

My R&A Scholarship at Askernish



R&A Scholar Geoff Fenn, Course Manager at Bedford & County Golf Club, recently visited Askernish through the scholarship scheme. It turned out to be the highlight of his greenkeeping career...

Proven performance across the UK



Richard Cutler
Course Manager
La Moye Golf Club

“Medallion TL quickly stopped disease and allowed turf to recover.”



Marcus Oakey
Head Greenkeeper
Moor Allerton
Golf Club

“Even with snow cover we achieved five weeks disease prevention.”



Stan Power
Head Greenkeeper
Hanbury Manor Golf Club

“The greens treated with Medallion TL came through the harsh winter period with no signs of disease.”

Eight lucky R&A Scholars recently had the opportunity to study and play at Askernish. I was one of them, and we were immediately awed by our surroundings.

We were accompanied by Paul Miller from Elmwood College, Andy Owen of Myerscough College and Steve Isaac from the R&A. Head Greenkeeper Allan MacDonald introduced us to the course with an overview of its fascinating history - from its design by Old Tom Morris in 1891 to the decline of the original layout in the 1920's and its eventual restoration in the most traditional fashion.

Our appetites whetted, we headed out onto the links for a round. It is only once out on the course you begin to realise just how special this place is. There is a stretch from the 7th tee where you encounter some of the greatest holes you could ever play. Dramatic views, brilliant design and most of all, great fun!

The greens are not visually as well manicured as golfers are used to, but this should come as no surprise as they are managed in the most natural way and the budget does not allow for any other type of approach.

Askernish is on a small island with a low population and requires a long journey to reach it. There is no passing trade!

The greens have literally just been mown down from the natural vegetation when course construction began in 2006. Maintenance is restricted to top dressing using the local dune sand mixed with a little local seaweed meal, a little iron and mowing (6mm in summer, 7mm in winter). This was my first visit to the club, but those who have visited over a number of years are full of praise for the annual improvement of the playing surfaces under this minimal maintenance approach.

The club has tried to keep the course in a traditional style - this means encountering some rabbit scrapes and broad-leaved weeds on the fairways and some coarse grasses, weeds and moss on the greens, but it all adds to the feeling that you are playing golf as it really should be.

We took a series of performance measurements of the greens, the most interesting being the Greens-tester (the holing-out test). The ball was rolled into the hole from 3ft, 6ft and 9ft and the ball was rolling straight and true.

It's a unique environment. During the winter months cattle graze the course - only the greens are protected by electric fences. Local wildlife groups are fully supportive of the course and understand the positive impact it has on the environment. The ultimate in sustainability.

I really would like to say a big thank you to the R&A, Askernish Golf Club and Paul, Steve and Andy for what was undoubtedly the highlight of my 20 years in the greenkeeping industry.



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