



CHRIS IS NEW HEAD AT PRESTWICH

Chris Harding is the new Head Greenkeeper at Prestwich Golf Club in Greater Manchester.

Previously a Deputy at Dunham Forest Golf & Country Club in nearby Eccles, Chris has joined the 18-hole parkland course with the intention of making his mark in his first Head Greenkeeper role.

He said: "It's a challenge and it's one I'm

really looking forward to. My first focus is to improve the greens because they have suffered with thatch here.

"It's a very pretty course, we've recently had a few new members join too so I want to help reach its full potential."

Chris currently has just one colleague on the greenkeeping staff although they are currently interviewing for a third member of staff.

KEITH KENSETT

Everyone at BIGGA was shocked and saddened to hear of the death of Keith Kensett of R&K Kensett in September.

One of his many good friends in the industry is Peter Bradburn, an expert in the start up of golf course businesses in the UK and Mediterranean for the past 20 years.

He said: "It is unavoidable that in a small industry such as the turf and golf sector we are all going to lose acquaintances and colleagues over the passing of the years. But the unexpected news about Keith will create a void in many people's lives.

"I was first introduced to Keith over 15 years ago, in another country on another grow-in but I was struck by his dedication and tenacity in getting the message across, his way was the right way of doing renovation maintenance and that was that!

"In the intervening years, I have listened to, discussed with and learnt from him on a whole range of subjects to do with growing good grass. It was not unusual to receive a call from him late in the evening as he returned from a job and would want to bounce an idea off you. That was the kind of guy he was and you just loved him for it: inquisitorial, inventive and resourceful.

"Knowing Keith, you inevitably got to know the his family and the extended clan that is R&K Kensett.

"My heartfelt sympathies and condolences go out to Jane and the boys during this time and the team at the family business.

"It is an overused epithet at a time like this but he shall be sadly missed in the industry; rest in peace old fella."



SWEET CHESTNUT BLIGHT UNCENSORED

Most people are now aware of the story so far surrounding the first UK finding of *Cryphonectria parasitica* (blight) in November 2011 at a farm in Warwickshire on sweet chestnut trees (*Castanea sativa*) planted in 2007 and sourced from a nursery in France.

However, tucked away in one of the mammoth reports regularly produced by the UK plant health authorities (this one by Food and Environment Research Agency [FERA]*) is an account which reveals a considerably more complex and higher risk situation.

First infected trees in the UK were indeed found in November 2011 at the unnamed Warwickshire farm, but on trees planted in different time frames and on different sites, having arrived at the farm along different distribution chains.

Eighty of the infected trees were planted in 2007, having been sourced from the French nursery, but an additional ten infected trees on a different site were planted later. These were purchased from a nursery in Devon which had sourced its stock from the same French nursery.

By the time the UK plant health authorities started to investigate, the nursery in Devon had sold all of its sweet chestnut stock. A Forestry Commission (FC) map reproduced in the FERA report shows how some 90 consignments of potentially infected trees were dispatched to sites across the UK.

The report says subsequent trace back through the records of both the French nursery and the UK supplier, by the Plant Health and Seed Inspectorate (PHSI) and the FC, led to the identification (as of April 2013) of nine further UK sites with infected trees.

FC focused on distribution of consignments of more than 10 trees leading to 30+ infected trees being found on an East Sussex farm and two infected trees at a private residence in Herefordshire. By May 2013 PHSI had additionally traced infected trees to seven private residences and one additional nursery mostly in southwest England.

The risk of sweet chestnut blight establishing in the UK does not end there. FERA says the vast majority of trees supplied by the French nursery into the UK were sold mail order by several different distributors, and that customer lists for deliveries made prior to 2011 are difficult to obtain.

No wonder the government has rushed to ban imports of sweet chestnut from known blight infected areas in Europe. If it all goes pear shaped then the government will no doubt claim it took appropriate and timely action. However, with potentially infected trees at apparently still unknown locations in the UK it could already be too late.

*FERA (2013) Rapid pest risk analysis for *Cryphonectria parasitica*. 23 pages. 20 May 2013.

Dr Terry Mabbett



BIGGA SEMINARS A HIT AT SUNNY SALTEX

It was standing room only during our education programme at this year's SALTEX.

We ran a whole day of free education presentations during the Wednesday of the show at a sweltering Windsor Racecourse – with CPD credits available for those attending.

Again we attracted experts from across the industry. Andy Wood, Course Manager at Robin Hood Golf Club, presented on greens drainage and was followed by Stuart Yarwood's seminar on managing and constructing bunkers on limited budgets. Stuart is Course Manager at Lymm Golf Club.

The day's final seminar was from Dr Simon Watson – Syngenta Turf and Landscape Technical Manager – on winter disease on golf greens. Dr Watson is pictured above.



GREAT AYTON WINS MCMILLAN TROPHY

Congratulations to Craig Ayton, greenkeeper at Foxhills Club & Resort, who won the Surrey Section McMillan Trophy held at Sunningdale.

Craig scored 40 points to win the competition, which was held on the New Course. Here he is being presented with the Trophy by Jack and Rita McMillan.



MORE BUZZ OVER OPERATION POLLINATOR

Golf courses provide an essential haven for some of the UK's most endangered insect species, and potentially hold the key to restoring populations of essential pollinating insects.

A new study, to provide a scientific approach to pollinator conservation efforts on golf courses, has revealed some fascinating finds - including the extremely rare bumblebee, *Bombus ruderatus*, on Operation Pollinator habitat at Rutland County Golf Club in Leicestershire.

The extensive study, by leading independent entomologist and ecologist, Mike Edwards, on some of the golf courses involved in the Syngenta Operation Pollinator initiative across the UK, has catalogued the diversity of insect species present, and the habitat potential to increase both the numbers and range of insect species.

Commenting on the study's results, Mr Edwards highlighted that whilst some individual golf clubs already have areas of outstanding interest for wildlife, there remains a large number where the potential to make a real contribution had yet to be realised.

"Many of the older clubs have areas that reflect the sort of countryside that was present before modern agricultural production became established.

All too often, however, these areas have sadly been un-managed and of limited ecological value," he said. "Providing expertise and support in restoring such flower-rich grasslands with the Syngenta Operation Pollinator initiative can make a major contribution to the conservation of our flora and fauna."

The discovery of *Bombus ruderatus* on Rutland County Golf Club was an especially exciting discovery, since the species was considered on the verge of extinction just a few years ago - with no records of the bumblebee in the area since 1994. However, Mr Edwards recalled that, when Operation Pollinator habitat had been created on farmland over the past decade, *B. ruderatus* was again rediscovered from the point of extinction, and is successfully on the way back to recovering its former distribution.

Rutland County Golf Club Head Greenkeeper Jamie Goddard believes the colour and wildlife in the club's new Operation Pollinator wildflower areas will enhance the whole experience of playing the course for golfers, as well as providing a valuable habitat for essential pollinating insects.

"The fact that we already have the incredible find of the rare *Bombus ruderatus* on the course highlights the ecological value of golf courses. Now we can actively

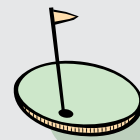
manage areas to make them even more attractive for bumblebees and other pollinators, alongside a great course for players, makes it even more exciting."

One of the key aspects of successfully restoring or establishing wildflowers in areas of golf course rough is the removal of competitive coarse grasses that dominate thick, dense rough, according to Syngenta Technical Manager, Dr Simon Watson. Autumn applications of the selective herbicide, Rescue, offer an ideal opportunity to clean up and thin out invasive grass species such as ryegrass.

Rescue should be applied whilst the coarse grasses are actively growing, to aid uptake of the systemic herbicide. Dr Watson added: "Extensive research and user trials have shown high levels of kill can be achieved with well-timed autumn applications."

"The added advantage of autumn application is that the plants are naturally senescing, which limits the visual impact of treatments."

Rescue is approved for use at the rate of 1.0 l/ha in the autumn, with optimum results achieved using the Syngenta XC Foliar Nozzle to minimise the effect of undulations or variable vegetation height and to achieve all round coverage of the leaf; applying in a water volume of 250-300 l/ha.



CGCS

SALARY INCREASE

Based on the Annual RPI figure for August 2013 the Committee for Golf Club Salaries (CGCS) have recommended an increase of 2.6% in the level of recommended Salary Scale for Greenkeepers. The Committee are fully aware that 2013 has been another difficult year for club finances, but believe it is essential to at least maintain parity with the Government RPI figure in order to retain current staff and attract new recruits.

The CGCS recommended rates of pay package are guidelines only and the Committee is aware that they are for negotiation only and that some staff will earn substantially more, while others will earn less, depending on the golf club.

The CGCS wants to emphasise that these scales are for 'packages' and should be treated as such, whilst taking into account individual and team performance and any increase in responsibility and/or qualification.

The CGCS, once again, wishes to remind clubs that they must be aware of any changes to pension or employment legislation.

Regional variations will be published and downloadable in PDF format from the BIGGA and GCMA websites from late October onwards.

LOOK HUGHES HEAD GREENKEEPER AT WHICKHAM



Brian Hughes has been promoted to Head Greenkeeper at Whickham Golf Club in County Durham – and he's made a real impact recently by using compost teas.

Brian has been at the parkland course for over 25 years, and has witnessed difficult times, particularly over the last few years.

However he now enjoys the full backing of the club and is proud that their greens are continuing to improve thanks to his use of compost teas.

Brian said: "Just like many other clubs we had a hard time of it recently and unfortunately the club had to make difficult financial decisions which involved some redundancies. But we've come through the other side and we're a stronger unit now.

"I started using compost teas two years ago and it's been brilliant, the greens are in great condition. They just feel healthier – we've got away from the sterile soils of the past. It's great to feel that you're doing something right from a greenkeeping point of view, we don't use any chemical fungicides at all on our greens now. It's saved us lots of money on fungicides.

"I feel the club is ahead of the game compared to some. We haven't turned the corner totally but we're looking at a really positive future."



FLYING HIGH AT EAST BERKSHIRE

In GI June we featured a project at St Annes Old Links who used a drone to take stunning aerial photos of the course. Matt Nutter, BB&O Secretary and Course Manager at East Berkshire GC, also wanted to investigate how seeing the course from the air using an accurate, up to date aerial picture could help him assist and manage the estate.

After researching companies who provide imagery Matthew employed the services of PinPoint Golf, a company who specialise in golf course mapping and surveys to carry out the drone flight.

The drone flight produced a fully geo referenced ortho image, in basic terms a full GPS map of the golf course and estate.

"The first thing that impresses you is the clarity of what you are dealing with" said Matthew. "Most of us have used existing online maps when we've had to but we know that when you scroll in close you lose any detail".

The main key benefits that Matthew was looking to glean from the exercise was to review cutting lines and shapes from the air and to be able to measure areas that had been raising questions from the membership: areas of long fescue rough, distances of carries from tee to fairway, heather plantations and areas earmarked for further heather establishment. The software allows accurate measurements around the tees fairways, greens and bunkers and then creates a spreadsheet of the surface areas of all of the key features of the course. This will offer savings by being able to accurately measure to order the correct amount of sand, fertiliser and dressing.

Matthew and the team at

East Berkshire had finished a successful course renovation programme when the aerial was taken but any proposed course changes can be helped as the image gives the best possible view of how the hole looks now and the impact of any proposed changes.

The process really helps you understand what space you have and how best to utilise it from boundary issues to land purchase. An accurate record of your course from the sky is invaluable. This has been particularly useful when making presentations to committees and Board members with regard to proposed projects. As Matthew commented "it's hard to argue with a detailed image showing the exact areas concerned and proposed changes". The software package allows future updated work i.e. drainage, irrigation changes and general ground works to be added to the mapping. This allows a consistent and accurate record of the course and completes the final part of a meaningful Course Policy Document.

Matthew concluded: "We finally have a tool that I can put to a practical use. If it was just a pretty picture it would be little use but thanks to the accuracy of the image combined with the ease of use of the software I'm using it all the time. And the more I use it the more useful it becomes for others as a living breathing record of my golf course".

When drones with cameras were invented it wasn't to benefit the management of golfing estates and to beautify golf courses but for those that have used it in that way and have seen the benefits it certainly has created an incredibly useful by-product.