

PORTSTEWART GOLF CLUB

Method used to Rebuild Old Bunkers and Build New Bunkers on Fairways and Greenside

By Bernard Findlay, Course Manager

1. It is important to have an end result in mind before starting renovation, reshaping or citing of a new bunker. In the case of Portstewart we carried out research at other Clubs such as St Andrews and Carnoustie (acknowledgement and thanks are due to the management and staff of these golf clubs). Many photographs were taken that could be shown to Greens Committee Members before work began. The end result has been a high specification bunker that is durable, repeatable in any position, easy to maintain and a pleasure to look at (from the outside at least).



2. Having decided on a particular shape, edge out the rough shape and position that you want the bunker.

3. Use a narrow gauge digger to pull out the edged material leaving a hole in which the bunker can be built. Some of this material may be required for landscaping around the bunker.

4. If drainage is required it must be carried out at this stage (how wet might this hole be in the middle of winter?).



5. Prepare a shelf inside the hole that is very firm and perfectly level all the way around



Eric O'Neill (left) and Brian McConway, Deputy Course Manager (right), two of the bunker building Greenkeepers at Portstewart.

the bunker. The shelf must roughly reflect the shape of the bunker.



6. Choice of turf used for 'revetting' is very important. We sourced a turf that is grown on a clay soil – the clay bakes hard during the summer, does not crumble like sandier turf and offers strength and durability for maintenance and play. The turf is delivered by lorry in rolls that measure 5 meters long by 740 mm wide by 50mm thick (16 1/2ft by 29in by 2in). We then roll out the turf and using a board cut the turf into lengths that are 740mm long by 250mm by 50mm thick (a reasonable size for handling and building).



7. Place one row of turf on the prepared shelf, at this point stand outside the bunker and check that the shape is as desired.

8. The wall of the bunker is built at an angle of 65 degrees, we use a wooden frame set at this angle with a spirit level set along the edge that is on the ground and check very regularly that the angle is maintained. To ensure this angle is followed we set old flag sticks on the inside edge of the first row of turf that can then be followed all the way up.



9. Place the next row of turf on the last row maintaining the same angle throughout until the desired shape and depth is obtained. It is important to backfill behind each row of turf as you build making sure the sand/soil is well packed.



10. When we reach the point that the bunker

needs to be higher at the front than the back we use a turfing iron to 'feather' the ends of the turf so they blend in with the previous row.

12. The bunker is then blended into the surrounding landscape and turfed around. We start this work in October and the bunker is open for play the following spring.



11. When the revetting is finished and before turfing around the bunker starts, we put fresh sand in the bunker. The level of sand in the bunker is maintained at 4 rows 200mm from the top edge of the bunker, at the bunkers lowest point of entry and is maintained at this level all the way around the bunker. The shape of the sand in the bunker is such that a ball entering the bunker will roll away from the immediate edge and more into the middle of the bunker making it easier for a shot to be played (the golfers prefer this!).

13. Ongoing maintenance involves daily raking and once every week blowing sand off the face of the bunker, followed by strimming and further raking. A flymo is used to cut around the top edge because in the first season of growth the grass can grow very lush in this area. The blowing of sand off the bunker face is very important otherwise sand accumulates and grass grows through the sand, and over time the face of the bunker would become steeper than 65 degrees.

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