

# Inside the STRI



At the hub: Anne Wilson, External Affairs Manager with the central filing system

**The Sports Turf Research Institute is an institution in the truest sense of the word but what really goes on on a day to day basis? Scott MacCallum paid it a visit.**

Everyone knows of the STRI. Most people actually know that it stands for the Sports Turf Research Institute. A fair proportion know that it is based in Bingley and that it produces the rankings of grass seed every year in "Turf Grass Seed". But how many people actually know what

else the Institute does, how many people it employs and how it all began?

It may surprise you to know that the STRI has a staff of 60 split into several departments. There are turfgrass agronomists, including eight regionally based throughout the UK and Ireland, a chemistry laboratory, a pathology laboratory, a soil physics and a cultivar team, a construction team, a golf course architect, an ecologist, a team of groundsmen and administrative staff.

"We are fundamentally a

research centre and service and information provider," explained External Affairs Manager, Anne Wilson. "First and foremost we are a provider of information and secondly we supply a service through the information we provide."

The Institute has widened its remit since it was originally established, on its present site at Bingley, by the R&A and the Home Golf Unions in 1929 as The Board of Greenkeeping Research.

Then it was purely for golf and it was not until 1951, when it became the Sports Turf Research

Institute, that it was expanded to include other sports as it was seen that what was appropriate for golf turf was also appropriate for other sportsturf.

"We are the national centre within the UK for sports and amenity turf and are internationally recognised for the research that the Institute does. Mike Canaway and Steve Baker work closely with the United States Golf Association Greens Section and Steve was on the Advisory Committee for the recent revision of the USGA Greens Construction Guidelines.

\*\*\* MISSION FOR THE 1990'S - ROOT OUT ALL COLONIES OF DRY PATCH - SEARCH AND DESTROY \*\*\*

## alleviate

tenside hydrophobe technology

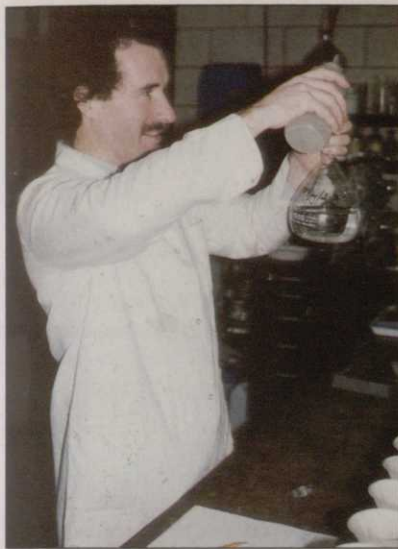
whilst wetting agents  
treat the symptoms, **alleviate** uses  
innovative tenside hydrophobe technology  
to attack and treat the cause  
of DRY PATCH

**alleviate** breaks down the hydrophobic  
barrier coating the surface of soil  
particles, allowing water to penetrate  
the rootzone

unsurpassed  
technology

**SERVICE  
CHEMICALS**

Developed and manufactured by:  
Service Chemicals plc, 17 Lanchester Way, Royal Oak  
Industrial Estate, Daventry, Northants, NN11 5PH.  
Tel: 01327 704444; Fax: 01327 871154  
email: [servicechm@aol.com](mailto:servicechm@aol.com)  
web pages: <http://members.aol.com/servchemuk>



The right mix: Dr David Lawson, Chemist



Sunny outlook: STRI trials grounds and weather station



Lab work: Dr Catherine York, Pathologist

"We are self financing in the main but also receive other funding from sports governing bodies. For example the R&A for golf and the TCCB for research into cricket pitches," explained Anne.

The Institute is backed by the Sports Council for the good of sport in the UK and the Council has an observer on our members' body, the committee which allows us to maintain our links with the sporting organisations.

"We are also involved with the Sports Council on the distribution of lottery money and we assist with the undertaking of feasibility studies – including the one which resulted in Hampshire County Cricket Club's successful bid for a new ground.

Other money comes from commercial research.

One of the principal duties of the Institute every year is the publishing of Turf Grass Seed, the bible for anyone choosing new grass seed.

"The Seed trade funds most of the trials on new grass seed – there are over 6,000 plots of grass in the trials programme – and these results are published annually.

"They are released at Saltex and the industry gets quite anxious about the publication of the results as the companies want to see their names at the top of the lists."

The results are objective and do not say which is the top company. What they do say is that in certain circumstances varieties performed in a certain way.

Since Mike Canaway took charge and Anne Wilson became External Affairs Manager there has been a significant change in the Institute's image and structure.

"It would be fair to say that the Institute had become insular and we waited for people to come to us rather than us going to them," said Anne.

As Mike Canaway says in the latest issue of the Bulletin:

"Structural change was necessary to both clarify corporate objectives and to assist with the development of new initiatives. For many years STRI had, on the one hand acted as a centre for research, receiving donations from governing bodies of sports for this work. On the other hand it aimed to provide a commercial, advisory and consultancy service. Sometimes these objects were in conflict, for example, if a governing body donated money for research the accusation could be levelled that this was "propping up" the advisory and consultancy side.

"There was also a 'Catch 22' with the financial management. If, as a Company Limited by Guarantee we broke even, this made the commercial aspects seem less than efficient. If, on the other hand, we recorded a surplus there was a potential deterrent for donors to research," explained Mike in his Editorial.

For that reason, as of the beginning of this year, the STRI advisory and consultancy services were transferred to a limited company, STRI Ltd, while the research work remains in the original Scientific Research Organisation.

The changes follow a revamp of the Institute's image which took place in 1995.

With that in mind last year a new image was unveiled complete with a new logo.

"The new logo came about when, not long after I had joined, it became clear that what we were all about in the Institute was first and foremost turfgrass. We are about how turfgrass is applied to sport but we are not strictly a sporting body.

The original logo was extremely clever and incorporated lots of sports – every ball you could possibly use in sport – but it was not what we were about.

"We are about turfgrass and everything which goes to make it grow including root zones, sand, chemical analysis, diseases and the advisory side. Hence the reason our new logo displays grass," explained Anne.

"We've gone back to our grass roots, as it were," she added with a smile.

Anne has also worked hard to give the Institute's various departments a more corporate look.

"Initially everything that was produced by us was individual and didn't possess a common

look. Each department had their own way of doing things, there was a lack of continuity and no-one in a marketing role to create a corporate image," said Anne, who stepped into the marketing role in '95.

One of her main tasks has been to revamp the Institute's publications including the Turfgrass Bulletin, which had been introduced in 1951 and had remained as a small black and white publication for many years.

"In '95, the decision was taken that we needed something more



DAISY  
(*Bellis perennis*)

## GONE WITH THE WIND

AT A GOLF COURSE NEAR YOU.

A WEEDFREE PRODUCTION

# Inside the STRI

commercial, in addition to the Journal which had become more scientific and only circulated to those people who requested it."

The launch of the Turfgrass Bulletin in April 1996 coincided with the organisational changes within STRI and the launch of the STRI's new logo and corporate image.

The new International Sports Turf Bulletin is full colour A4 size and contains advertising previ-



Dr Mike Canaway, Chief Executive, left and Dr Stephen Baker, Senior Research Officer and Head of Laboratory Services

ously reserved for the Journal.

"It has a circulation of 5,500 and goes to all subscribers including golf clubs, sports clubs, local authorities, education, Sports Associations and Governing Bodies, trade contractors, greenkeepers, groundsmen and colleges.

The Journal continues to be produced annually as a scientific research publication.

With education becoming ever more important the STRI also offers training courses including the Open Learning Training Modules, launched at BTME this year. Operated in conjunction with the GTC the written modules provide greenkeepers with theoretical knowledge for work place assessment at NVQ/SVQ Level 2. To support these written modules there is a series of three one-week long residential training courses.

With the new structure, image and other initiatives it seems that the Sports Turf Research Institute is well prepared to tackle the demands of the future in an increasingly competitive industry.



STRI trial grounds - a plot showing a wide variety of grass species

To celebrate **21 years** in the industry

## Bailey's of Norfolk

announce the introduction of the

### "Greenkeeper's Charter"

The "Charter" is a commitment to supply Turfdressings, Root Zones, Divot and Tee Dressings that are of the highest quality. Our own "in-house" Soil Analysis Laboratory, allows us to ensure that:

- ❖ Every load you receive is accompanied by an **up-to-date laboratory analysis**
- ❖ The **pH** value is clearly stated
- ❖ The dressings particle size fall within the parameters recommended by the **USGA**
- ❖ The **quality and consistency** of dressings supplied is continually monitored
- ❖ The raw materials used are continually analysed for suitability
- ❖ Provision of a **FREE** on-site sampling and analysis of your greens
- ❖ We can provide a **FREE** analysis of your current dressings
- ❖ You receive technical and informational back-up
- ❖ **21 years** of experience in the top soil business, is used to support Greenkeepers.

## Bailey's of Norfolk

*Turf Dressings that meet the highest specification and a commitment to support Greenkeepers.*

Brick Kiln Road, Hevingham, Norwich, Norfolk NR10 5NL

**Tel: 01603-754607**

