- 1 Ransomes TM80
- 1 Hardi Sprayer
- 3 Verticut units