

TALKING

Six of the country's top men give their views on some of the things they consider to be "Tops"

You're the tops

Compiled by Malcolm Huntington MBE



Name: Eddie Adams
Course: St Andrews Links - Old Course
Region: Scotland
Type of Course: Links
Number of Holes: 18
Number of Staff: 21



Name: Phil Baldock
Course: Ganton GC
Region: Northern
Type of Course: Inland links
Number of Holes: 18
Number of Staff: Five, plus two apprentices



Name: John Wells
Course: Brocket Hall Golf Club
Region: Midland
Type of Course: One parkland, one woodland
Number of Holes: 36, plus one nine-hole par three practice course
Number of Staff: 23 (including gardeners and mechanics)



Name: Chris Kennedy
Course: The Wentworth Club
Region: South East
Type of Course: Heathland
Number of Holes: 54, plus nine hole par three and six grass tennis courts
Number of Staff: 40



Name: Jim McKenzie
Course: Celtic Manor
Region: South West and South Wales
Type of Course: American style parkland
Number of Holes: 54
Number of Staff: 58 (summer) 38 (winter)



Name: Alan Strachan
Course: Royal County Down GC
Region: Northern Ireland
Type of Course: Links
Number of Holes: 36
Number of Staff: 15

1

1. What do think has been the single greatest invention the greenkeeping industry has seen?

1. Apart from the obvious lawn mower, I would consider the aeration machine the most important invention for golf turf maintenance.

1. The hydraulic triplex mower - when mine are running well. With one of these and a range of attachments, more tasks can be completed more frequently with less labour.

1. The strimmer as it has helped to save many man hours on the general tidiness of the course, leaving time for other important jobs.

1. Power driven aeration equipment - hollow coring and core harvesters, slit-tiners, verti-drain and hydrojet.

1. Hydraulics for mowers and virtually every piece of equipment.

1. The lawnmower! Seriously, I think the best to be the verti-drain in recent times. Compaction is one of the biggest problems on courses and a machine which helps to relieve this, generally with little disturbance, would be a worthy addition to anyone's machinery fleet.

HEADS

2

2. Who is the best greenkeeper you've encountered in your career?

2. There are two - Dave Dewar for his training during my apprenticeship and Walter Woods for his guidance and support throughout my 15 years at St Andrews.

2. My dad, Rex Baldock, who achieved results without many of the resources available to us now, such as a reasonable budget, modern machinery and well-trained staff. Closely followed by Ian McMillan, at Hankley Common, a very good greenkeeper with a progressive attitude to management.

2. I greatly admire people who work on The Open venues, but Turnberry in 1994 looked superb, so I guess, George Brown.

2. Shaig Logan, of Muirfield. He prepared his course for four Opens to the highest standards. However, when you see some of the equipment he had to achieve this standard of quality and presentation it was evident just how talented he was.

2. Old Tom Morris, about whom I have read so much. He was Keeper of Greens at St Andrews from 1865-1904 and has a reputation lasting more than 100 years, despite working without resources. How many of our top people will be talked about in 100 year's time?

2. Sandy McGregor, my first boss at Montrose Links. He gave me my first chance in greenkeeping and I am grateful for that. He quickly made me realise that there is an awful lot to do in this job other than cutting grass.

3

3. If you could chose any golf course in the world, other than your own, which one would you most like to manage?

3. Difficult question, but it would have to be Pebble Beach in California because of its design, lay-out and location.

3. Hankley Common. A beautiful heathland course with the best greens I have played on. The club also has one of the most enlightened attitudes to greenkeeping, greenkeepers and course management.

3. Any British links course, as they are beautiful, peaceful and beside the sea. This is where the best golf is played in my view.

3. Cyprus Point, California, for all round setting and quality in a naturally beautiful area - and Sun City, for its achievements in very difficult surroundings.

3. Pebble Beach, California. A spectacular course with spectacular views - and I daresay a touch better weather than we enjoy!

3. Any course which allowed no play before mid-day and close one hour later, situated beside a beach with a perfect climate of warm days, blue skies and nice soft rainfall at night! Truthfully, Royal County Down is pretty close to being the best. I feel it is the most natural and attractive links course in the world, but relatively unheard of in the UK.

4

4. What is the best piece of advice you've ever been given?

4. If a job is worth doing, do it well - Dave Dewar.

4. Free advice is exactly what you pay for it. If it's not broken don't fix it - from Alex Moore, my Deputy at Royal Portrush.

4. Grass roots do not grow in the soil, they grow in the spores of the soil, which makes me realise the importance of aeration.

4. Do not leave important duties or tasks until tomorrow, as the next day's circumstances may have changed, ie weather, staffing levels, vandalism. And... never have an affair with the Captain's wife!

4. Never put off until tomorrow what you can do today - advice given to me by Chris Kennedy when we were on the staff at Hagsgs Castle a few years back.

4. To treat all employees as equals, treat them fairly and expect no more of them than what you would do yourself.

5

5. Who delivered the most memorable seminar paper you can remember and why?

5. A seminar on irrigation water analysis I attended at the GCSAA show given by Dr David Kopec and Dr Clark Throssell. It was eight hours long, but it never got tedious. They involved the audience and encouraged dialogue and debate between fellow superintendents. It was excellent.

5. Golf Course Management by John Harris/Ian McMillan. John was and maybe still is, Managing Director of a computer company and Greens Chairman at Hankley. He and Ian gave inspirational papers at a seminar which convinced me that there were at least some people involved in the management of golf courses who knew how things should be done. I have met some more at Ganton.

5. Dr Donald White, Professor of Turf Grass Science at the University of Minnesota, gave a talk at the National Conference at Egham, Surrey, in 1990, entitled "Annual Meadow Grass, the super grass". This made a lot of greenkeepers realise that some of the best greens in the world can be of high amounts of Annual Meadow Grass content, if managed well.

5. In the United States, James Beard on theory. In the United Kingdom, Walter Woods and Jack McMillan on practical theory and greenkeeper oriented skills and for all mentioned previously. Plus, mixed with his own brand of humour, George Brown on Turnberry.

5. Dr James Beard, Professor emeritus at Texas AM University, talking at Montpellier, France in 1995. He spoke for nearly two days on a variety of subjects particularly relevant to me at the time.

5. A paper presented by Jim Moore, of the USGA Greens Section, on Water Management. He presented himself and his subject very professionally and kept the audience interested throughout by getting them to participate. He made the subject interesting and humorous and explained it in a simple manner.