

TALKING HEADS

Compiled by Gareth Jones

1

Does emergency work get in the way of your pre planned winter work?

CONSTRUCTION



Name: Richard Cutler
Years as a Greenkeeper: 14
Club: Montrose Links
Course Type: Links (36 Holes)
Region: Scotland
Number of Staff: Course Manager, plus 9

Hopefully not this year. Our Medal course suffers from coastal erosion and in previous years teeing areas have been lost to the sea. We now have alternative tees ready to use on some of the most threatened holes, but you can never be exactly sure what shape we'll be in come the end of winter.



Name: Tony Smith
Years as a Greenkeeper: 42
Club: Teesside Golf Club, Stockton On Tees
Course Type: Parkland (18 Holes)
Region: Cleveland
Number of Staff: Course Manager, plus 5

Yes. To keep the course open and playable at all times is our first and foremost duty to the membership, neighbours and to conform to Health and Safety regulations.



Name: Ian Upton
Years as a Greenkeeper: 19
Club: Rye Hill Golf Club, Banbury
Course Type: Heathland (18 + 3 hole academy)
Region: Midland
Number of Staff: Course Manager, plus 4

Even the best planning cannot prevent the occasional emergency. My view on this is do deal with any emergency quickly, utilising my staff at all times to deal with the situation with minimum fuss. We work on flexible time basis and in case of extreme circumstances everybody will stay on until the job is done.



Name: Lee Squires
Years as a greenkeeper: 26
Club: Harwich & Dovercourt Golf Club, Essex
Course Type: Parkland (9 Holes)
Region: South East
Number of Staff: Head Greenkeeper, plus 2

Yes of course it would. If you have a full programme of works anything out of the ordinary is bound to have an impact. But isn't that life, not just greenkeeping?



Name: Roger Myatt
Years as a Greenkeeper: 10
Club: Knighton Heath Golf Club, Bournemouth
Course Type: Heathland (18 Holes)
Region: South West/Wales
Number of Staff: Course Manager, plus 4

Yes, emergency work can defiantly affect our pre planned work. However, typically this emergency work will only affect our pre planned ventures if it is costly or highly time consuming.



Name: David Lenham
Years as a Greenkeeper: 30
Club: Milltown Golf Club, Dublin
Course Type: Parkland (18 Holes)
Region: Ireland
Number of Staff: Golf Course Superintendent, plus 6

Not really, unless we have a semi hurricane. This happened in 1987 when we were clearing up storm damage and fallen tress, around 350 of them, for about 8 or 9 weeks. Generally any emergency work would only be short term, pumping flood water or emergency tree surgery following storm damage.



Name: Dick Gray
Years as a Greenkeeper: 25
Club: Jupiter Hills Club, Florida
Course Type: Parkland/Links (36 Holes)
Region: International
Number of Staff: Superintendent, plus 44

Hurricanes cause the problems. Last year we took two direct hits and lost over 1000 trees. Lightning is a large problem. The bigger issue is the damage done to the irrigation system. A bolt will hit a tree, move into the roots, blow the sprinkler head apart and the ensuing flood will create a hole bigger than a pick-up truck.

2

Do you like to give your team an in house project to do or do you prefer to use contractors?

All construction work is done in house. Every year we refurbish around 30 bunkers which are of the revetted type. We employ an architect when considering new tees or bunkers and then construct to agreed specifications.

Most of our construction work is done in house. They learn more and take pride in the course and the construction work carried out, alterations to greens, tees, bunkers and things along those lines. The only work carried out by contractors is tree felling and drainage work using their machines with assistance from the staff.

Wherever possible I will utilise the skills of my staff on all projects, as it is usually far more cost effective to do everything in house. However, some of the larger projects, like drainage, may need specialist machines and operators and in this case we would use a contractor.

Whatever the project or scale of the work we do here at Harwich & Dovercourt we do it in house, every time with the team of three.

We rebuilt all of our bunkers here at Knighton two years ago. This project was completed by contractors in this case. All the other work that is done on the course is normally done in house by my team. This includes tees and greens and things along those lines.

I would prefer using my own staff when possible. Of course, there are limitations to what can be undertaken using your own staff and this should be carefully considered when planning any future projects. There is no point in undertaking an in house project if you feel the maintenance of the golf course as a whole will suffer due to the staff being too stretched.

We do a lot of our projects in house for several reasons. Mainly the fact that we can do them and that our teams take pride in doing them. It also means we can control the flow and pace of the project. We have total control of the cost of the project and we can control the collateral damage of the work.

3

Which construction job are you most proud of?

Bunker work can be particularly satisfying but any job where the land has been contoured to an extent where nobody notices the join is always pleasing. A couple of winters ago we turned an untidy three surface tee complex into a nicely shaped two tier tee. It looks much better than before and now has almost double the available tee marker positions.

All our jobs are done with pride, but if we had to choose it would have to be the mounding around the course that is six metres high, goes three quarters of the way around the course, at the back of 3 greens and was built without losing one single day's golf over two years. The mound was then over-planted with trees.

I believe that the job that has given me the most satisfaction was to renovate an old sleepered bunker, which had started to collapse and become dangerous. We replaced it with a complete 360 degree bunker that was fully revetted. It took many hours and tons of turf, but was worth it.

The 200m long, large open ditch from the river to the 8th green that allowed me to drain the green.

Last October we rebuilt one green, which would not drain. We stripped the turf off, removed the soil down to the free draining undersoil. The soil was then mixed in with free draining sand and replaced with new contours. The original turf was re-laid to keep the green similar to the other on the course. The green was back in play after six months.

That's a difficult question. Probably a series of winter tees built by a team of First Assistants who were teaching two Apprentices the correct techniques involved. Their enthusiasm and pride in the quality of finish and the care they took in producing final levels, followed by excellent laying of sods made the job very gratifying to observe.

We are most proud of the improvements we make that are seamless. If we execute properly and finish correctly, golfers can't find the seams of the improvements, so it appears we did nothing. The beauty of this is no complaints and no whining, and American golfers are world class whiners.

4

How do you communicate plans and disruption to the membership?

A winter work programme is available for all members to look at. We also produce a newsletter two or three times each year which includes up coming projects and the reasons for doing them. Course walks with interested members provide a good opportunity to discuss planned construction projects.

We have a five year plan of work reviewed every three years. Members are informed via the notice board and when it gets nearer the time of the project we place a large notice on the 1st tee of starting times, rules of golf, the alteration to the course and safety to staff.

We have good communication channels so that our membership is always informed of forthcoming works. We use email and paper copy in house memos and notices on all the members' boards. We also have signage on the first tee to tell of all activities.

For any plans we have a Course Policy Statement. As for any disruption my Captain and Greens Chairman are unrivalled at notice posting, which helps a lot.

There are various ways that we can communicate with the members regarding any course issue, but espically when major work is being done. We normally use open forums at club, along with having a policy document and using the notice board to highlight upcoming plans and work.

We have a notice board dedicated to all matters related to the course. Any major reconstruction work will have been discussed at an EGM, voted on and been approved. This would be followed by a mail shot to the entire Membership to cover people not attending the EGM. We have a club magazine where important course maintenance dates can be highlighted.

We work closely with our golf professional, Bill Davis, and our Club Manager, Atilla Kartes. We have a website as well as a newsletter and we keep posting bulletins in the locker rooms and pro shop. I make myself available in the pro shop, at the first tee and the men's locker room so the information is conveyed accurately.

5

What are the main jobs you will be doing this winter?

As usual we will be refurbishing a number of bunkers on the two courses. Also this year we have identified three teeing grounds which are uneven and will be levelled.

The continuation of our bunker programme will be the main project this winter. Also we plan to remove some large trees and install new drains in four greens. We'll try to keep the course open and playable at all times during these schemes.

In addition to routine course maintenance we plan to continue up grading the bunkers by replacing the sand and renewing the drainage systems. We intend to enlarge and re level some of our tee areas. Also, we will construct some new pathways in areas of heavy footfall.

The plans for this winter are redesigning the 2nd fairway to create a Dog Leg. Also we'll open a ditch across the 2nd fairway as part of the redesign works we are doing currently. A large open ditch will appear on the 3rd too.

Rebuilding a tee and path will be this winter's major jobs. Also we will be keeping a close eye on the Electricity Board, who are running a cable through the course.

We have just started a major redesign project involving the reconstruction of seven green and tee complexes. There are also some new and realigned bunkers to be made. We are removing the existing green sods and reusing them on the new greens. This is not an in house project, but our own staff will be heavily involved with the grow in.

Recently we've rebuilt one practice range, the east tee of another range, a short game practice area and installed new collars on both courses. Of course, that didn't phase me as I was playing in Ireland. Next my plan is to be in the UK, the cradle of the game, while we completely redo our Hills' course.