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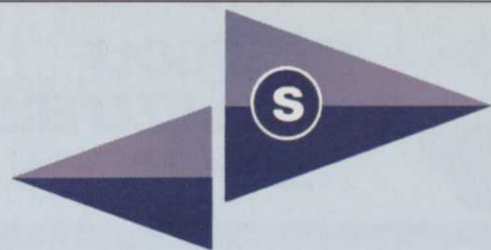
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John Crawford's year as chairman of BIGGA came to a close at the National Conference. He told Greenkeeper International what it's like being in the hot seat

End of term report

Being chairman of the British and International Golf Greenkeepers Association was an honour which I did not set out to achieve, but one which I certainly took great pride in.

I see the chairman's role outside board of management meetings as one of being 'PR' or 'front man', attending the various events which are organised in conjunction with our trade sponsors and any section/region events to which he is invited.

It is my opinion that not enough of the sections/regions extend an invitation to the chairman to attend their events, while appreciating that someone who is working full-time would find it difficult to attend them all during his year in office, at least the invitation should be extended.

What were the highlights?

The highlights of my year were too numerous to mention but obviously being chairman during the most successful BTME so far, attending the numerous functions and events to which I was invited and the GCSAA show in Dallas, even though I was somewhat apprehensive about wearing a kilt for the first (and last?) time in my life, are all events of which I will have many fond memories.

What were the worst moments?

There were one or two low points during the year, which I would rather not go into, but hopefully they were not to the detriment of the Association.

What did you learn during your year?

I certainly learnt there are still too many different views amongst the members as to what the Association is about and what the board of management are attempting to achieve on their

behalf. This can be changed with the improved communication which is now taking place through Greenkeeper International and with members of the staff from HQ attending more section and region events.

How much time did it take being chairman?

If the past chairman told the incoming chairman how much time was required during his term of office he would probably resign on the spot! It is something you want to do for the Association and are willing to sacrifice your own time freely. I reckon it took between 60-70 days, not counting section and region events in Scotland.

Did it help being out of work?

Being unemployed for part of my year of office made it easier for me to attend more functions/events than I would have felt comfortable doing if I had still been in employment, but it certainly did nothing for my self-confidence.

How do you see BIGGA's future?

Although the Association is growing slowly, there are still too many greenkeepers who are not members, which is disappointing as the benefits which can be derived from being a member are numerous. We must also endeavour to get every member to present a more professional image, ie. dress and self presentation.

Improved communication with employers needs to be achieved (a difficult task with some golf clubs) to inform them of what the benefits of their staff being members can mean to the club, ie. better education opportunities.

I feel that in the not too distant future the chairman will not come from within the board of

management, due to the amount of time involved in dealing with Association matters, perhaps he may well be a well known retired greenkeeper or someone associated with the greenkeeping/golf world.

What will you do now?

Hopefully I can find employment which will allow me to return to greenkeeping and try to continue with life as before - if not, who knows what lies ahead?

John Crawford has helped promote the status of greenkeepers through 33 years of membership with SGGA/SIGGA and BIGGA. During those years he has held numerous offices:

- 1981 - appointed to the Central Section committee
- 1983 - appointed chairman of the Central Section
- 1984 - appointed secretary of the central section
- 1989 - appointed to the board of management
- 1992 - appointed chairman of the Scottish Region
- 1993 - appointed chairman of BIGGA

Any final messages?

Yes, I would like to say a special thanks to everyone who gave me their support during my year as chairman - the members, fellow board members, Neil Thomas and all the staff at HQ, every company that gives superb support to the Association and last but not of all Ailsa, without whose wholehearted support and encouragement it would certainly have been a totally different year altogether.



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OPEN

Chris Boiling talks to Turnberry course manager George Brown to find out what's in store for contestants in this year's Open Tournament

Who can forget the 1977 Open, with two of the sport's all-time greats, Tom Watson and Jack Nicklaus, in peak form deciding the championship on the 18th green? Who can forget the 1986 Open, when Greg Norman battled against the wind and rain to claim his first major title?

Turnberry is hoping for an equally memorable tournament this year when it stages its third Open. And course manager George Brown is hoping for conditions and scores somewhere between the two earlier events.

In 1977 when Tom Watson won with a four-round aggregate of 268, it was hot and dry. In '86, Norman shot his level par 280 amid gale-force winds.

George Brown wants Turnberry to be a fair challenge – a stiff breeze and sunshine would be ideal with the top players shooting 67s and 68s. Without a breeze he reckons they could shoot low 60s, like Mark Hayes in '77 and Norman in '86, or even a 59. With too strong a wind many of them will struggle to break 80. Planning to be fair is going to be a problem.

"It's very difficult to set up a links fairly because if they play it how it is today, with no wind, they will shoot low 60s or even something silly like a 59. There's nothing wrong with that. We don't mind them doing that but if it weakens the course too much then some people may say it's not good enough to hold the Open.

"It's a question of getting the balance, that's what we're looking for at the moment."


That's why there have been a few minor modifications to the course.

"These golfers are so good now, they hit the ball so far, you have to keep making a few changes to keep up with them," explains George, 55, a top amateur player in his younger days.

The main differences from '86 are new bunkers on the opening two holes and 17th and wider fairways.

"After the '86 Open we thought the first fairway was a wee bit too narrow. Some of the top-class players were hitting an iron off the tee, even as low as a 4 iron, which we didn't think was the right way to start a championship. So, after a bit of thought and discussion and professional advice from an architect, we widened the fairway to the left and put two bunkers there to make it a challenging tee shot, and we tightened up the greenside bunkers. You can still lay up short of the bunkers if you have a head wind. If there's no wind or a back wind then you can easily carry them or there's a 20-yard gap if you fancy threading the ball through the middle. So it's a much fairer hole."

There are also two new bunkers on the second. "We thought the second hole was a wee bit weak so we added bunkers left and right to tighten up the tee shot. Again there's about an 18-20-yard gap if you fancy taking a chance. It'll make the players think for the Open, especially if there's a back



George Brown has been in greenkeeping for 40 years. He started at Princes, Sandwich, straight from school at the age of 15. He was there nine years. "When I went there I was the boy with 11 groundstaff. When I left nine years later I was still the boy...I thought I could do better for myself."

His next job was as the greenkeeper/pro at nine-hole Alton, in Hampshire. "Someone bet I could do it, I didn't think I could, but I applied for the first job that came along, it happened to be Alton and I thoroughly enjoyed it. It was fantastic experience. The members were very kind to me."

He stayed for three years with one tractor and one mower. He'd cut the greens, then go and cut the tees. Then give a lesson.

He went back to Princes as the gaffer and stayed for five years. Then in 1979 he joined Broome Park Golf and Country Club near Canterbury to oversee its construction and stayed on as golf manager – which meant running the whole complex, including the bars and restaurants.

In January '86 he moved to Turnberry to prepare for the Open. Eight years later he is still there and preparing for his second Open.

Having been a pro and Kent amateur champion, we wondered if he'd ever thought about going further on the pro side. "No, I made so much money when I was 24 I decided I'd made enough to pull out of it," he jokes. "No, seriously, I had no training as a pro, I did it as a bet." He now plays off 4.



'It's just like when the mother-in-law comes over for it's just that little bit extra effort'

TO IDEAS

wind, whether to hit a wood or lay-up with an iron."

The bunker that was out in the rough on the par 5 17th – "which no-one ever seemed to go in" – has been filled in and a new one built on the edge of the fairway to catch a slightly wayward tee shot. "I think this will play a major role in the eventual winner of the Open Championship. Again there's 18-20-yards on the left if you fancy driving past it."

"Par 5s on links courses in the summer can play short, but this bunker may make them think."

Wider fairways

All the fairways are a few paces wider. "The criticism from the '86 Open was the width of the fairways. They were too narrow. One of the most vigorous growing seasons we've ever had made the rough very dense and to add salt to the wounds we had horrendous weather for three out of the four days," recalls George.

More obvious differences between Turnberry when Norman first won a major and when he returns in July to defend his Royal St George's triumph are the new £4.5m clubhouse (opened by the Duke of York last June), the new leisure centre annexe to the hotel, and the fact that the 360-acre site, two courses and three-storey hotel have been taken over by a golf-orientated Japanese company.

Preparing for two years

George Brown and his team of 18-20 staff have been preparing for the Open for the last couple of years. But because it is attached to a 132-room, five-star hotel, it has to be kept in tiptop condition 52 weeks of the year anyhow. They have ongoing maintenance programmes

so that when the Open comes around "we don't have to do a lot different.

"It's just like when the mother-in-law comes over for tea on Sunday, it's just that little bit extra effort."

They have revetted 90 percent of the 66 bunkers over the last two winters (the other 10 per cent were done three years ago and do not need redoing). They will top-dress more frequently to ensure a smooth surface and step up their divotting programme (using caddies and paying them with free rounds on the Arran course).

"Presentation is the key. We're looking for perfection. But it doesn't matter how many hours we work or what jobs we do, at the end of the day there'll still be a few jobs we'd wish we'd done or hadn't quite got round to. It's like a garden, you never actually finish."

But he has had more time to prepare for the 123rd Open than he did for his first one in '86. He took over as Turnberry's course manager seven months before the championship following the death of Russell Brown. George said he seemed to spend most of his time trying to track down underground services and eliminate damage. But now he has detailed plans to help him.

The condition of the fairways, tees, greens and bunkers was great in '86. "Hopefully it will as good, if not in better, in '94," he says.

But don't expect it to look all green and lush. George does not believe that green is necessarily beautiful. "In early summer and autumn when the fairways and whole golf course is green and striped it does look rather beautiful. But when you have a dry spell for a week or two and the wind gets up off the sea, it can go very dusty and strawy and looks unkept at times. There's nothing wrong with

that, links are supposed to be fairly natural and fiery and supposed to have firm fairways. But now we have a new watering system, installed a couple of years ago, and hopefully with proper management we'll be able to strike the balance of not making it too lush and green and not making it too strawy and dusty and looking unkept. I see my role here as trying to keep a balance and keeping it links condition – firm and fast – but presented nicely."

In 1988 Turnberry was taken over by the Japanese company Nitto Kogyo which owns about 30 courses in Japan and several more in America and has just opened The Oxfordshire near London. All of their other courses are green and heavily watered.

"I see my role here as trying to keep Turnberry traditional," George reassures us. "This is the first links course that Nitto Kogyo have owned and it would be very easy for me with my irrigation computer to press a few buttons and step up the water and I have the budget to pile on the fertiliser to make it green and lush, but I refrain from doing that. We don't want a course like '77 where it is a struggle to keep grasses alive during the drought season, but then we don't want to be like American courses where you play target golf on soft, holding greens. I look at my role as trying to keep it 'down the middle', if you pardon the pun – traditional but well presented."

George says his new bosses have been very supportive. They have renewed most of his machinery and provided a new 10,000 sq ft maintenance facility with spacious 'bothy', showers, drying room, soil bays, purpose-built chemical stores, and a proper workshop with grinders and hydraulic lift for his full-time mechanic. ➔

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The new clubhouse at Turnberry, officially opened last June by the Duke of York

Sand blow

One of the biggest problems in recent years has been sand blow. For four or five years running in January or February ferocious winds from the Atlantic blew sand from the beach up over the 30-40ft dunes protecting the course and upto 50 yards inland. "You couldn't stand anywhere near the sixth green or 7th tees, the sand would almost cut your face to pieces. We've had as much as 2-3ft of sand on the 7th tees." Which, as you can imagine, destroyed the tees, and didn't do much to enhance the 6th and sometimes 5th greens. The greenstaff have wasted a lot of time shovelling and sweeping sand off the course. "Two years ago the whole squad spent two weeks pushing sand, got it all cleared up, then three weeks later it was back again, which is rather soul destroying." One year they even resorted to using a helicopter which hovered over the 6th green to dry the sand, making it easier to brush off without damaging the greens.

They tried planting marram grasses, but they disappeared with high tides. Then last year they installed snow fences (500 yards worth) in short sections pointing out to sea like groyne. It seems to have done the trick. "This is the first year in six years that we haven't had any sand blow, so we're pleased with that. And we're going into the summer with the 6th green and 7th tees looking quite good for a change. That was my only concern..."

Shaping up

The contractors moved in at the beginning of April and started laying the cables for the tented village which will be sited on the practice area between the two courses. This means the second hole of the Arran course becomes the practice ground with a grandstand and the 18th green on the Arran is used for additional putting practice. Grassy hol-

lows near it are to be turned into practice bunkers and the green extended.

The course closes at the end of June for final preparations - divotting, seeding, top-dressing etc.

Between now and then George will be involved in many meetings with the R&A, BBC and various contractors. He will be working closely with the contractors in planning the sites for about 39 static cameras, the routes for the grandstand erectors, the water and electricity pipes and the digging of big holes for septic tanks.

"It makes the day go round and it keeps us all occupied. Greenkeeping is just one part of it," he says in his usual laid-back manner.

During Open week he will be getting up at 3.30am to phone the Met Office at 3.40 - and plan his cutting regime accordingly. If it is going to be hot and windy he may leave the grass on the greens slightly longer, "otherwise it will be like putting on glass."

The week after the Open is more of a problem for George. "When the Open's finished, all the contractors etc want to do is get their material away from here onto the next site. Obviously

they're not so careful taking it down as they were putting it up. That's when most of the damage can be done to the ground, especially if we turn away."

Once the Open is over, George can start planning the other big jobs that need doing, like additional landscaping around the clubhouse and upgrading the Arran course in readiness for the 1996 British Amateur event which will be played over both courses - qualifying on the Arran and the finals on Ailsa.

"It's one big merry-go-round," says a contented George, who also has a big personal golfing date to look forward to - his debut in the British Seniors in August, along with St Andrews' Walter Woods.

George Brown on bunkers

"If you get in a bunker there is no written rule that you're supposed to get up and down for two or that you can hit a 5 iron out. Sometimes you will have to hit a sand iron and be content with 10-60 yards. If you get in a bunker it should cost you a half to one shot.

"Bunkers are not just visual things, they're here for a purpose."

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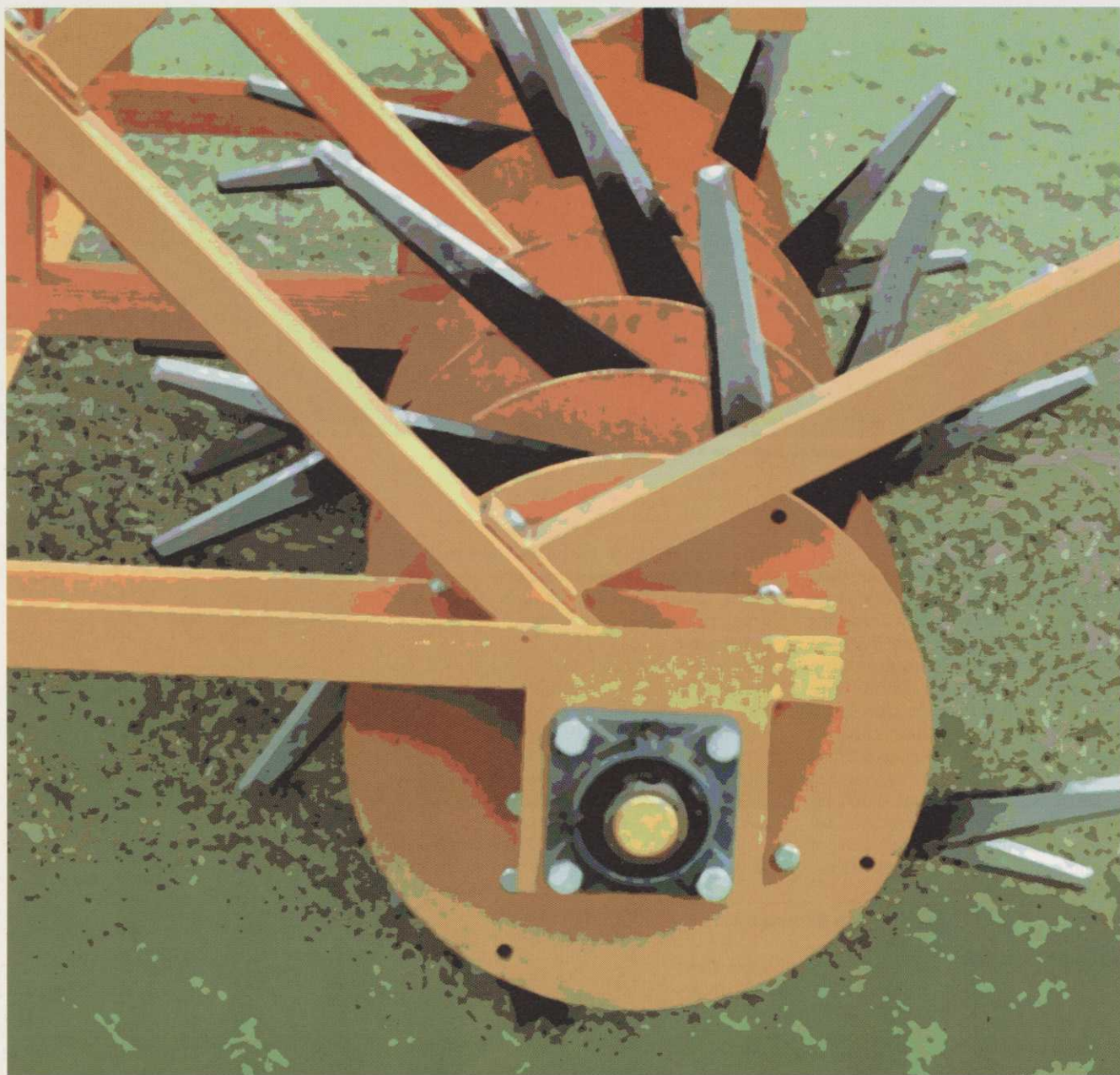
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Constructor is given golf course in settlement of six-figure debt

Golf course constructor Brian D Pierson has opened his own course. Run by eldest son Mark, Hamptworth Golf and Country Club, on the edge of the New Forest, was given to the Piersons to settle a six-figure debt by the original developers, Hamptworth Park Leisure, who had a 125-year lease on the land.

The Piersons started building the course in 1991, then stopped halfway through when the developers' money ran out. Eighteen months of negotiations later the company which has built more than 180 golf courses worldwide took over the whole project, scaling down the plan for a grandiose clubhouse.

Laid out over 175 acres, running in and out of the 700-acre English Nature-managed Langley Wood, Hamptworth has the potential to become one of the best courses in the south-west.

Newly-appointed head greenkeeper Keith Hill-Jones says he wants to make it the best course in the area in the next couple of years.



Mark Pierson, Robert Key MP and Brian Pierson

Based on a Philip Sanders design, it measures 6,500 yards off the back tees and features several intimidating, tree-lined tee shots, some monster bunkers and a par 5 of 582 yards.

Water hazards are provided by the River Blackwater as it meanders through the course, which was opened last month by Salisbury MP Robert Key. Other hazards are natural too – plenty of trees and hedges and only 19 bunkers.

Greens are built to Jim Arthur specifications. The 9th and 18th holes finish on a double green guarded by a massive bunker which one over-enthusiastic writer described as being "as big as the Isle of Wight".

One of the most daunting holes is the 360-yard 14th which doglegs slightly to the right once you have driven through an avenue of trees that may make even the best players consider using a 4 iron.

Construction of a 6,500 sq ft clubhouse is planned for next year.



Hamptworth's double green – the 9th and 18th

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■ More than 220 companies are booked in at the Landscape Industries show June 8/9 at the National Agricultural Centre, Stoneleigh Park, Warwickshire.

■ The Greenkeeping Supply Company has been set up by Liam Galway. He will be supplying course furniture from Tacit, Pattissons and Standard Golf, as well as clothing and tools. Tel/fax: 0245 248880.

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...like the simple flat bed of an Atterton, the natural way to grind a cylinder, in the upright position

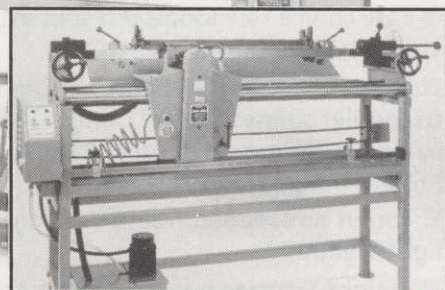
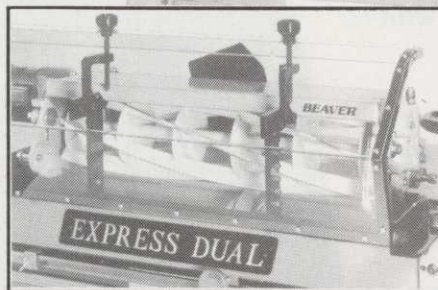
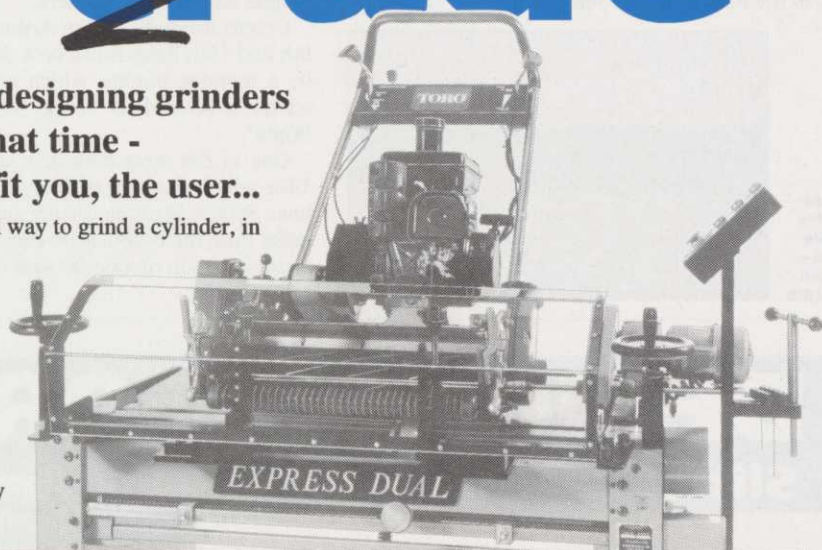
...like the simple choice of either in-situ grinding with the whole machine up on that convenient flat bed, or separate cylinder grinding when the machine's stripped down

...like the simple single pedal clamping device, perfected by Attertons to provide easy, accurate fixing when grinding the cylinder in-situ

...like the simple method of operation, to accurately and efficiently grind cylinders, either way, with a minimum of operator effort

...like the simple fact that there's nothing quite like the EXPRESS DUAL available today...except its partner, the ANGLEMASTER, Britain's premier bottom blade grinder...together they form a formidable duo for today's modern workshop.

The trick of the blade?... grind with an Atterton and then cut the grass...it's no trick...it's magic!



**NOW WITH RELIEF GRINDING ATTACHMENT
AND LIFTING TABLE**



ATTERTON & ELLIS LTD
Manufacturers of fine Grinders for over 100 years

Iron Works, Haverhill, Suffolk CB9 8QH
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