

**John Nicholson has just chalked up 25 years at Longridge Golf Club, in Preston, and he recalls his first days the club and some of the early highlights.**

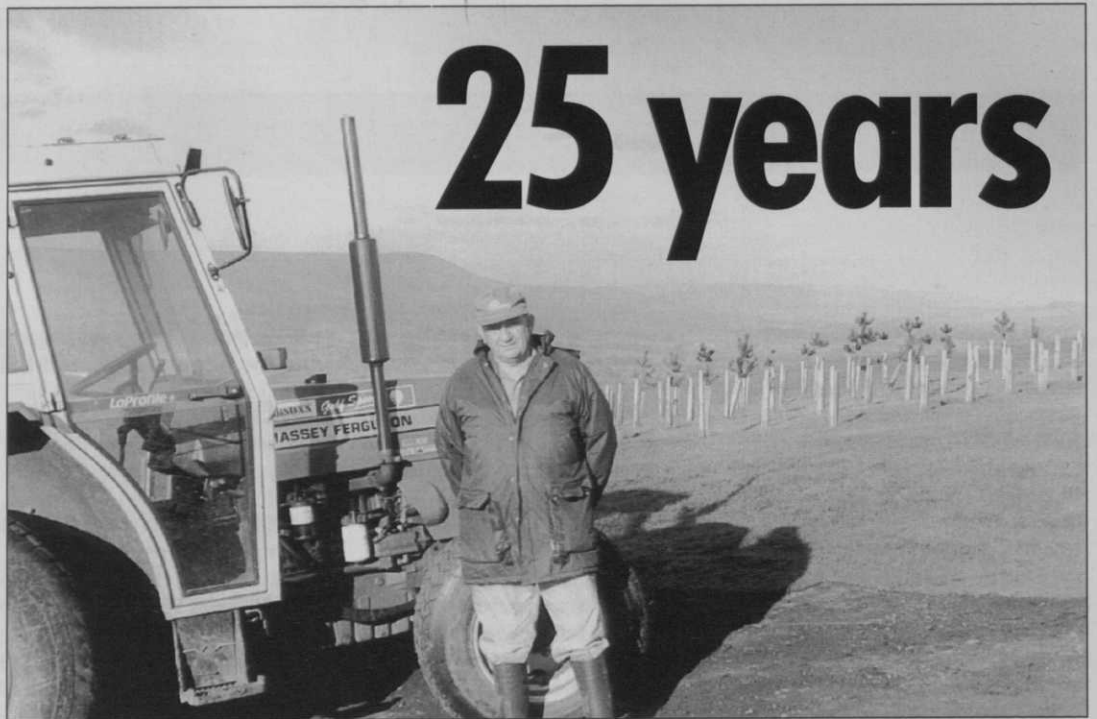
**B**eing presented with a gift for 25 years service to Longridge Golf Club prompted me to look back through my records and it brought back some early memories.

I'd just got married and the need to earn enough for a mortgage made me look for a better paid job. Landscape gardening fitted this need and so I became a landscape gardener and bought a house in Longridge. In July of 1970, however, I was made redundant and the "Employment Exchange" asked had I tried to get a job at Longridge Golf Club, as there had been a vacancy there. After visiting the club I received a message asking me to go up to the Club to meet the Greens Chairman.

A walk on the course revealed that much work was going on as it was being extended from nine holes to 18. It was explained to me that I would be involved with the extension along with the maintenance of the existing nine holes. I was contacted again and asked to attend a meeting at the Clubhouse with another candidate and we were told the Committee could not decide to which of us to offer the job, but as they had all the work of the extension to the course they would employ both of us and a lot of the construction work could be done by us. We asked what other staff worked there and were told none.

On starting I carried on with the practice of record keeping I'd done while landscape gardening and still do, so the following information is from this record.

The greenkeeping shed was an 8' x 16' ex-poultry cabin. It contained two pedestrian controlled hand mowers, a barrow, some peat, a Sisis rotorake, a cyclone spreader and a few hand tools. Outside was a B250 International tractor and loader, a triple set of greens ranger gangs, a tractor mounted rotary mower and a tractor. Against the wall was a pile of timber and some corrugated iron sheets. It was explained that they were to build a bigger shed and more machines had been purchased and would arrive when it had been built.



# 25 years

## at the same club

During the next few weeks meetings were held in the evening to discuss the course and development, and instruct us on such things as hole moving. A drainage contractor installed some drains on part of the development and a tractor, an International 414 and a set of 3 point link mounted Ransome gangs, plus another pedestrian controlled greens mower, which had been away for repair, were delivered.

The end of September – tractor shed erected by two joiners with us acting as labourers. It was an open fronted shed with a dry stone wall acting as the back and the corrugated iron used for the sides and top.

Early October – disease started to appear on the greens and these were sprayed with Verdasan using a knapsack sprayer. An autumn feed was also applied. We also took delivery of a Sisis Auto-

greensman and made a start on slitting the greens. During the autumn of that year most of the new greens had been constructed by a contractor and turfed.

End of October – some cattle got onto the course and walked across one of the greens. This was repaired before dinner. On returning to the green to clear up and leave the area tidy, the hoof marks were back on the green but there was no sign of the cattle. It is obvious what had happened but they had appeared as if by magic. Incidents such as these stick on your mind. In early November the other man left and I was on my own. I suppose I was the Head Greenkeeper.

It was decided to buy fertiliser for the following year in order to beat any price rise and as we had nowhere to store it another cabin was bought and duly erected. I also attended my first demonstration/open day. This was by Sisis at Old Trafford cricket ground.

During the summer in order to save costs the members had been constructing tees, and we divided our time between maintaining the course and the development. In the autumn the tees which had been constructed were turfed. The turf used in the construction was cut from the area to be used for the car park and the practice area. The winter months were spent clearing drains, building tees, and generally making what had been fields into a golf course.

1971 – In the spring the greens

### 'The greenkeeper is your friend'

1996 at Longridge Golf Club – following the presentation of the prizes for the Presidents Day competition a special presentation of a silver tray, decanter and glasses was made to John E. Nicholson for 25 years service to Longridge Golf Club.

On accepting the gift John thanked the Club and said that he had been thinking about greenkeeping and greenkeepers and what they meant to different people.

To the man in the street he cuts grass in summer and plays cards in winter. To some golfers he is the person who has not mown the grass the ball has landed in. He puts the hole in bad places and digs up and alters things when they have just got right.

However, a greenkeeper is a

machine operator, mechanic, botanist, weather forecaster, architect, constructor, gardener, ecologist, irrigation engineer, manager and above all a diplomat. So days can be good, bad but never boring.

So what has greenkeeping done for him? Enabled him to work in beautiful surroundings. Be part of the development of the course. Enabled him to attend seminars, exhibitions and be part of the greenkeepers support team at the Open. And he was always proud to say he was from Longridge.

He thanked his family, especially his wife, who had been there at the end of those bad days, and the club once again and said he would leave the golfers present with a thought.

"The greenkeeper is really your friend".

were fed, solid tined and dressed with sand. A fly mower and another Greens Zepher was purchased. The work was mainly mowing and general tidying of the course. Although the time up to now had been concentrated on greens, tees and fairways, the rough had been let to grow, this would have to be dealt with. It was mown, made into hay and carted off by a local farmer. Up to the present time the rough on the existing course had only been cut once a year (before Captain's Day) and made into hay. This year it was all going to be cut for hay. The policy was then to keep the rough down, so the following winter the stones were removed. It was soon discovered that a lot of the stones were just below the surface. These cause damage to gang mower when they became exposed so a flail mower was purchased. Although it is not used on the rough now - 25 years on - it proved to be the ideal machine in those early days.

Presidents Day - The 18 holes were played for the first time. As there had been very little money available for the building of the extension many members had given up their golf in order to assist. They had dug out and picked up rocks, dismantled and carted away dry stone walls surrounding the fields which were to become the course. All this stone was used under greens and tees.

It has been estimated that 6,000 tons of stone were moved, 1,000 tons of ashes, 5,000 tons of topsoil carted and levelled, 9,500 square yards of turf laid and 8,000 field tiles.

I had been employed to work a 40 hour week, however, it had been a case of working six days a week with never under 50 hours in summer and dawn till dusk in winter, but we had got there. As time and finance had been concentrated on providing 18 greens with appropriate tees, no bunkers had been built and tees were small but this would be put right in the following years as finance became available.

Twenty-five years later this has and is still being done and I still feel this was the correct way forward. The rest of the growing season was taken up mainly with mowing, although the greens were given an autumn feed with the new greens having been occupied first to produce a better putting surface.

#### ANSWERS TO QUIZ ON PAGE 42

1. Janet Adamson,
2. James McEvoy, 3. Sami Collins, 4. Louise Lunn,
5. Neil Thomas, 6. Amanda Freeman, 7. Pauline Thompson, 8. Ken Richardson,
9. John Pemberton,
10. Scott MacCallum

#### (mis)adventures of Gordon the Greenkeeper



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