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Greenkeeper International



The pride of Dudley

As entries open for the 2025 BIGGA Awards, the greenkeeping team of Tony Salt, Stewart Marshall and Darren Povey reflect on their unexpected recognition this year

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■ Obituaries

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The magazine for BIGGA members
Greenkeeper International exists for you, our members. Since 1987 BIGGA has helped thousands in golf greenkeeping to progress their careers, find inspiration and get involved in our varied and vibrant community. This magazine aims to reflect the passions and preoccupations of our members and we'd like you to be involved. Please drop us a line, send us a picture or post on our social media pages.

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Welcome

Much has quite rightly been made of the crisis our industry has faced and continues to face in recruiting staff. It's a major issue and one I'm delighted we now have the full support of the wider golf industry in trying to tackle.

Our own efforts through First Green and second careers are important but the challenge is one for the whole sport to address. I am, however, thrilled that a fairly intense period of recruitment for us as a business has been a success. We've had a brilliant response for the roles that our mini-restructure following Sami Strutt's departure brought on and are about to reap the benefits.

I'm particularly pleased to see former BIGGA chairperson Scott Reeves joining our ranks as Head of Membership. Firstly, it is a crucial role – we're a members' association and now is an important time for us to develop our strategy for membership, including a real, hard look at our categories, benefits and the breadth of our offer to all elements of our industry. But secondly, in Scott we bring a deep and rich knowledge of our industry and membership which will go some way to replacing the knowledge that a 30-plus-year stint instilled in Sami.

Our recent recruitment processes have been exhaustive but incredibly rewarding

The final 'piece in the jigsaw' is our Learning & Development Technical Manager who will lead on our GTC formal education activity as well as continuing our plans to create a coherent education pathway for all greenkeepers at every stage of their career. Watch this space!

All this recruitment – we have also filled a couple of important behind-the-scenes roles – has reminded me of the value of our staff and the critical importance of recruiting well. This is a message we continue to preach to all golf clubs, and it is absolutely right that we practise what we preach. Our recruitment processes have been exhaustive but incredibly rewarding and I'm excited for the future.



Jim Croxton
BIGGA Chief Executive

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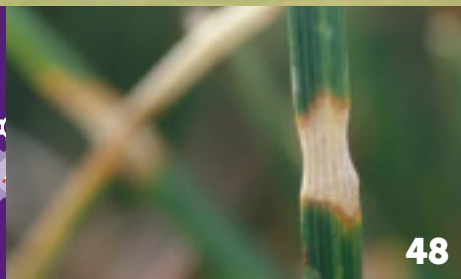


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from





First Cut

All you need to know from around our industry

- Newark greenkeeper runs London Marathon in memory of baby son
- Peter Thompson reflects on his 68 years of greenkeeping at Castlefields



Durness GC named best 9-hole course in Scotland at Golf Tourism Awards



Durness Golf Club claimed a prestigious honour after being named the best 9-hole golf course at the

Scottish Golf Tourism Awards 2024.

Head Greenkeeper Alistair Morrison picked up the prize at a ceremony hosted at the Culloden Battlefield Visitor Centre in Inverness.

"This is a real achievement for the club, and I'm really proud to pick up this award," he said.

"It will 100 per cent help us in future in bringing more visitors here."

Many of those visitors will face a long but worthwhile trip, with Durness being the most north-westerly mainland golf course in Britain.

Durness saw off the challenge of four other finalists, with Bridge of Allan, Gifford, Kingsfield Golf & Leisure and Milnathort having also been in contention.

When assessing each course, judges considered the design and layout, scenic beauty, condition and maintenance and the customer experience.

Durness features an additional set of tees, making it possible to enjoy an 18-hole experience on the 9-hole layout.

The club was established in 1988 by local golf enthusiasts Lachie Ross, Ian Morrison and Francis Keith and sits on the North Coast 500 tourism route.

Club Captain Sheila Urquhart posted

a celebratory message on Facebook after the triumph.

"We have members past and present to thank for their foresight and continued dedication to providing such a magnificent golfing asset in

I'm really proud to pick up this award

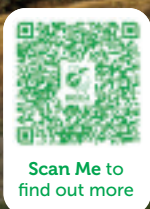
north-west Sutherland," she wrote.

"I look forward to seeing many of you on the course this coming season, but be warned, this award may bring in many more golfers wanting to play the best 9-hole golf course in Scotland 2024!"

The BIGGA Calendar

June: Graeme Roberts, Hayling GC

Download the desktop calendar by scanning the QR code



Newark greenkeeper runs London Marathon in memory of son Tommy



Newark Golf Club greenkeeper Charlie Gillman ran the London Marathon in April in memory of his baby boy, who died aged just 10 weeks.

Charlie's push to complete the epic race came from the saddest of circumstances – his son Tommy passed away in December 2022 due to salmonella Brandenburg meningitis, an extremely rare form of the disease.

Following the unimaginable loss sustained by Charlie and his partner Tamzin, Newark Golf Club rallied around the 24-year-old greenkeeper and offered to host a charity day

and other activities for meningitis research.

Charlie also committed to taking part in the London Marathon, despite not having any experience of long-distance running.

"I've never done anything like that," said Charlie. "I just thought, 'throw yourself in the deep end and go for it. Even if you have to crawl over the finish line, then so be it'.

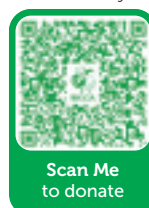
"For me, it was more of a determination thing to get it done in Tommy's honour."

Charlie completed the marathon in five hours, 42 minutes and 30 seconds and raised over £3,500 for the Meningitis Research Foundation.

Such is the life of a greenkeeper that fresh from his exertions on the road, Charlie was soon back looking after Newark's fairways.

Speaking on the Wednesday after the race, he said: "My legs finally feel recovered today. I've just finished cutting the greens at work and I thought, 'I might go for a run'. But by the time I got home that had changed to, 'You know what, I'll leave it a couple of weeks or so!'"

However, having completed one race, he's got the bug and has already put himself forward for the 2025 edition of the London Marathon. **GI**



What's on this month

Dates for your diary

5 June

BIGGA Cleveland Section Spring Golf Day –
Wynyard Golf Club

6 June

BIGGA North East Scotland Golf Championship –
Banchory Golf Club

10 June

Handsworth Presidents v Greenkeepers –
Handsworth Golf Club

12 June

First Green STEM Field Trip – The Bedfordshire
Golf Club

20 June

BIGGA West Scotland Golf Championship – Paisley
Golf Club

26 June

BIGGA D&C Summer Golf Day – Torquay Golf Club

A greenkeeper's best friend – Shady



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Favourite spot: On my cart
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Peter Thompson's incredible 68 years' service at Castlefields Golf Club

Peter Thompson has racked up a remarkable 68 years of service as a greenkeeper at Castlefields Golf Club.

In the February issue of this magazine, we featured Ron Butler and asked if his 58 years at Wilton was the longest stint of any greenkeeper at a single club. Impressive as Ron's feat is, he's a decade short of the irrepressible Peter.

Born in 1934 and set to celebrate his 90th birthday in August, Peter started at the West Yorkshire 6-hole par-3 course in 1956 following a spell in the RAF.

Peter, who lives in a house right on the course with his wife Sally, boasts 26 hole-in-ones, with 21 of them coming at his home club, where he served as captain in 1961.

Recalling the start of his long relationship with his beloved Castlefields, Peter said: "I lived about 200 yards from the course, and I was there one day when one of the elderly members saw me, and this was a time when they didn't admit just anyone – it was the big money men who were allowed.

"I got an appointment to go for a meeting in the clubhouse, and they told me I was a member. Then they said, 'Now you're a member, you can lend us a hand' – and I've been doing that ever since!"

He even used to help out on his lunch break, while working full-time at a mill that once stood at the bottom of the course, and has also undertaken greenkeeping duties at Huddersfield Golf Club and Elland Golf Club, where he was captain in 2003.

Peter, who was president of the Halifax, Huddersfield District Union in 1995, is taking things a little easier these days after being beset by a few health issues, but he loves the freedom that comes with being out on the course.

"I enjoy being out in the open air," he added. "I'd say to any younger people that greenkeeping is a good thing to do, and I can honestly say I've enjoyed my time doing it." **GI**








Peter Thompson (right) with Castlefields President Richard Badrock

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The rains of 2023 and 2024



Leading architect Tom Mackenzie, principal at Mackenzie & Ebert, has been speaking to many of his greenkeeping contacts about their experiences over the last year, and his supportive message from the wider industry is – you are not alone

I have been a golf course architect since 1989 and, in that time, I have been privileged to work with many of Britain's top agronomists and course consultants, starting with Jim Arthur. I have worked with hundreds of course

managers, head greenkeepers and course superintendents across the world. I have the utmost respect for them, and many have become friends not just colleagues.

So, I have gained a good working understanding of agronomy and course management over 35 years - just enough to realise that I don't know nearly enough about it. It is so much more than "just grass cutting" - with so many inter-related factors which all have to be considered on a day-to-day basis. If I am with two course managers together, it is not long before I have no clue what they

are talking about. Greenkeeping is a science and an art.

We are living through the most extreme period of weather, which I can see has pushed even the ultra-positive course managers to the limit. Job satisfaction is at an all-time low - going out in the rain day after day and being unable to deliver the surfaces that they want to offer the golfers.

A constant thread in discussions with them was the morale-sapping impact of those golfers who cannot see beyond playing the blame game and totally ignoring the

An Agronomist's View

Alistair Beggs, Head of Agronomy,
R&A Sustainable Agronomy Team

"I have visited clubs all over the land on all kinds of soils. In addition, I have my winter experiences from Royal Liverpool where, for the first time in my golfing recollection, we have had waterlogging and flooding to an exceptional level. Our 1st hole, practice ground and most bunkers have been flooded and out of use for large periods of winter and spring. Only last month did the raised water table decline in level.

"Elsewhere the pressures have been greater. Other links courses in this area have endured raised water tables, flooding and waterlogging, and this has curtailed golfing and greenkeeping activities. Rainfall levels in all regions of England are close to, or have exceeded, all-time records and clubs in East Anglia, the South East, Devon and Cornwall, the Midlands and the North have all been similarly affected. The heavier the soil the more devastating the impact has been. Also, it is worth noting that DLI (Daily Light Integral) values are much lower than in previous years (lack of sunshine) compromising turf health further.

"There are a lot of deflated greenkeepers out there at the moment. However, in most instances, there is some understanding from golfers that it will take some time for normal playing standards to be restored. There are always a few exceptions where a document like this will help (hopefully) to ease the difficulties."

unprecedented weather. The following statements follow a simple WhatsApp to the course managers on my phone contact list, asking for a couple of sentences on how they have felt about the last nine months. The course managers are all from British courses on all sorts of different soils. Many are Master Greenkeepers, others have decades of experience coming from greenkeeping dynasties and others have hard-earned degrees in Turfgrass Science. They are leaders in their field.

The responses are a great reminder that greenkeepers are not robots (yet). They are human beings who take huge pride in the work that they do and who have feelings. Even if the unreasonable criticism is just from the minority, it really hurts them and badly affects the morale of the team as a whole.

I hope that this document may just make whoever reads it pause and reflect on the challenges that our sport faces and to make us work together to find solutions. The reality is that the climate is changing and not for the good. **GI**

What greenkeepers told Tom

"As a third-generation greenkeeper I have been working in golf for the last 46 years and the last eight months have been the most difficult I can remember. Greenkeeping standards have moved forward hugely over the last 20 years and expectations the same, but weather is still the biggest contributor to what we can and cannot produce in the south east. Last year it started to rain in July and did not stop until early April. Damage done on golf courses from November to March does not start repairing until May. Over the last 10 years April has turned into a no-grow, when cold east winds and frosty mornings turns all the surfaces thin, hard and bumpy."

"In all the years I have worked here, I have never experienced a worse winter, just constant rain. The impact on the team morale is bad enough, but having to stop certain work due to flooding and saturated soil on a Links course is unheard of. I really feel for the teams on inland courses that have been impacted worse than us."

"In my 30 years of being a Course Manager, last year was one of the toughest by far. Sadly, there will always be an element of golfers with unrealistic expectations and zero tolerance for anything less than perfection, irrelevant of whatever Mother Nature has thrown at us. I fear your efforts to highlight this will simply fall on deaf ears but thank you for trying."

"Last winter was without doubt the most challenging weather wise I have experienced in 30 plus years of greenkeeping. Volumes of rainfall have made general maintenance and winter projects more demanding than ever."

"All I can say is that we are all in this together, because we are a turf sport that is different to football, cricket or horse racing where rain/ground conditions will stop play. I believe the mild wet winters are here to stay, so everyone associated with our great industry, work or play, will have to be realistic, stay focused, remain positive and manage expectations."

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From your Association

Representing the greenkeeping community

- How your club can get involved with the First Green initiative
- Dudley GC on winning Greenkeeping Project of the Year at BTME



Put employees first, says BIGGA CEO

"I'm a football coach at the weekend and the way I run my son's under-18 boys' team is entirely determined by the FA," said BIGGA CEO Jim Croxton at an England Golf Sustainability Conference. "They tell me how many times those kids can head a ball in training, they tell me the exams I've got to take to be a coach and I've got to stay up to date in all manner of things. With respect, we don't have any rules in place or exams to become club chairperson or sit on a golf club's committee."

"Golf is a sport that's run by the facility. If we put our employees first and we take care of them by making golf clubs good places to work, they will pass that goodwill on to the customers. Golfers will get a golf course they enjoy playing and we will be seen by the wider public as a better use of land and resources, so hopefully golf will be thriving in 50 years time."

BIGGA continues to champion greenkeepers

As part of our commitment to championing the role of greenkeepers to promote the ongoing health of the golf industry, BIGGA representatives have spoken at various public engagements over the past few months.

Among other events, during February, March and April, BIGGA CEO Jim Croxton represented the association at regional England Golf Governance Roadshows, the FEGGA Conference in Madrid and the Golf Forum in St Andrews.

Jim was also recently asked to speak at an England Golf Sustainability Conference, hosted in partnership with the Cheshire Union of Golf Clubs at The Tytherington Club.

Key points discussed included:

- Public perception of golf
- Governance in golf clubs
- Golf as a form of land use
- Resource availability
- Robotic technology
- Community outreach including First Green.

You can find the full transcript of Jim's talk on the BIGGA website.

The BIGGA team continues to campaign on behalf of the entire greenkeeping industry and we're proud to showcase instances when our members have done the same.

If you have spoken at an event, whether a careers fair, a members' evening or otherwise, please let us know. [GI](#)

The BIGGA National Board is comprised of the following members who volunteer their time to support the association: Gordon McKie, Jack Hetherington, Antony Kirwan, Andrew Laing, Iain Macleod, Lucy Sellick and Andy Smith
BIGGA President John Keenaghan, BIGGA Chairperson Steven Lloyd

Former Leyland Golf Club course manager joins BIGGA team as **Head of Membership**



Scott Reeves has been appointed BIGGA's Head of Membership, overseeing the development of the association's membership activities.

The 53-year-old was formerly the course manager at Leyland Golf Club, where he spent 17 years. He began his greenkeeping career at Wycombe Heights Golf Club, Buckinghamshire, followed by spells at Stock Brook Country Club in Essex and Chobham Golf Club in Surrey, before relocating to Lancashire in 2003. He spent three years at Preston Golf Club before a one-year stint with Saxon Industries in a sales role. He then returned to course management at Leyland Golf Club in 2007.

Scott has volunteered at every level of BIGGA, culminating in his appointment as chairperson of the association in 2019. He will be responsible for ensuring the development and implementation of the association's membership strategy, as well as taking on a senior leadership role within the organisation. Furthermore, he will work closely with all BIGGA departments to ensure the

association is fulfilling its responsibility to members, while seeking to evolve BIGGA's activities and offerings.

"What attracted me to this job is it is such a huge opportunity," he said. "One of the things I really valued in my time as a greenkeeper volunteer with BIGGA was the chance to make the world a better place for greenkeepers, as we always say. With a little time away, focusing on my own job as a greenkeeper, it's helped me see just what a valuable resource BIGGA is.

"What I'd say to BIGGA members is that another one of us has joined the association. I'm someone who understands you and your challenges as I've faced them myself. We're here to help you, to serve you and to make sure that you can access everything BIGGA has to offer, to build a better career for yourself and a stronger industry for everyone."

BIGGA CEO Jim Croxton said: "I'm excited that after an exhaustive process, Scott successfully earned this important role and I look forward to working with him to improve the lives of our members." **GI**

Get involved with First Green



Are you keen to share your passion for greenkeeping with the next generation and show them what a wonderful career path it can be? Hosting a First Green event is the perfect way to do just that.

The initiative turns golf courses into classrooms, providing practical STEM education through inclusive learning stations, where the greenkeeping team teaches some of the skills they use every day to make their golf course awesome.

Getting started with First Green is simple, with BIGGA having prepared everything you need to host a field trip, including a breakdown of what you will require and step-by-step checklists to help you along the way.

The initiative is a wonderful way of connecting communities with the natural world and the countless learning opportunities presented by life on the golf course.

It is also a fantastic tool for golf clubs and venues to raise their profile within the communities they serve.

Royal Liverpool Golf Club hosted a First Green event last year welcoming children from West Kirby Primary School, and First Assistant Chris Trimble was thrilled with how it went.

"It's really refreshing to see how interested people are in the job, and it shows how interesting greenkeeping is as a career," he said. "Hopefully we've encouraged a few potential greenkeepers." **GI**



How to get involved with First Green

1) Register to host a field trip

If you are interested in hosting a field trip at your golf course, register to become part of the programme by scanning the QR code below and completing the Field Trip Golf Course Registration. A representative of BIGGA will then reach out with additional details. You can then access all of the member-only First Green resources, which includes the Getting Started Guide.

2) Connect with a school or group

Contact local schools, colleges or other groups to identify the best time for a field trip at your golf course. The Getting Started Guide will provide you with the information and templates needed to enable you to do so.

3) Register the date of your field trip

Once the details are confirmed with the school or group and teacher, register your event on the website and BIGGA will support you in the hosting of a successful field trip!



Finding the sunshine behind the clouds



John Keenaghan
President

Even the best-laid plans are vulnerable to the things you just can't control

The first few months in my role as BIGGA president did not pan out as I would have hoped.

When I was formally appointed to the position at BTME in January, I planned to travel the country and see as many of my fellow members as possible – for me, that's the best part about it.

However, the weather had other ideas as the day job at Chipping Sodbury took up most of my time, and many of those who I might have visited would have been similarly consumed by their duties.

The persistent rain over winter continued to outstay its welcome into the spring and, being a clay-based course, you can imagine the toll it took.

The weather put us four or five weeks behind schedule, and we were doing 12-hour days to get back on track. I have to pay tribute to my team for the work they did, and I know many of you will have been in the same boat – in fact, a boat would've come in handy!

We were fortunate to have a couple of dry days to get on and do maintenance on the greens, verti-draining, solid tining and getting some top dressing on.

The rough was horrendous at one point,



Chipping Sodbury

but there's only so much you can do when the elements are against you.

I shouldn't complain too much as I did have

Mann and his team did an outstanding job of preparing the course for what was a brilliant day.

It's exciting to note the

“It's great to see any greenkeeper getting the recognition they deserve

the opportunity to go to Phoenix for the GCSAA Conference, and there was no shortage of sunshine in Arizona.

I also attended the South East Golf Day at Walton Heath, where Michael

launch of the 2025 BIGGA Awards, which provide a fantastic platform for the great work being done in this industry of ours.

I was proud to be part of the judging panel last year, when the winners ranged

from the aforementioned Walton Heath to the lesser-known Dudley – both great stories in their own way. I'll be seeing Dudley's Stewart Marshall at Royal Troon for The Open next month, and I'm so pleased to see the positive attention he and the club have been getting.

Most of us are out there doing our work quietly and without fanfare, but it's great to see any greenkeeper getting the recognition they deserve.

With entries now open, perhaps the next BIGGA Awards will shine the spotlight on you. **GI**

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George Richardson (GK)

Liam Scott (DHGK)
Ben Teviotdale (AGK)
Richard Watt (GK)
Montrose Golf Links

Dean Enstone (DHGK)
Bellshill

Jason Hogg (RP)
Agrovista Amenity

Greg Menzies (GK)
The Hon Company of
Edinburgh Golfers

Darren Welsh (CM)
Sandyhills

Northern

Mark Allen (A)
Hillsborough

Mark Grealey (AGK)
Childwall

Morgan Kirk (AGK)
Saddleworth

Daniel Ry (AGK)
Woodhall Hills

William Lloyd (AGK)
Heaton Moor

Alexander Nelson (AGK)
Rother Valley Golf Centre

Neil Prestwood (AGK)
Lansil

Lewis Scott (GK)
Bamburgh Castle

Key

A Affiliate Member

AGK Assistant Greenkeeper

APP Apprentice

ATP Approved Training Provider

CA College Assessor

CM Course Manager

DCM Deputy Course Manager

DHGK Deputy Head Greenkeeper

FA First Assistant

GK Greenkeeper

G Groundsperson

HGK Head Greenkeeper

HG Head Groundsperson

I International Member

L Life Member

M Mechanic

P Partner

R Retired Member

RP Regional Patron

S Supporter

ST Student Member

SUP Superintendent



BIGGA

CPD

Continuing Professional Development

Congratulations to the following members who have achieved CPD Approved status

Leigh Powell, Windlesham

David Warner, Woking

Mattias Kolborg, St Andrews Links Trust

Peter Pattenden, Carden Park

Reiss Evans, Chigwell

Anthony Girardi MG CGCS, Rockrimmon CC

Johnathan Peacock, Luffenham Heath

Alan FitzGerald MG CGCS, Rehoboth Beach CC

Paul Connolly, Sandyhills

Beverly Blair, Southwick Park

Oliver Kirk, Bury St Edmunds

Stephen Watson, Royal Aberdeen

Jason Norwood, Reay

Owen Mackay, Royal Aberdeen

Patrick Brown, Wentworth Club

Congratulations to the following members who have achieved their CPD Milestone

Peter Pattenden, Carden Park

Anthony Girardi MG CGCS, Rockrimmon CC

Graeme Gallimore, Launceston

Alan FitzGerald MG CGCS, Rehoboth Beach CC

Oliver Kirk, Bury St Edmunds



Broadstone

Connor Tupling (AGK)

Grange Park



George Bevan (AGK)

Woodhall Spa

James Castle (DCM)

The Caversham

Luke Elsmore (GK)

William Mackie (AGK)

Roger Prenter-Jones (CM)

Brocton Hall

Joe Hague (AGK)

Horsley Lodge

Mete Johnston (AGK)

Verulam

Christopher Knowles (RP)

Agrovista Amenity

Daniel Perkiss (GK)

Royston

Scott Rowan (AGK)

Redditch



Thomas Clarke (AGK)

Royal Ashdown Forest

Finley Dee (AGK)

Jake Williams (AGK)

East Brighton



Jacob Franks (AGK)

St Enodoc

George Lines (AGK)

Matthew Towler (AGK)

Jamie Pippard (AGK)

Broadstone

Vinnie Phelps (GK)


Filton



Royal Aberdeen

Dudley's Day





As nominations open for the 2025 BIGGA Awards, we take a look at the transformative impact on a modest Midlands club who never expected to be collecting the Greenkeeping Project of the Year trophy at BTME last January

It took a bit of coaxing for Stewart Marshall and Rob Woodall to make their way on to the stage after Dudley Golf Club were announced as the winners in the Greenkeeping Project of the Year category at the 2024 BIGGA Awards. It wasn't a reluctance to get up in front of a crowd that made them linger a little longer at their table in the main auditorium of Harrogate Convention Centre but a sense of disbelief that kept them firmly rooted to their seats while host The Jazzy Golfer tried to cajole them into action.

The emotional impact on both Marshall and Woodall was plain to see as the giant screen bearing the words 'Winners – Dudley Golf Club' made it clearer still that they had indeed won.

Even now, months on from that January evening at BTME when the latest in a seemingly never-ending succession of named storms was swirling around outside, Dudley's course manager is still trying to make sense of it all.

"We never thought we'd win," said Marshall, who recently gained a distinction in his Level 2 certification. "The awards were not on our radar at all; we were nominated by the Midlands Golfer Magazine. Just to have that nomination was really nice in itself, and making the shortlist was obviously even better, but when we looked at the competition, we didn't think we had a chance of winning it.



We didn't think we had a chance of winning

"I didn't give any thought to what I might say on the stage if we did win, or what it would mean for the club and myself if we managed to."

As it turned out, speaking without a script and from the heart served Marshall well as he praised General Manager Woodall and the many volunteers who helped keep Dudley going when all looked lost.

The club had come within a whisker of closing down as membership numbers dropped and the course fell into disrepair. Woodall had informed the 150 or so members still left that the clock was ticking.

The Covid pandemic provided the unlikely catalyst for an equally unexpected revival as, when the easing of restrictions allowed for it, many more people were looking to play golf,

Top tips from Michael Mann, Course Manager at Walton Heath

The team at Walton Heath took home the prize of Championship Greenkeeping Performance of the Year after hosting the 2023 AIG Women's Open. Here, Course Manager Michael Mann shares his top tips on how to prepare the course for the biggest events at your club.

1) Expectations

Ensure you are absolutely clear from event organisers what the expectation is in terms of course conditions

2) Time

Give yourself plenty of time to plan. Avoid leaving it to the last minute. The earlier you plan, the more comfortable you will be with the execution

3) Resources

Determine what is needed in terms of manpower and equipment. Is it something that can be done in-house or will you need additional support to deliver? Once you know this, start preparing a plan for ideal conditions

4) Contingency

Weather hugely influences on-course conditions. As well as the ideal weather plan, contingency planning is very important. Make plans for every possible eventuality and make sure you have the equipment and manpower to implement them

5) Flexibility

The ability to be flexible and react to any situation is a must. Towing out stuck contractors' vehicles, herding escaped sheep and operating a pump, knee deep in a puddle of a burst sewage bag, are some personal highlights!

6) Teamwork

You will only succeed as a team. Delegating is a great way of engaging team members by giving them additional responsibilities



and Dudley was among the beneficiaries.

Leading a team of three, with the club's dire circumstances meaning none of them were qualified greenkeepers at the time, Marshall oversaw a drastic improvement of the course that relied more on creativity, hard graft and community spirit than any sort of budget, and most of what was spent came from donations.

Amid all that work, Marshall – who made a bold career change to greenkeeping after leaving his role as an operations manager – never stopped to imagine that it might win the club an award, so when he found out they were potentially in the running for Greenkeeping Project of the Year, he didn't actually

believe it.

"BIGGA contacted us to say we'd been nominated, and I thought it was a scam! I had to check it was true and, sure enough, it was. They asked if I could submit evidence and some photographs showing before and after and that kind of thing. We put in 82 pieces of evidence to show the work that had gone on and then later found out we'd been shortlisted."

It all led to that night at BTME, and the spotlight that fell on Dudley there has continued to follow them, with Marshall enjoying a kind of celebrity status. He has appeared in many publications and on podcasts, with his new-found fame leading to him being recognised out and about.



Left to right: Tony Salt, Stewart Marshall, Darren Povey

"It's crazy. I was playing at a local course recently and went into the shop, and the pro in there recognised me – he was reading a piece in a PGA magazine about Dudley, and it had my photo in there. Stuff like that is a bit surreal to be honest.

"James Bledge contacted me soon after the awards to go on his podcast, which was a big deal – this guy is course manager at a place that's just hosted The Open and he wants to talk to me! It's been quite enjoyable and it's all stuff I'm happy to do."

It hasn't gone to his head, and Marshall's modesty means he struggles to comprehend quite why Dudley's story has captured the imagination in the way it has, though he has begun to appreciate that there are many out there in the

industry who can identify with it.

"I think maybe the fact that you could tell it meant something to us to win the award is what first made people take notice," he explained. "I'm not saying it didn't matter to the other winners, of course it did, but I don't think they were necessarily on the verge of tears, so people possibly related to that.

"My wife has really allowed me to make such a drastic career change at the midpoint of my life, so the support that our family has given to me, and the sacrifices I've made when I was working crazy hours and getting to the point where I can't even take my socks off some evenings because it's been such a graft – it's a combination of all of that I think that came across



when I was on the stage.

"A lot of these greenkeepers at bigger clubs, places like Walton Heath, who were also winners on the night, they will have started off at a course like Dudley where they probably felt insignificant then, so they understand it too."

With the awards triumph having elevated the profile of the course and its manager, Marshall hopes other clubs of a similar ilk will consider themselves worthy of recognition – even if they might need a hand from elsewhere in the form of a nomination.

"I understand why people wouldn't want to nominate themselves, and it's not something I would have thought to do, but there might be people out there who know of clubs who deserve that recognition who might want to nominate them, which is what happened in our case.

"It can be tougher at these smaller clubs – there are no on-site mechanics or spare machines, we have to bush fix anything that breaks, and the budget isn't always there to buy new things or replace old stuff like-for-like.

"Those are the sort of challenges you face, and I do hope seeing us win gave other clubs in a similar position the sense that they could do it too. People had probably never heard of Dudley before, but it feels like we're on the map now."

The club's membership numbers have continued to grow this year, and there was further good news for Marshall when he was selected to join the Volunteer Support Team at the Open, with his wife quick to spread the word far and wide.

"I think she's more excited about that than anything else. She works at a neonatal unit, and she tells everyone I'll be there. They're all turning into golf fans for a week, hoping they'll catch a glimpse of me." **GI**

How to prepare an effective award nomination

Nominations are now open for the 2025 BIGGA Awards. If you are thinking of nominating someone, take advantage of these top tips:

- Remember, it is likely the judges do not know anything about your story, so make sure you take the time to explain everything you achieved that sets your nomination apart from the rest
- The judging panel relies on concise and complete nominations. Set your nomination out in a format that matches the judging criteria, and this will make scoring easier
- Well-written nominations supported by high quality imagery or videos are sure to catch the eye
- Poorly prepared nominations will not highlight the technical accomplishments of your nominee
- Provide details of specific examples of challenges and explain how they were overcome
- Solicit support - references from stakeholders or event hosts will add weight to your nomination



YOUR CHANCE TO CELEBRATE YOUR TEAM'S SUCCESS

The BIGGA Awards recognise that high standards of quality and dedication are vital to the success of any golf course or championship. They reward the innovation delivered by BIGGA members who are at the cutting-edge of their profession.

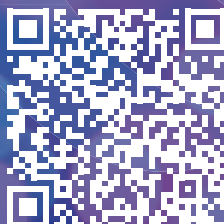
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Careers

Jobs, expert advice and peer-to-peer support

■ From raking bunkers at 15 to working on a top-class estate with two championship courses, Brocket Hall's Graham Down has come a long way



'Every day is a school day' – Cawder's Montgomery is making up for lost time



David Montgomery took a circuitous route into greenkeeping, but now that he has arrived, he is keen to go all the way to the top.

Initially working in audio production, and with a degree in the subject, he later took on an office job during Covid but yearned for something more - so when the keen golfer got wind of an opportunity at Cawder Golf Club, he jumped at the chance.

Here, he explains why greenkeeping appealed and how he plans to make the most of his new career path.

"When the position at Cawder came up, I seized the opportunity because I was aware that, at my age, I may not get many other chances for a job like this," he said.

"Due to starting my career later in life, I want to learn as much as I can about the craft and experience as many different types of golf course as possible. Eventually I would like to run a golf course. Every day is a school day for me. I am always looking to try and be better than the day before, and education is a big part of that.

"You can learn from everything that happens daily on the job, especially anything that goes wrong. Understanding what went wrong and how it went wrong via discussions with your seniors, and then learning on your own, can contribute to you performing better next time.

"This career can be very satisfying and rewarding. However, there are aspects to consider. The weather

is tough, especially in the west of Scotland, the pace is fast during the summer when setting up for competitions, for example, and the work is hard.

"If you are looking to work outside and get your hands dirty but also are willing to learn, then this could be a satisfying career for you.

"It was once I got to my first summer that I knew it was the career for me. The mornings were lighter, you could feel the sun on your skin, see the work that you have completed through the winter developing and growing, see the golf course growing and being cut into shape and have the satisfaction of seeing your own work finished nicely and how it contributes to the course itself." **GI**



Graham Down

Graham Down spent his weekends as a teenager raking bunkers at his local club in Devon.

It proved to be the start of a long and fruitful career in greenkeeping, with several course manager roles now on his glowing CV. And that is the position he now holds at Brocket Hall, where the promise of a fresh challenge has him filled with excitement.

Tell us about your new role

My new role is golf course manager at Brocket Hall in Hertfordshire. We have two championship golf courses, an academy with driving range and a short game area, as well as a 6-hole, par-3 golf course and many lawns and gardens around the estate. Altogether the site is just under 600 acres. I manage this with a team of 23 greenkeepers and gardeners.

What do you hope to achieve in the role?

I want the golf courses to play their best and be well respected in our area, but I also hope I can positively influence the careers of the team around me. There are some great greenkeepers here and I would love to help them develop. We can do this by identifying educational requirements and providing opportunities for them to network within the industry at trade shows, volunteering for tournament preparation at other venues or taking advantage of some of the fantastic opportunities BIGGA offers.

How does it fit into your career path?

Brocket is really a culmination of hard work and steady progression. I played golf from the age of 12 and started greenkeeping at just 15 years old, raking bunkers on a weekend at Ashbury GC in Devon. I didn't know then that it was going to become my career, but I enjoyed working outdoors and the camaraderie of the tearoom. It was certainly an eye-opener at times! I moved to Cardiff with my now wife at the age of 20 and took a job at Cotterell Park, where my passion for the job took off, and I started my formal education in golf course management. I'm now working on a top-class estate with two championship golf courses which was always my dream.

What skills have you found vital to your job?

Communication is key! With a large team it is vital we have good lines of communication so that everyone knows what their role is in achieving our goals. I have weekly meetings with the heads and deputies of each course where we go



Photo Credit: Kevin Murray

Brocket Hall's new course manager has come a long way since starting out in greenkeeping at the age of 15



“ I hope I can positively influence the careers of the team around me

Graham on applying for a new job

Describe the recruitment process for your role

The club advertised in Greenkeeper International, but I was hesitant to apply as I was content in my role at Harewood Downs, where I had been course manager for seven years. I had overseen many course improvement projects and was enjoying the fruits of my labour, but comfort is the death of ambition, and after speaking to a few close friends in the industry, I decided to apply. Once I was selected for an interview, I researched what I could in preparation for a course walk with the outgoing CM (Jonathan Taylor) and consultant (Greg Evans) where we discussed all things turf management before a sit-down 45-minute interview with the managing director (Michael Longshaw) and Greg to discuss the financial management and future course improvement ideas.

What were your new employers looking for?

Someone who had a professional approach to their work and could lead a team in achieving the company's goals. But also someone to carry on the good work Jonathan had put in and to continue to push the estate forward to improve its standing.

What do you think set you apart from the other candidates?

I would hope it was my professionalism, reputation within the industry and experience of similar projects, which are due to come up at Brocket, as well as my absolute passion for the job. I also felt I conducted myself well in the interview process. I think it is important to always be professional and personable with everyone in the industry. Good manners cost nothing, and you never know who you might be speaking to.

What advice would you give to anyone applying for a similar role?

Do your research. Walk the course and try to identify any potential improvements or issues the club may be facing. If possible, arrange a call with the outgoing course manager as they may be able to shed some light on what the role will entail.

Photo Credit: Kevin Murray

“ Why wouldn't you want to get out, explore and develop your career?”

over the previous week and plan for the following week. It sounds a bit corny, but a can-do attitude goes a long way. You will often find yourself in scenarios where it would be easy to give up or take the easy way out.

What is the best thing about your new job?

The challenge of learning a new site and putting all my experience into a new situation. The landscape here is amazing, and I can't wait to see how it changes through the seasons and how we can cope with what they throw at us.

What do you wish you had known at the start of your career?

Travel! Golf is played on almost every continent so there is ample opportunity to see the world. Why wouldn't you want to get out, explore and develop your career?

What has been your best career break?

Getting my first course manager role at Oakland Park GC

in Chalfont St Giles. I was internally promoted from deputy when my good friend, Dominic Lewis, moved on. It wasn't the biggest golf course, we had a staff of four or five, but I felt like I had achieved a massive career ambition, and the next six months to a year was probably my biggest learning curve to date. I have such fond memories of the course and all those who I worked with.

What would you like to be doing in 10 years' time?

Tough to answer! If I look back on the last 10 years, so much has changed with my career and with my personal life. It's hard to predict where I will be in another 10 years. Hopefully, the kids will be at university or starting their own careers and the wife and I can start to spend some time together without them. I might have started the ever-growing list of projects on the house! Hopefully, I would have done a good job here at Bocket and ticked off a good few projects that are on the horizon. I would love to see the golf courses in the top 100. **GI**

A guide to UK apprenticeships



In the latest of a series of articles, Andy Wight of Oaklands College explains how apprenticeships work in the different nations of the UK, with the focus this month on Northern Ireland



Northern Ireland uses a framework system for apprenticeships, meaning there is no End Point Assessment involved.

Instead, students produce a portfolio of evidence to demonstrate competence. As with all other areas of the UK, there is a requirement for the apprentice to be provided with paid off-the-job training.

What levels of greenkeeping apprenticeships are there in Northern Ireland?

ApprenticeshipsNI provides Level 2 and Level 3 apprenticeships. The frameworks for these are:

Level 2 Horticulture, requiring completion of:

- Level 2 Diploma in Work-based Horticulture
- Application of number – level 1
- Communication – level 1
- Information and communication technology – level 1

Level 3 Horticulture, requiring completion of:

- Level 3 Diploma in Work-based Horticulture
- Application of number – level 2
- Communication – level 2
- Information and communication technology – level 2

The ApprenticeshipsNI programme provides funded apprenticeship training and is open to all of those who are school leaving age and above. Apprentices are employed and paid directly by employers, and directed training is provided by a Contracted Training Contractor, Further Education College or College of Agriculture Food & Rural Enterprise.

To be eligible for apprenticeship training, an apprentice must be newly employed or an existing employee, undertaking a new role that requires a substantial amount of training and development and working at least 21 hours per week on a permanent, remunerative basis.

“ Every apprentice follows an apprenticeship framework

The Training Contractor must carry out an Initial Assessment of each apprentice to identify their strengths and weaknesses, professional and technical training and Essential Skills level, as well as to assess which level of the programme is most appropriate to meet their needs.

A Personal Training Plan (PTP) detailing the progression route for achieving the agreed qualifications is then drawn up for the Apprentice that must be agreed by the Training Contractor, Employer and Apprentice.

Every apprentice follows an apprenticeship framework, which sets out the relevant national occupational standards and qualifications which must be achieved by the apprentice.

A Delivery Agreement, which details the responsibilities



of the parties and their commitment to the successful completion of the apprenticeship, must be completed by the Contractor in respect of each apprentice.

The PTP will then be reviewed at least every eight weeks, and these reviews again must be signed by the Training Contractor, Employer and Apprentice.

Upon successful completion of all elements of the Framework being followed, a Full Framework Certificate will be issued by the Department in the Apprentice's name.

Who pays for the apprenticeship?

In Northern Ireland, for public finance and operational reasons, there are no digital accounts for employers and here the Government only funds apprenticeship training through the ApprenticeshipsNI programme. The Department for the Economy does not receive any additional funding from the Apprenticeship Levy. The 60 per cent additional funding provided by the European Union in respect of apprenticeships ended on 31 December 23.

All-age apprenticeships were introduced on 1 September and the DfE pays the full cost of the Directed Training element of the apprenticeship for all adults. An Employer Incentive Payment is available for employers whose apprentice successfully completes a Level 2 or Level 3 framework. The incentive ranges from £558 to £1,674, depending on the apprenticeship undertaken and the age of the apprentice on joining the programme. **GI**

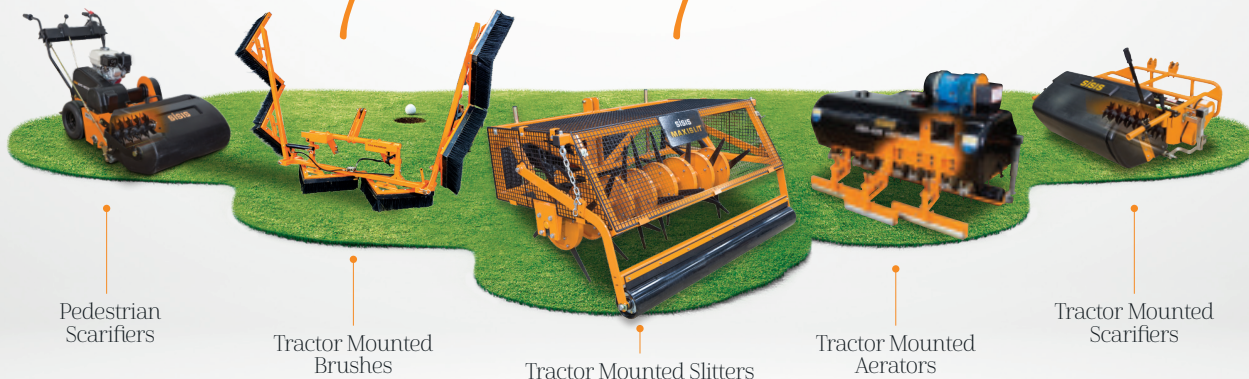


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Obituaries

June 2024

We include an Obituaries section in Greenkeeper International on a periodic basis to pay our respects to BIGGA members and those close to the association who have recently passed away

If you would like to inform us of a member's passing, please contact us by emailing membership@bigga.co.uk





Raymond Chandler

1922-2023



Raymond Chandler lived in good health beyond his 100th birthday after spending his retirement years putting his

greenkeeping skills to fruitful use in his own garden.

Born in the West Sussex village of Lurgashall, Raymond served in the army and fought in the Second World War.

He returned to his home county and got a job as a gardener at a manor house, where his wife Nora, better known as Nonie, worked as a cook.

The couple went on to have three children and moved to Coventry to provide better employment opportunities for them.

It was there that Raymond first got into greenkeeping, taking a job at Coventry Golf Club – known locally as

Finham – in 1966. Later, while on the payroll of Warwickshire Council, he designed and built Newbold Comyn Golf Club in Leamington Spa after telling a course architect who had been sent by the local authority that he “didn’t have a clue” and sending him back to London.

Upon completion of that project, undertaken with borrowed equipment and just a couple of assistants, Raymond returned to Coventry GC and retired in 1988.

Raymond was a diligent and dedicated greenkeeper whose skills were entirely self-taught. He loved the role and enjoyed the thrill of preparing the course for competitions, sometimes bringing his daughter Angela with him to help.

In his later years, Raymond would

browse the pages of Greenkeeper International and marvel at the developments in the industry, with some clubs boasting huge manpower and able to call upon an array of equipment that was not available to him and his team of three or four.

That the job required such demanding manual labour was no issue for Raymond, who appreciated the value of hard work and would often take on side jobs doing gardening so that he could pay off his mortgage as quickly as possible.

Raymond celebrated his landmark birthday in 2022 with family and friends, proud to receive a card from The King and The Queen Consort.

He leaves behind his children Antony, Kevin and Angela, and his grandchildren Julie, Zoe and Alex.



Derek Postlethwaite

1943-2024



Derek Postlethwaite was a much-loved and well-respected member of the green staff at Formby Golf Club, where he worked for almost half a century.

Having started there as a trainee in 1960, he worked his way up to course manager by 1977 and held that role until his retirement in 2008. There was one interlude of 18 months where he worked for the council, cutting roadside grass verges.

During his long and distinguished tenure, Formby hosted 25 championships, including two Amateur Championships.

His exceptional greenkeeping skills and peerless knowledge of the course helped Formby to earn recognition as one of the top amateur venues in the country.

"Derek will be greatly missed by all and our thoughts and prayers go to his family and friends," said a statement from the club.

It is said that in his long time at the club, Derek managed to avoid ever being struck by a golf ball, but did himself come to the aid of others in need – rescuing colleagues stuck up trees and rounding up horses that strayed onto the course.

Derek was a very keen pigeon fancier and went every year to a pigeon fanciers' conference in Blackpool to indulge his passion.

He leaves behind wife Sue, daughter Laura and grandchildren Isla and Ada.



Martin Coe

1979-2023



Martin Coe spent more than half of his life at China Fleet Country Club, where he had risen to the role of deputy course manager at the time of his passing following an illness.

He worked at the Cornwall venue for 23 years, starting out as a 21-year-old range assistant, picking up the balls and keeping things tidy.

After two years, the lifelong Liskeard resident moved into the pro shop

with the intention of earning his PGA qualifications and spent six years as a shop assistant after deciding against becoming a teaching professional.

He took the opportunity to join the green staff in 2008, describing it as the "best decision I ever made".

His love of being outdoors and passion for golf made greenkeeping the ideal career for Martin, who became course manager in 2013.

He was interested in course architecture and would always be

keen to take on an exciting project to leave his mark, which he certainly did.

A talented golfer, Martin boasted a hard-earned handicap of 1.7 and won multiple club championships at Lostwithiel and China Fleet.

The father of four was part of the 2021 Open Support Team at Royal St George's and also volunteered at the BMW Championships at Wentworth.

Martin is survived by his partner Tammy, and children, Lilly, Thomas, Nakita and Jack.



Joe Buckley

1983-2024



Joe Buckley had a profound impact on Harrogate Golf Club, touching the lives of many as a champion

golfer, a dedicated member of the greenkeeping team, and, above all, a cherished friend.

"From the moment he joined as a junior from Knaresborough Golf Club, Joe's talent shone brightly," said Harrogate GC spokesman Keith Peters.

"His remarkable skill on the course, highlighted by numerous club, district and county-level victories, left an indelible mark on our community."

He compiled a remarkable list of achievements on the course, winning multiple tournaments and representing the Harrogate & District Union no fewer than 84 times.

In 2016, Buckley landed his dream job with the club's greenkeeping team, where he became an asset to

Harrogate in a different capacity.

He quickly rose through the ranks to become senior greenkeeper in 2020 and his dedication, hard work and pride in his role were evident to all who knew him.

"Joe's passing will be deeply felt by all who had the privilege of knowing him," Keith continued.

"As a club we would like to offer our deepest condolences to Joe's family, Jacqui, Millie, Julie, and Nicky."



Daniel Dalton

1985-2024



Daniel Dalton was making plans to return to work at Copt Heath even after a diagnosis of stage four cancer.

Having received the news in September 2023, colleagues who saw him later that year were struck by his positivity and enduring smile.

Daniel joined Copt Heath in 2019, having previously ventured to Canada

to work at Wildstone and Trickle Creek, as well as a stint at Millbrook in New Zealand.

His varied CV, which highlights his sense of adventure, also boasted a spell at The Belfry.

"Dan was a special person adding to our already talented team," said Deputy Course Manager Ian Holden.

"He was always keen to learn from myself and others. It was a privilege to

have worked with him.

"Dan was a bubbly character that had a keen interest in seeing and experiencing the world, greenkeeping in several countries.

"As a greenkeeper, he had a passion for presenting the fairways with 'proper lasers', making the fairways his own. I was certainly envious, but proud of his mowing ability. He will be missed but never forgotten."



Bobby McDougall

1982-2024



Bobby McDougall was a third-generation greenkeeper who followed in the footsteps of his dad, Allan McDougall, a former course manager

at Royal Mid-Surrey Golf Club, and his grandfather, Bob McDougall, formerly of Hilton Park Golf Club in Glasgow.

He was ground maintenance technical officer at Glasgow Life, having attended Elmwood College and served much of his career at courses across Surrey – Royal Mid-Surrey, Queenwood, and Walton

Heath – as well as a stint as deputy course manager at Miklagard Golf in Oslo, Norway.

Outside work, aside from being a dedicated family man, Bobby held a life-long passion for music. His particular focus was heavy metal where he was a well-known figure on the Scottish scene, with spells as a lead singer, playing live gigs and recording.

More recently, his knowledge and contacts led him into managing bands.

He leaves behind two children, his mum, and his sister.



Garry Batson

1960-2024



Garry Batson worked down the coal pits before turning his hand to greenkeeping, which became his passion.

Having spent time in the collieries at Shilbottle, Whittle and Ellington in his younger years, Garry's first taste of greenkeeping came at Longhirst Hall Golf Club, before moving to Alnmouth.

He spent 18 years there, earning the

respect and admiration of his colleagues and members alike.

"Garry was a very well-liked and steadfast member of our team and is a great loss to us all," said Head Greenkeeper Jim Storey.

Despite being ill, he won the Foxton Hall Cup in 2023 and had his only hole in one in 40 years of trying in 2022.

He leaves behind his wife Christine, children Mark and Jill, and six grandchildren.

In Memoriam

Daryll Curtis
1979-2024

Mark Clewes
1969-2023

Robert Coppack
1947-2023

Thomas Fairfield
1958-2023

Kevin Newman
1961-2023



Latest job vacancies

From trainee vacancies to senior management roles, new greenkeeping job opportunities are added daily to BIGGA's online recruitment pages. Our website receives 1.6m page views per year and 55% of those are to our careers pages. Visit bigga.org.uk/careers to see our latest opportunities and find out more about advertising your position. Call 01347 833 800 or email info@bigga.co.uk

Greenkeeper

Les Bordes Golf Club, France



Les Bordes is a private members golf club south of Paris in the Loire Valley. Home to two championship courses; the World Top 100 Gil Hanse (2021) design New Course and the Robert Von Hagge Old Course (1987).

This is a vital role to the members experience and the quality of the golf courses, both in the presentation and playability. Expected duties under the guidance of the Superintendent would be:

- Experience with the safe operation of motorised equipment.
- Experience with the principles to safely operate gasoline and diesel engines.
- Mechanical aptitude.
- French speaking not compulsory.
- Remuneration to match expertise level of candidate.
- Accommodation support and allowance can also be supplied.

Please send applications to jack.laws@lesbordes.com

Course Manager

West Hove Golf Club, Sussex



We are looking to recruit a course manager to join our excellent team and friendly club. This is a great opportunity for a suitably qualified greenkeeper to advance their career.

Applicants should possess the following qualifications: Minimum 5 years in golf course experience/management and minimum 3 years' experience in a senior role. Minimum level 3 qualification in Sports Turf Management or equivalent, PA1, PA2 and PA6 spraying certificates. Strong attention to detail, good time management and communication skills and a full and clean UK driving licence.

We are offering: a competitive salary including O/T, holiday entitlement, pension scheme, BIGGA membership, continual professional development opportunities and uniform/PPE.

Please send covering letter along with your CV by email to gary@westhovegolfclub.co.uk by May 31st 2024

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Practical Greenkeeping

Refine your skillset and expand your knowledge



David Jones, Course Manager at Knutsford, explains how his team are tackling the ongoing issue of moisture management



**What we do
in... June**
Club: Knutsford
Golf Club

I started at Knutsford in September 2019 and it was soon clear that moisture management and improving the playing surface quality were going to be of paramount importance.

The course is relatively free-draining and heavily lined with oaks and beech, which can present certain challenges, especially for moisture management and growing fine turf.

The greens were high in organic matter and thatch, making them soft in winter but quick to dry out in summer and prone to hydrophobic dry patch. My team and I sought to reduce the organic matter while increasing root depth and overall plant health.

We set out a simple, yet regular aeration plan, with deep slitting during winter and a regular solid tine during summer. This is in

conjunction with a summer topdressing and a tailored wetting agent programme.

Many greens were and still are surrounded by trees which take up all the moisture during summer and reduce sunlight and airflow, particularly during winter. We set out a tree management plan including lifting canopies, heavy pruning and even removing some trees. Almost immediately, the greens and plant health improved.



Wetting agents have been a great tool.

We first started with Aqueduct liquid, a curative wetting agent to fix all the hydrophobicity and reset the soil. This is followed by a monthly application of Aquatrols Zipline during the challenging summer months. Being able to keep the greens drier and firmer is not only conserving water and saving cost, but also enabling us to further improve the playing surface and reduce organic matter.

During winter, after we deep tine, we follow with Dispatch Sprayable. This surfactant breaks surface tension of water and helps further increase the percolation rate. The aeration and Dispatch are keeping the greens drier during the wetter months.

With this wetting agent plan, along with our agronomic and aeration plan, we have certainly seen improvements – less organic matter, deeper rooting and improvements in overall plant health and playing surfaces.

This winter's rainfall presented huge challenges for many greenkeepers, including us at Knutsford. However, the plans we put in place and the work we continue to do ensured it was better for us than it would have been. **GI**

“ Being able to keep the greens drier and firmer is not only conserving water and saving cost, but also enabling us to further improve the playing surface and reduce organic matter levels

A close-up photograph of a golf course grass blade, likely a bentgrass, showing signs of dollar spot disease. The grass blade is yellowed and has a distinct white, fuzzy growth (mycelium) on its surface, which is characteristic of the fungus. The background is a blurred green, suggesting a healthy lawn.

Golf's nemesis: Exploring the impact of dollar spot on golf courses

Kelly-Marie Clack, Agronomy Technical Manager for Origin Amenity Solutions, discusses the growing presence of dollar spot on our golf courses and how to deal with it.

Dollar spot is a relatively new disease to the UK and 2023 saw the largest outbreak we have seen on our shores.

Previous outbreaks had been restricted to the Channel Islands and the south of the United Kingdom, but the high humidity experienced in the UK last year led to outbreaks being observed as far north as Aberdeen.

In the United States, this is considered the most detrimental disease to golf courses, as it is a summer disease that can severely affect surface aesthetics as well as performance.

At the time of year that golfers expect firm, true and smooth surfaces, we observe tanned, pitted spots all over the green.

The symptoms of dollar spot

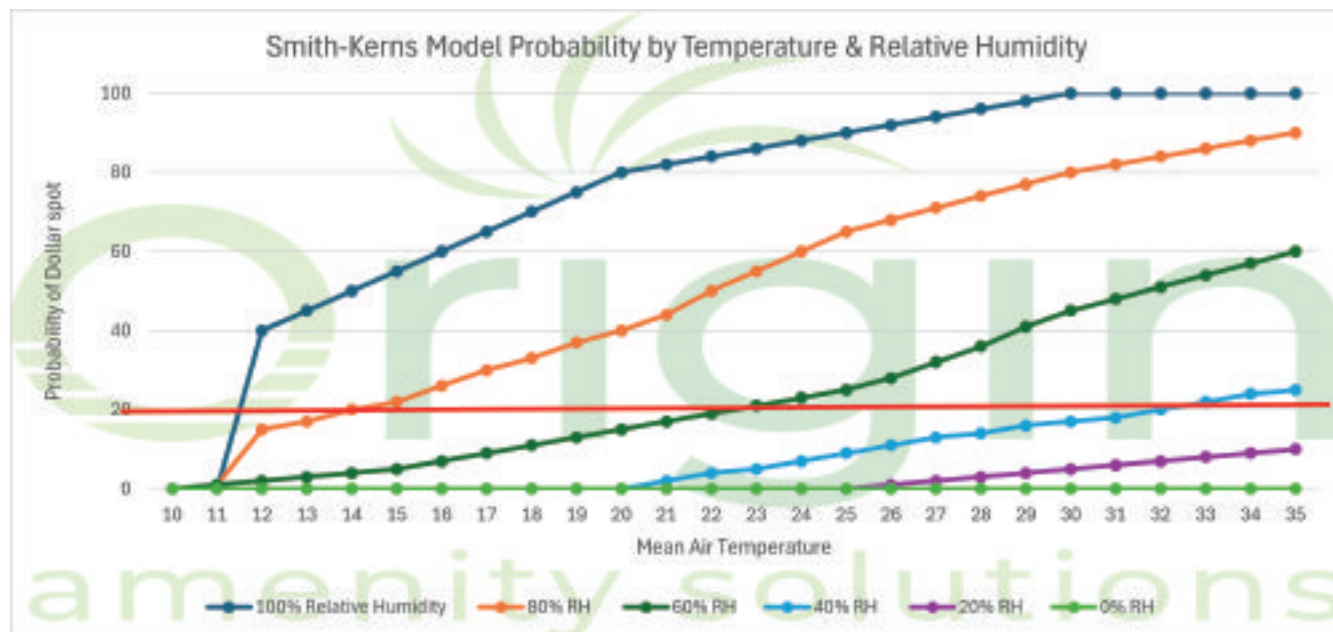
The tell-tale signs of the disease are tanned spots about the size of a dollar coin (dollar spot!) - around 2-5cm in diameter. They usually appear on highly managed turf such as tees, fairways, approaches and greens. On close inspection, hourglass-shaped lesions can be seen on the leaf blade. Spots can typically coalesce, which can wipe out large areas of turf.

This is a fungal disease, which is spread through small bits of mycelium moving to a new plant host. They move in water and can also be spread on shoes, golf equipment and turf management equipment.

This disease does not produce spores, but scientific experts in the US believe that it could be entering the seedling of the plant and spreading as the seed drops.



Above: Hourglass-shaped lesion on leaf blade



Above: The Smith-Kerns Model shows the probability of a disease outbreak

Environmental conditions

If environmental conditions are conducive to the disease requirements, an outbreak could be imminent. Temperature can range between 12 to 32 Celsius with an 80 per cent relative humidity. Leaf wetness, low fertility, susceptible grass species and surface wetness can also encourage the disease activity. Collecting weather data is important for preventative monitoring of dollar spot.

Disease model

The widely used Smith-Kerns Dollar Spot Model uses a five-day rolling average of relative humidity and average air temperature to give the probability of a disease outbreak. If the risk reaches 20 per cent probability, a preventative integrated pest management (IPM) programme is recommended to prevent disease.

It is important to use forecasted weather data to plan. If probability is above 20 per cent and increasing for the seven days ahead, implement your IPM strategy. Relative humidity is heavily weighted in this model. Temperature can be as low as 12 to 15 Celsius, but if relative humidity is 100 per cent the probability of dollar spot is 40 per cent.

Management strategy

Points to consider in regard to cultural practices that can help support dollar spot management include overseeding with grass species and cultivars that are less susceptible to dollar spot. Some fescue, bent and creeping bent species are excellent for dollar spot resistance.

“At the time of year that golfers expect firm, true and smooth surfaces, we observe tanned, pitted spots all over the green

Studies in the US on creeping bent grasses show a decrease in dollar spot from rolling greens, a 61 per cent decrease when rolling twice per week and 95 per cent decrease from four times per week. Rolling is only recommended when conditions are conducive.

Dollar spot is a foliar disease so maintaining sharp blades

About Kelly-Marie Clack

Kelly-Marie Clack is the Technical Manager for Origin Amenity Solutions, the UK's largest supplier of innovative products and solutions for the turf, amenity and grounds maintenance sector. She works closely with all areas of the business to promote innovative, research-based solutions that will optimise turf health and surface performance. Kelly has a genuine passion for the industry, innovation and sustainability. She delivers workshops and training events that promote good stewardship of amenity spaces, that look amazing, and perform to an exceptionally high standard.





Above and Below: Dollar Spot causes tanned spots around the size of a dollar coin on turf

on all maintenance equipment will reduce damage to the leaf tissue and minimise sites for the fungus to enter the leaf tissue.

Dollar spot is often associated with low fertility. Collecting clip volume data can be an extremely useful data set when planning your nutritional inputs, and collecting this alongside growth potential will give you growth ratio data.

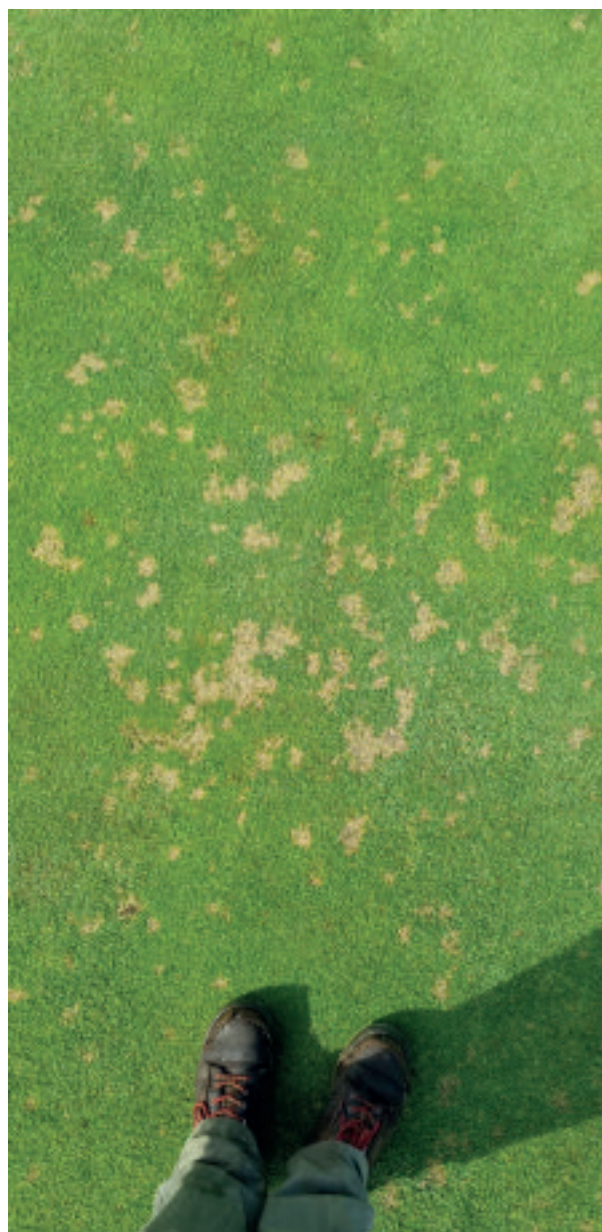
As with most diseases, moisture management is key to reducing the possibility of an outbreak.

- Irrigation cycles should run in the early hours of the morning rather than in the evening to avoid prolonged leaf wetness, or short irrigation application during the night to break leaf wetness duration if a dew forms early evening.
- Irrigate to depth to ensure good soil moisture management, monitoring evapotranspiration rates to avoid moisture deficit. This will reduce surface moisture and encourage root development for a healthier plant.
- Remove dew as early as possible and rotate cutting regime, so you don't remove dew from the last green every time you cut.
- Use wetting agents to reduce surface tension and allow water to penetrate into the soil profile more efficiently. Water will spread through the profile to produce a consistent moisture level.

There have been some in vitro trials indicating, but not conclusive, that encouraging an alkaline pH on the leaf surface can lead to a natural suppression of dollar spot. Using the principles of the Origin Amenity Solutions 20/20/30 strategy, but with more alkaline constituents, progress is being made in the field to support dollar spot integrated pest management plans.

A recommended fungicide for dollar spot prevention is Exteris Stressgard. In addition, Stressgard is a proven technology that mitigates stress and maintains plant health to improve consistency in turf quality, therefore delivering great playing surfaces.

Exteris Stressgard delivers the immediate aesthetic improvements and long-term plant health benefits proven with Stressgard technology. [GI](#)





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Weather data for turf decisions

Changing climatic weather patterns create challenges for daily decision making, but making sense of all the data can prove difficult

Weather conditions have a huge influence on almost every turf action. It's little wonder that most greenkeepers have three or four weather apps on their phones to plan daily activities, but with the difficulty to filter data that is actually relevant to turf management decisions.

Climatic changes and increasing unpredictability of the weather, including more extremes and prolonged periods of stress, with faster switches between conditions, all add uncertainty and challenges to turf management.

Forecasts, of both weather and turf management decision support models - including disease risk forecasting, Growth Potential and Growing Degree Days - are hugely important in predicting what is likely to happen over coming days and weeks.

But equally important, and missing

from most sources available, are the conditions experienced over recent days, which will be impacting on turf health and performance now. That also has the implication on pressure of pests and diseases that have been building up.

The introduction of the Syngenta Turf Advisor app has provided instant access to a wealth of useful weather data specifically selected to help with proactive turf management decisions in one place. It includes the important previous and forecast conditions, pre-

sented in a format that can be tailored through the year to any changing situation.

Disease models

All disease models currently available in the UK for turf are calculated from weather data. They would more accurately be described as forecasts of climatic conditions that will influence disease pressure.

The models primarily look at what weather conditions are conducive to disease development, often based on research in controlled lab situations and validated with field studies.

Early in the development of the Syngenta GreenCast disease forecasting, evaluation by STRI in Yorkshire determined that it was possible to maintain cleaner greens with fungicide applications dictated solely by

Read this for:

- Interpreting weather data
- Understanding disease pressure models
- Developing ITM strategies



Author: Sean Loakes
Syngenta Technical Manager UK & Ireland



Weather climatic conditions will encourage disease to develop, where turf management practices allow. Turf Advisor provides relevant weather data in one place to help focus proactive ITM decisions.

to highlight when disease could be most damaging.

In the case of the increasingly reported dollar spot, the *Syngenta Dollar Spot State of the Nation 2024* report highlighted that even under repeated high Smith-Kerns pressure, courses that instigated an effective Integrated Turf Management strategy - primarily involving nutrition, rolling, moisture management and preventative fungicides - reported little or no disease activity on greens' surfaces.

Conversely, it was also identified that where turf was managed in such a way that enabled disease activity, a high incidence of disease was often reported on courses that experienced relatively low Smith-Kerns disease model pressure.

This has reinforced the importance of calibrating disease models to the specific situation on any course, and using local knowledge and experience to interpret the information when making a decision.

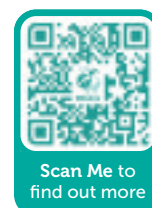
Each course would need to set a benchmark disease model figure that indicates the pressure and trigger point for their situation, as well as what level of infection is acceptable to dictate cost effective actions.

Interpreting data

There are often other weather metrics that will impact on conditions that are not taken into account by a disease model. For example, a bright, warm, windy day will dry leaf surfaces far faster than still, dull conditions - which will significantly reduce pressure and risk of disease.

Creating a Turf Advisor app dashboard that includes other weather factors that underpin a disease model enables better interpretation of the data to make decisions.

Weather data models do have an increasingly important role in guiding more effective decision making on a daily basis. But they are only ever a decision support tool, which needs to be used in conjunction with greenkeepers' experience and local knowledge in ITM strategies. **GI**



Weather data models have an important role to help daily decision making

modelled disease pressure alerts of climatic conditions. Furthermore, it was achieved using fewer, more precisely timed preventative applications over the course of the season, compared to routine treatment or applications at the first signs of disease.

Most turf disease models are still based on temperature and moisture levels that influence disease development - which is clearly very simplistic compared to real life conditions, where multiple influencing factors are in play. They can give accurate guidance, however do need to be carefully interpreted with the benefit of experience.

Influencing factors

Turf models cannot predict if spores will be present to initiate infection. Furthermore, no account is made of turf management practices, which have by far the greatest influence on whether disease outbreaks will actually impact on turf.

For some turf diseases, such as microdochium, the pathogen is now so widespread and endemic in thatch that, if weather conditions are conducive and turf management practices create an environment where it can thrive, then infection will almost certainly occur. As such, the GreenCast microdochium model can be a good guide

More than one third of all reported 'over seven day' injuries and 10 per cent of 'major injuries' in the workplace are associated with manual handling.

Those figures underline how important it is for everyone to be aware of the dangers associated with manual handling.

Anyone involved in the moving and handling of goods and people could be at risk, even repetitive handling of light loads can cause injury. Inadequate ergonomics and workplace layout are a factor in many hazardous manual handling tasks.

Poor position, forced or awkward movements of the body, lifting excessive loads, or excessive repetition of movement can result in problems such as back injuries, or severe pains in the upper limbs, neck or shoulders resulting in strain injury.

What is manual handling?

Manual handling is described as any task in which a load is supported, lifted, pulled or pushed by hand or body force. In effect, any activity that requires an individual to lift, move or support a load will be classified as a manual handling task.



Manual handling: **How to assess risk and avoid injury**

In an industry where getting hands-on is part of the day job, it's vital to make sure best practice is followed when it comes to manual handling

It's vital to make sure best practice is followed when it comes to manual handling

Five considerations when assessing manual handling risk

As with any assessment, employees should always be involved in the process.

1) Task

Consider what has to be done and whether it can be achieved any other way. Does the activity involve twisting, stooping, bending, excessive travel, pushing, pulling or precise positioning of the load, sudden movement, inadequate rest or recovery periods, team handling or seated work?

2) Individual

Is the individual fit to carry out the task? Does the individual require strength or height for the activity? Are they pregnant, disabled or suffering from a health problem? Are they trained or do they require specialist knowledge or training?

3) Load

How heavy is the load, can it be handled easily, and can it be split up into smaller parts? Is the load heavy, unwieldy, difficult to grasp, have sharp edges, hot, cold, difficult to grip, are the contents likely to move or shift?

4) Environment

Is there sufficient room to lift easily, is it too hot or cold etc? Are there space constraints, uneven, slippery or unstable floors, variations in floor levels, extremely hot, cold or humid conditions, poor lighting, poor ventilation or gusty winds?

5) Other factors

Is movement or posture restricted by

clothing or personal protective equipment? Is there an absence of the correct/suitable PPE being worn?

Key requirements

The main requirements to manage manual handling activities are:

- Completion of a suitable and sufficient risk assessment for manual handling tasks
- Providing staff with information, instruction and training on safe manual handling techniques
- Assessment of each task taking in to consideration the task itself, individuals involved, the load to be moved, environment the task is being carried out in and any other relevant factors that may pose difficulty in completing the manual handling task
- Providing staff with suitable and maintained mechanical lifting aids when required to assist in reducing risk to staff
- To provide personal protective equipment to staff who are involved in manual handling tasks when deemed necessary

Five questions to consider

- Can the task be completed by eliminating risk of manual handling?
- Is the area where the manual handling task is being carried out appropriately segregated?
- Can the load be carried by more than just one person?
- Has the equipment being used to assist in the manual handling task been formally inspected?
- Has the route been cleared from all obstructions? **GI**



“As with any assessment, employees should be involved in the process



Manual Handling Operations guidance

The Manual Handling Operations Regulations state that employers should adopt a hierarchy of control measures:

- To avoid hazardous manual handling operations so far as is reasonably practicable
- To assess any hazardous manual handling operation that cannot be avoided
- To reduce the risk of injury so far as is reasonably practicable

Employers have a duty to:

- Assess the risks from manual handling in their workplace
- Provide appropriate controls and training for their employees to prevent injury

Employees have a duty to:

- Follow the laid-down procedure
- Make proper use of equipment provided
- Generally co-operate with the organisation on health and safety matters

A person wearing a blue long-sleeved shirt and khaki pants is shown from the waist down, leaning forward. They are holding a handful of brown seed in their right hand, which is positioned over a vibrant green lawn. The seed is falling from their fingers, creating a vertical stream. The background is a soft-focus view of a golf course with trees and a cloudy sky.

Proactive overseeding

You can learn how to grow healthier grass without needing to resort to fungicides, explains Richard Brown of Germinal Amenity



It has never been more important to be sustainably managing species of grass that are less susceptible to disease

Key takeaway

A regular regime of proactive seeding will combat poa annua on your greens and, at the same time, reduce disease incidence

Let's talk about the problem of poa annua. It is well known that poa annua is the most disease-susceptible grass on your greens.

With the loss of so many curative fungicides, it's never been more important to be sustainably managing species of grass that are less susceptible to diseases like anthracnose, fusarium and increasingly dollar spot. The best way to reduce disease incidence on your greens without chemical inputs is via prevention.

Improve the look and performance

The approach we advise at Germinal Amenity is proactive seeding – a modern programme to help reduce poa annua and strengthen the look and performance of your greens. For the purposes of proactive seeding, we are considering bentgrass. Although fescues can be disease tolerant, they do not proliferate under modern mowing heights of four millimetres or less and, therefore, are not the correct species to aggressively outcompete poa annua.

How does proactive overseeding work?

The core aim is to significantly increase the amount of bentgrass so that it outnumbers poa annua on your greens. You are going to have to overseed more and it should be considered a routine maintenance. We recommend proactive seeding at least twice a year, with three times being more ideal to combat the efficiency of poa annua. A blend of bentgrasses is best with a minimum total of 100 kilos of bentgrass per hectare per annum across 18 greens. Of course, this means we're advocating sowing in seasons outside of the traditional late-summer window. This could mean overseeding in spring, the height of summer, or even in the winter months.

Seasonal sowing

There are pros and cons of sowing in each different season, but all can be successful. The important point is to weigh up the

overall seedling mortality rather than just the initial take. In the traditional late-summer window, seedlings have the advantage of high soil temperatures and rapid growth, but they have the disadvantage of emerging when playing pressure is high and just ahead of the main disease pressure season, which can take its toll on young seedlings. The polar opposite to that would be cold seeding or dormant seeding in November and December, which will see seedlings emerge more slowly in cooler spring temperatures and the overall germination rate will be lower, but those seedlings have the advantage of emerging when playing pressure is light and heights of cutter increased, and of course they will be well hardened off ahead of any main disease pressure.

One overseed is not enough

If you are serious about outcompeting poa annua, you are staking a lot on just one overseed per year. You need to be doing more. That requires a judgment call on the pros and cons of overseeding at different times of the year, products to use, and why firstly you need to be using varieties that are comfortable with modern mowing heights. For mowing heights of 3.5mm or less, we strongly advocate the use of a creeping bent. Creeping bentgrasses excel at these lower cutting heights and this is important, especially when overseeding during the height of summer. We need to be using varieties that thrive under low-input conditions so minimum water and minimal input conditions that weaken poa annua.

The right varieties

Proactive seeding with creeping bents relies heavily on varietal selection. Choose the wrong variety and it is going to struggle or, even worse, you're going to encourage the poa annua in an attempt to keep that variety alive. You also need to be selecting varieties that have an inherent resistance to disease such as fusarium. **GI**



About Richard

With over 30 years' experience in the amenity, turfgrass and landscaping sectors, Richard Brown is well-known to greenkeepers across the UK. His career in the amenity sector started at the tender age of 14 when he began working at a Lincolnshire plant nursery and he later gained a degree in horticulture.

Richard joined Germinal in 2002 and is responsible for overseeing all aspects of the company's amenity business.

Richard is FACTS (Fertiliser Advisers Certification and Training Scheme) qualified and will happily talk at length about how to get the best results from golf and sports pitch-specific grass seed mixtures.



Could a robotic mower help your course?

Husqvarna sees increased demand for robotic solutions at UK golf courses

Husqvarna, the global leader in autonomous robotic mowing, is seeing high demand this year in golf courses opting for its robotic mowing solutions. Husqvarna launched its large area solution CEORA™ in 2022, capable of covering areas up to 75,000m². Equipped with a cutting deck designed for sports turf as low as 10mm, CEORA™ is rapidly becoming accepted as an additional team member on golf courses.

Greenkeepers around the country have been impressed with the quality of cut on the fairway and semi-rough, with the Husqvarna machines even being able to work through the recent wet conditions when traditional ride-on

machines have struggled to cut on the saturated ground.

Craig Stoba, Professional Robotics Key Account Manager at Husqvarna UK says the main challenges he is seeing that clubs are facing revolve around labour issues and rising costs. He says, "Clubs are struggling to find the staff they need and greenkeeper retention rates are low in many clubs. Even clubs with a larger green teams are realising that time is limited to maintain the course to the required level. This combined with rising fuel costs, the need for clubs to be more sustainable, as well as the rising cost and lead times for new traditional machinery has meant that course



managers are looking towards Husqvarna solutions as an answer to these challenges.”

Craig adds, “We’ve seen significant rainfall this year which has resulted in course closures nationwide and with greenkeepers left with no means of cutting or even getting machines out onto fairways. Now that courses are starting to dry out, greenkeepers are playing catch up to get the course to the condition it should have been weeks earlier. Utilising Husqvarna robotics means that clubs can reduce this pressure, as the course can be presented at a consistent height, without the worry of damage that traditional

machinery would cause in such conditions. It also frees up the team to concentrate on the more labour-intensive tasks around the course.”

Husqvarna is seeing the apprehension around robotics diminish, as they’re inundated with requests from golf courses. “When we used to demo machines a few years ago, we’d see some scepticism over the need to utilise robotics within some clubs as they had a full team and a full fleet of traditional machinery” added Craig. “However, these same clubs are now coming back to us as they understand the benefits of robotics and how it can help ensure that standards are met.”

As more golf courses pledge to reduce emissions, greenkeepers are being challenged on how they can contribute to this. “In the past, clubs would like the idea that they are being more environmentally conscious by using robotics, however, we’re now finding that sustainability is becoming a driving factor in the decision to switch to robotics” says Craig. A study by Husqvarna shows that a CEORATM 546 EPOSTM, when compared to a diesel front

Husqvarna believes there isn’t a one-size-fits-all approach to robotics

mower with a 19kw power output and a 155cm cutting deck, can reduce CO2 emissions in one season by 83%.

All golf courses are different, and Husqvarna believes there isn’t a one-size-fits-all approach to robotics. Craig commented, “Every club has different challenges and pain points, and it is our job to provide a bespoke service that addresses this and will make a noticeable difference to the club. A lot of clubs have varying levels of robotics knowledge so it is our job to create a plan which will be suitable for their ambitions and experience.

“We’re also mindful that greenkeepers know how they want the course presented, so in many cases it is our job to simply show the concept of robotics, show the machines in action and let them see how and where the machines would make a difference. Whether this is starting with one small machine working on areas around the clubhouse, to large conversion plans to utilise robotics on all fairways to replace a traditional fairway mower, we work with the greenkeepers to plan the different phases so that robotics can be introduced as part of their longer-term plans.

“Part of our planning process is also working with clubs to ensure that there is the correct mix of machines working across the course to maximise efficiency. Whether this be a Husqvarna CEORATM for fairways, Automower® 550 EPOSTM machines for surrounds and approaches, or our Automower® 535 AWD for steep banks, we work with our customers to create the right plan and fleet of machines that will best suit their needs.” **GI**

For more information on Husqvarna and its robotic solutions visit www.husqvarna.com/uk.



Kubota UK explore 'off-play' but 'on-point' mowing

When we talk about mowing in a golf club environment, the emphasis will tend to be on the finish and finesse demanded for precision play on the greens, tees and fairways. However, how much consideration is given to the options available when it comes to the mowing and management of 'off-play' areas? Matt Wilson, Kubota UK Groundcare Product Manager, discusses the advantages and potential limitations of different mower configurations in maintaining high standards site-wide.

Ask any turf professional about the type of mower used on a golf course and there's a strong likelihood the top answer will be a cylinder mower. While these come in all sizes and set-ups, it's what we know and rely on to

deliver the millimetre adjustment and precision for cutting at low heights and on undulating ground. Designed with that specific purpose in mind, it's therefore unlikely that the same cylinder mower would be employed to cut long, dense roughs, practice areas or car park surrounds.

With the best mower design in the world, the cut performance can still be compromised by the weather and the ability to mow an area in the first place! With most clubs resigning their mowers to the shed for the first few months of 2024, we needn't say anymore...

So, for areas away from main play where perhaps the key considerations are speed and efficiency, alongside presentation, what options are available? Ride on mowers for the maintenance

of areas such as the roughs will typically offer two types of cutting deck – flail or rotary. Flail mowers could be categorised as the 'hardest' option available, with very few limitations on where and what you can cut. I've heard of instances where stones and bricks have proven no match for a flail mower (though it's not recommended to try this at home), so situations with high quantities of long grass can be cut quickly and easily. This durability comes at a cost, literally, with flail mowers demanding a higher retail value.

Rotary mowers have long proven their versatility. Within the Kubota range are a number of ride-on mowers with rotary decks, providing the end user with different options

“ Rotary mowers have long proven their versatility. Within the Kubota range are a number of ride-on mowers with rotary decks, providing different options when it comes to discharge method



Left, the Kubota G-261 with Rear Discharge Deck. Above, the Kubota F-391 mower with side discharge

when it comes to discharge method – side discharge, rear discharge and mulching.

The advantages of a side discharge system, like that utilised on the Kubota F-Series and Z-Series of zero turn mower, are the speed of cut and distribution of clippings, quickly and evenly dispersed to the right-hand side of the mower deck. The spread of material, traditionally better than alternative discharge methods, leaves a more aesthetically-pleasing finish which would be preferable for more frequently visited areas.

The limitation with side-discharge is that a good knowledge of the area is required to best navigate the mower where effectively only one side of the deck is cutting at any time. A clever path can negate the challenges posed by trees, fences and other obstacles but could contribute to the discharge of clippings into areas where you don't want them – on pathways, pedestrian areas or the clubhouse patio where a greater clean-up may then be required.

With rear-discharge mowers, such

as the Kubota G-261 RD, control of cut and the resultant clippings is more straight-forward. Traditionally the cutting implement will be in the wheelbase of the machine, giving you a compact and highly manoeuvrable mower, capable of cutting high volumes with good speed and accuracy. This is an ideal solution for mowing around trees, hedge lines or perimeter fencing, or for the cutting of long grass areas such as roughs or wildflower patches. The beauty of using such a mower for wildflower management is the increased potential for self-seeding.

While not an exhaustive list, the other main dispersal method would be mulching, which involves repeatedly cutting the grass and recycling the fine material back into the turf profile. This circular system presents many benefits to turf health in areas where accumulations of organic matter are not a concern, leaving a clean finish and replacing vital nutrients into the ground where perhaps fewer inputs are traditionally applied. Most machines across the

Kubota portfolio have the capability to fit a mulching kit.

The benefits of mulching to surface quality may be offset by the time the process takes, and the increased risk of clogging when operating in wetter conditions. Mulching would also not be recommended for areas where thatch management programmes are in place, to prevent the requirement for additional scarification.

No matter the method of mowing employed, a few common denominators apply – ensure the deck is clean, the blades are sharp and keep on top of regular maintenance to ensure optimal performance. After that, the choices are plentiful, so speak to your local Kubota dealer about the unique nature of your site to find the mowing solution that works for you and your course.

For more information, visit www.kubota-eu.com/GI





Two ICL biostimulants prove better than one



Author: Henry Bechelet, Technical
Sales Manager, ICL

A trial conducted at St Andrews Links in 2022 illustrated the advantages of combining two proven technologies. Tank-mixing the seaweed biostimulant Vitalnova SMX with the non-microbial biostimulant surfactant H2Pro TriSmart programme yielded significant additional benefits. This research emphasised the capacity of the combined treatments to improve turf health, particularly during dry summer months.

The trial, employing a randomised, replicated, block design, was conducted on a fescue-dominant golf green turf nursery underlain by a sandy rootzone.

The study aimed to assess the benefits of incorporating Vitalnova SMX, a liquid biostimulant containing 10% *Ascophyllum nodosum* seaweed solids, into a TriSmart wetting agent programme (a product that also boasts proven biostimulant properties).

In the trial, plots treated only with TriSmart and untreated plots served as bases for statistical comparison.

The trial was assessed every 2-3 weeks for turf quality, Normalized Difference Vegetation Index (NDVI), and soil moisture content at two depths (38mm and 76mm). At the trial's conclusion, soil samples were analysed for rootzone microbial content.

Over the course of seven monthly applications from March until August, the assessment results revealed that the H2Pro TriSmart-only programme significantly increased volumetric moisture content (VMC) at both depths, as well as achieving improvements in Turf Quality and NDVI compared to the untreated plots.

Most notably, the addition of Vitalnova SMX to the H2Pro TriSmart programme further enhanced Turf Quality Scores, both early and late in the season, surpassing results from the TriSmart-only treatments.

In terms of rootzone microbial analysis, the TriSmart-only treated plots contained significantly greater total bacteria, total fungi, and total microbial biomass than the untreated control plots.

The combination of TriSmart and SMX significantly increased microbial biomass and total fungi beyond the already enhanced TriSmart-only results.

Key findings from the trial include:

- The H2Pro TriSmart-only programme resulted in a significant increase in Turf Quality, % VMC (to 38mm and 76mm), and NDVI.
- Tank-mixing Vitalnova SMX with H2Pro TriSmart significantly boosted Turf Quality Score beyond that achieved with H2Pro TriSmart alone (but did not affect the % VMC).
- Applications of H2Pro TriSmart and Vitalnova SMX combined also resulted in a notable increase in total fungi and total microbial biomass in the rootzone.

"Our primary objective was to demonstrate the efficacy of H2Pro TriSmart in managing soil moisture levels and reducing turf stress, and to explore how Vitalnova SMX could further enhance these benefits," stated Dr Richard Collins, ICL's International Technical Manager for Amega Sciences. "The results clearly demonstrate the advantages of integrating these products into a turf management programme, offering significant improvements in turf quality and rootzone health."

Richard concluded, "This trial not only underscores the potential of these treatments to improve turf performance during critical stress periods but also opens avenues for further research into sustainable turf management practices." **GI**

How to start the journey to better year-round greens



Alistair J Beggs
Head of Sustainable
Agronomy Services, The R&A

After months of seemingly relentless rain, the ultimate objective for all course managers is clear. Here is some help on how to start addressing the issue

As we reflect on another desperately wet autumn and winter, golfers and greenkeepers up and down the land are battling their frustrations and hoping the rain will stop. The climatologists are telling us, 'we told you so, expect more of this' - yet our abiding hope each year is that the worst won't happen, and we'll be OK. The brutal facts are that, despite some investment in drainage and reconstruction in recent decades, most of the greens on golf courses throughout the UK remain 'push up' and soil-based in their construction.

Many of these greens are close to - or more than - 100 years old, and depending upon their design, their

above, but sound drainage underpins all elements of greenkeeping, and without it achieving good year-round standards is almost impossible unless both the topography and the profile's physical properties are conducive to adequate drainage function.

Drainage performance can be measured using a double ring infiltrometer. This is a rather cumbersome piece of equipment, but the unit measures the rate at which water moves through a profile in mm/hour, and when profiles are saturated it provides a good measure of any green's ability to drain.

A good performing push-up green may show values of between 10 and

programme or constructional and drainage amendment will be necessary.

The first step is to determine the cause of poor drainage. This may be due to an excessive level of thatch (surface or buried), or due to inadequate percolation and drainage through and out of native soils. It could also be due to layering or, more simply, it can be a result of sealing or compaction.

Other possible causes include influx of water from adjacent areas, for example if the green sits below a slope, or a failure of existing internal drainage systems due to blockage or tree root invasion. This is a very common problem where stands of trees are allowed to crowd out playing surfaces - again all too common on so many of our courses.

For many clubs, there is a need to act if greens are showing signs of poor drainage. Procrastinating and hoping the problem will go away could result in increased business risk in the future.

If nothing else, start by optimising the growing environment to aid drying. Then assess the level of risk and consider the solutions available. Future proofing your main asset is essential. **GI**

“ Sound drainage underpins all elements of greenkeeping and without it achieving good year-round standards is almost impossible

usage levels, the quality of the base material and the appropriateness of the maintenance applied to them, their performance can vary quite markedly. Some still perform quite well, others perform very poorly and are simply not up to the job of providing year-round play. However, when we say "perform", what do we mean? Most golfers' assessment of failure relates to a lack of firmness and poor drainage, and this often leads to a deteriorating sward composition, thatch deposition and disease susceptibility, which are all issues that more regularly concern greenkeeping professionals. The truth is that failure can be due to any of the

15mm/hour. Once values drop below 6 or 7mm per hour (depending on the green's location) it is likely that turf performance and quality may be compromised.

In comparison, it is not unusual for a more modern green construction, for example USGA specification, to show infiltration values (in situ) in excess of 25mm/hour. Infiltration can provide an objective record of performance, and any declines can be picked up and dealt with promptly.

If infiltration numbers are low, organic matter and green closure levels are high and feedback from golfers is poor, then it is likely that adjustments to the maintenance



Our monthly column from The R&A's Sustainable Golf team shares news and insights on agronomy and sustainability themes. For more information on The R&A's Sustainable Agronomy Service please contact sustainablegolf@randa.org

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