

# TOGETHER



course come the winter. Courses close more often these days because the ground between tee and green is unfit for traffic. If they stay open there is tremendous damage around greens and to other navigational routes which must be repaired in the spring just when all your efforts should be turning to the preparation of greens for summer play.

#### **When time really tells**

Hopefully, the real consequences of everything that is done on a golf course is beginning to sink in. The interaction of maintenance operations is so great that it is difficult to grasp the "global" implications of any single treatment. Let us confuse the situation further by considering the importance of timing.

Back to irrigation and fertiliser. The dangers of watering and feeding late in the year are well known. Greens must be dry when entering the, potentially, wetter autumn months. Late feeds with nitrogen do encourage disease.

When do you need top dressing most? Not at the height of summer when the different grasses which make up greens turf are growing uniformly and true surfaces can be produced with the right combination of mowing,

grooming and verticutting. Dressings through the best growing months of the year interrupt verticutting regimes, blunt mowers and do little to nurture good relations with golfers. Concentrate dustings of dressing through the spring to true up surfaces and protect the turf from drying winds.

The best time for aeration is a great subject for discussion. Greenkeepers know that aeration is most successful when there is life in the soil and growth in the grass. Golfers want aeration kept to the winter. How often are greenkeepers forced to punch holes into their pride and joy in October, November or even deeper into the winter? How surprising to hear complaints about bumpy green from golfers come the spring when the holes from the late tining are still open? If greens are being cored or Verti-Drained with a view to heavy top dressing then timing is even more critical. The dressing must be worked in thoroughly to avoid smothering and weakening turf and bringing on disease. This means that the ground has to be reasonably dry and the grass must still be growing to absorb the dressing.

#### **To conclude**

The examples discussed here are not complete

in themselves. No doubt other reactions to the actions mentioned, or entirely different systems of interaction, will come to mind as you sit down and think the processes through. It would be wrong to ignore the value of individual treatments. Turf would be difficult to look after if watering or aeration were omitted but they form part of the package and if you want pro-active, rather than crisis management, then it is vital that a cohesive strategy of complementary works is implemented.

Greenkeepers are, generally, aware of the consequences of most of their actions. Of more concern is the influence of committees who would like to dictate policy completely oblivious to the delicate balance needed to sustain quality turf.

The interactions of maintenance policy are too complex for the majority of laymen to understand and many members are not overly interested anyway, provided the course is in good nick whenever they are on it.

If only golfers could appreciate that managing quality turf demands a programme of carefully timed works which cannot always accommodate ever increasing golf fixtures and competitions.

That nut is a hard one to crack.



**Phil Chiverton is a Course Manager whose progressive ideas are ensuring that The Buckinghamshire becomes one of the best new clubs in the country.**

The dates of Captain's Day, Club Championship, Pro-Ams and any regional and national tournaments due to be played at a club can usually be seen ringed in black ink on the office calendar. They are invariably preceded by an intensive programme of work designed to bring the course to its peak, looking its magnificent best, on just the right weekend.

At one new club, however, it is slightly different. The Buckinghamshire, in Denham, a few miles off the M25, is maintained at its absolute peak at all times with presentation given the number one priority.

The Course Manager is Phil Chiverton who masterminds the policy of ensuring the course is seen at its Sunday best, seven days a week, 52 weeks a year.

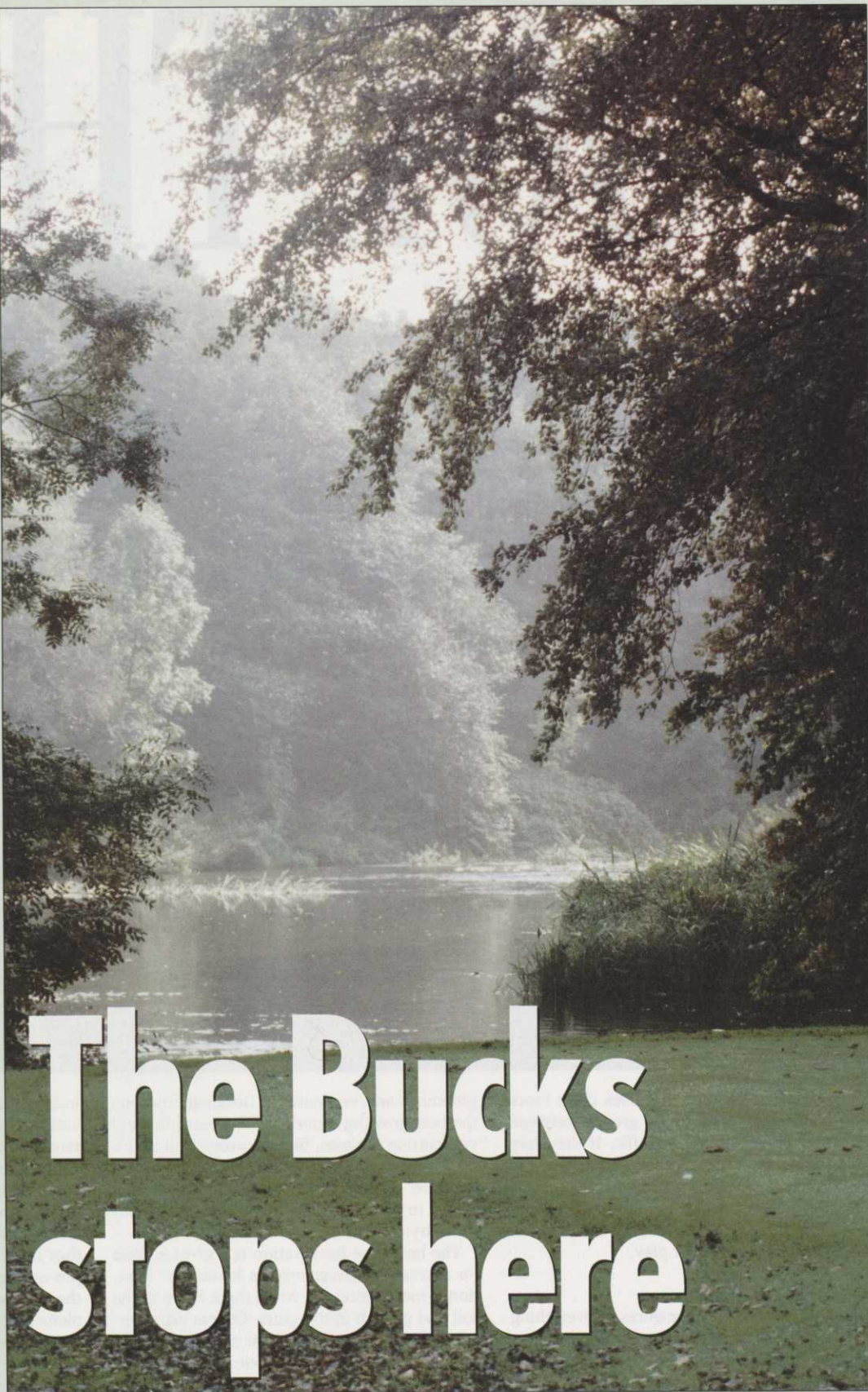
"We hand mow greens right throughout the summer and the winter to avoid triplex ring wear and tear. We also hand mow tees, collars and approaches and will have eight people out on walk behind mowers at any one time in the morning which takes four hours," explained 27 year-old Phil, who previously worked under Chris Kennedy at Wentworth, looking after the West Course.

The care is not confined to the greens, though, as it is normal practice to box off on fairways and collect all the clippings all year round.

"If we didn't hand mow greens and tees and box off clippings it would allow us to do a lot of the other jobs like bunker maintenance but presentation takes a high priority at The Buckinghamshire," explained Phil, who has a full time staff of 11 excluding himself.

"Luckily I've got the resources to maintain the high standard of presentation but I would still like two months to prepare for a big tournament. For a club competition a couple of weeks notice is all that we would need to polish off and get the course up to scratch."

Phil has been at the prestigious new Japanese-owned club since May 1990 just after it was constructed, and been involved all the way through as First Assistant under Kevin Munt, who has since moved up to be General Manager, before being promoted to Course Manager at the beginning of '94.



# The Bucks stops here

"Initially I looked after the irrigation system, a Toro Network 300. We hope to update this to a CDS next year. We have wall to wall irrigation pumping about 400 gallons a minute. It's all mains water and we spend £25,000 a year on water bills."

Phil began his greenkeeping career at Bridport and West Dorset GC before moving to Wentworth where his immediate boss was Jim McKenzie, now

Course Manager at Celtic Manor.

The decision to move from one of the most illustrious, high profile courses in the country to a similar position on a course still to be built was one a lot of young greenkeepers would not have made. But Phil was tempted.

"This course was such a new development with new Bent grasses, high maintenance and I decided I wanted a change. I felt that I had spent long enough at

Wentworth there was not anything more to gain from being there. I wasn't really moving ahead quickly enough," he explained.

It is a decision which has certainly paid off and it has allowed Phil to do things his own way.

"It is a new course and there are lot of improvements to be made. There are a lot of scraggy areas which could be improved upon and Rye grass was the only





real option. There are not many grasses which withstand wear and tear better than the Rye grasses or Dwarf Rye grasses these days. It helps with presentation and uniformity of cut and even playing surface. The benefit to the golfer is that the ball tends to sit up more on the fairway. You don't get as a big divot with a Rye grass fairway as you do with a Creeping Bent grass fairway.

"The down side is that it grows a lot more, particularly if you keep the nutrition up as we do here. You have got to keep mower blades very sharp as Rye grass is very tough to cut but you can rip it very easily. However it doesn't need as much verticutting, top dressing and hollow coring as Creeping Bent grass does.

"My main priority at the moment is to put bands of Rye grass around the greens. We get a turf cutter and strip off round the green and turf with 100% rye grass and bring that back down to collar height. It prevents poa from creeping in from the edges and onto the putting surfaces."

**'I do tissue tests regularly to determine the amount of nutrient on the leaf which allows me to determine when the plants need another feed.'** PHIL CHIVERTON

"I've also been working on the root development on the greens and managed to get down to about six inches – we did have that down to an inch but we've got rid of that completely now. This was thanks to a more intensive verticutting and slitting programme and cutting out. We put on a light top dressing at least once a fortnight in the summer depending upon the conditions and instead of mowing the following day go over it with the turf iron.

"We also try to water the greens better and rather than do a little bit every night try to do a flood once a week and hand water in between so roots go down to find water rather than

sitting in a wet moist layer on top all the time.

Another policy which Phil has introduced should help to take the guess work out of the introducing of nutrition.

"This year, working with Scotts, we now know exactly how much nutrition we are putting on the course at any one time rather than doing it on an ad hoc basis. We're basing it on kilogrammes per hectare of nitrogen, phosphorous and potassium. I keep a record of how many grammes go on per square metre.

"For example I've just finished putting 389 kilos of nitrogen, 34 kilos of phosphorous and 397 kilos of potassium on the greens.

"The benefits are financial on

one side and I do tissue tests regularly to determine the amount of nutrient on the leaf which allows me to determine when the plants need another feed. I've got records of that right throughout the whole year so it's given me a much more scientific approach. It is the way greenkeeping is going now. It takes guesswork out of it.

It is quite a daunting prospect for a young greenkeeper to be managing a top golf course with a £500,000 a year budget and a staff which, with seasonal workers, rises to 18 in the summer.

"I found it difficult at first to move into a more sedentary, desk bound, job but I'm now beginning to enjoy it because it was more of a challenge. I was more of a hands on person but now I'm behind a desk or a computer a lot more.

"I do an annual programme, a monthly programme, have a senior staff meeting once a week to discuss the work ahead and give a sheet to the Head Greenkeeper and he gets on with it. I'm not involved in when the greens and tees get cut or the bunkers





are raked.

The Buckinghamshire boasts £500,000 worth of equipment with £140,000 worth bought this year as part of a five year replacement programme.

Jamie Bennett of Grass Roots Ltd sponsored him to go to San Francisco last year for the GCSAA Conference.

"I went on a two day James Beard course on Basic Physiology and Anatomy of Turf Grasses and that was just brilliant. Americans are much more advanced and professional in their greenkeeping although I think were getting better at it.

"I now have enough points to do the Master Greenkeeper Award so might like to do it next year.

"During my visit to California I hired a car and drove down to Pebble Beach and the Monterey Peninsula Spyglass Hill, links at Spanish Bay. I walked around Cypress Point and it was just

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Two Kubota F2400s	One Hardi NK600 Sprayer
Two Toro Sandpros	One Farmura Turf Iron
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Two Cushman Trucksters with Vicn Variaspreader and AMP 300 Hardi Sprayer	One Hayter Scarifier 308
One Massey Ferguson 362	Two Sisis Drop Seeders
	One Richard Long Scarifier Collector
	One Woodchipper
	Two Fraser Trailers
	One Sorrel Roller

unbelievable, *Poa Annua* everywhere, including the greens, but the setting of the bay and the design of the course is just incredible.

"I pick up ideas from books and other greenkeepers. I keep in touch with Andy Wood at London GC and Martin Jones at The Oxfordshire a lot. They are similar types of golf clubs and operations – all Creeping Bent grass greens and fairways and we often get together and talk about the way we do things.

"Clubs are often too secretive. If we got together more perhaps we could help each other out a bit. Dealing with things like *Poa Annua*," he said.

Phil has become a close friend of Jamie Bennett and is a member of the recently launched Barenbrug/Grass Roots Go Parting team but he also appreciates the work that Grass Roots does.

"The benefit of working with

Grass Roots is great from a service point of view. When I first became Course Manager I was constantly on the phone to about six different companies chasing up materials, supplies, prices and quotes. I got Jamie in and talked through my whole programme in November '94.

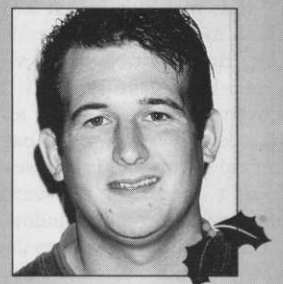
The benefits of working for a Japanese funded club are immense but they also lead to some extra work which wouldn't normally have been budgeted for.

"We're owned by Asahi Breweries in Tokyo and the Managing Director during one of his visits said he wanted the greenkeeping sheds painted because he didn't like the colour. We had to go ahead and get that done in a hurry," said Phil.



Phil (centre) with some of his team

## WHAT I'D LIKE FOR CHRISTMAS



**Dean Jones, Gerrard's Cross GC:**

"Either a machine which can pick up every single leaf from a green or getting a fat cat water boss as a member of our course."



**W**hen Bob Savine and Chris Gilroy spent more and more time building tees and bunkers when they were assistants at Mid Herts Golf Club they saw an opportunity to combine their 22 years of experience and start a business of their own.

That was seven years ago and was the start of S&G Ltd which has slowly developed into one of the best regarded small construction companies in the country.

At the beginning of this year they were joined by Chris Foreman who added Project Manager experience and opened the door to potentially bigger contracts and possibly their own 18 hole golf course to construct.

"Our aim as a company is to construct an 18 hole golf course but we're quite happy to do the work we're doing at the moment," said 35 year-old Bob, as we surveyed the nine new greens and surrounds the company was building at Hessle Golf Club in Hull.

"Then I think we'd feel ready to compete with the big contractors. We are tendering for 18 holers at the moment and if we get one I would feel we were on our way."

Chris and Bob started the company as finishers and with the introduction of Chris Foreman as Project Manager, one of them can go with Chris to construct, finish, grow in and maintain a golf course leaving the other to carry on the work which they have always done."

In many ways the arrival of 29 year-old Chris Foreman has meant that the company has reached a cross roads and given the two founders much to contemplate.

The works which we can now compete for are bigger, larger contracts. We would compete with Southern Golf but on the other hand we couldn't because we don't have their labour force or their back-up. If we did want to compete we would have to say to all the small jobs, I'm sorry we can't do them but these are the jobs which S&G has been brought up on. These are the jobs we enjoy doing," explained Bob.

The benefits of being first and foremost greenkeepers are enormous according to Chris Gilroy.

"As greenkeepers we have a



Bob Savine, Chris Gilroy and Chris Foreman

# ON THE WAY UP

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**'As greenkeepers we have a good eye for the finishing of greens and, for cutting purposes, where a mower can get round and where it can't from a maintenance point of view.'**

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good eye for the finishing of greens and, for cutting purposes, where a mower can get round and where it can't from a maintenance point of view.

"We also have the knowledge that we are being paid by the golf course to do a job and we respect the fact that the members pay a large amount of money to play golf on a private golf course. We appreciate the fact that they want to play golf and they don't want to see people working in front of them stopping them from playing.

"We also work alongside the Head Greenkeeper so as we can give the job that the Head Greenkeeper and the committee wants. At the end of the day, when we finish on site, it is important everyone is happy - most of all the Head Greenkeeper because what we leave he's got to maintain," explained 30 year-old Chris.

In the last few days on site we go out with him and ask if it's how he wants a particular job left," he added.

The downside is that greenkeepers are sometimes wary of having other greenkeepers on their course.

Some greenkeepers get intimidated by Chris and myself because from a greenkeeping aspect we know as much as they do but from a construction point of view we know more than they do because we've been out here for seven years and learned a hell of a lot in that time - especially as specialist finishers and in

growing in. We've picked up tips from the likes of Chris Foreman as contractors and the like and we use their techniques to make ourselves better and a lot of greenkeepers feel intimidated by us," said Bob.

Both began their greenkeeping careers in the '70s.

Chris Gilroy started as an assistant at Welwyn Garden City GC and remembers seeing Nick Faldo practising there before he became well known. He then moved to Wheathampsted GC Mid Herts and went to college and passed his exams. He stayed there for three or four years before moving on to the Japanese-owned Hatfield London Country Club.

Bob started at Mid Herts then went to Welwyn Garden City as an assistant before going to Hatfield London as Assistant Head Greenkeeper.

"I'd known Chris for a while but we ended up together at Hatfield London and in the early days were doing regular greenkeeping but then a new company, Tokyo Leisure, took over and they wanted to revamp the whole golf course," remembers Bob.

"The Japanese took a shine to us because of our work rate. It must have been the Japanese work ethic. We were putting the hours in, doing the overtime, chasing money reconstructing tees, greens, bunkers, doing ditching work and draining and they gave us more and more to do. Eventually we thought we could combine our experience and give it a go on our own."

It was a major step to take as Bob had a mortgage and although Chris didn't he had the usual living expenses.



# 'It's a case of getting the course in play as quickly as possible'

"We discussed the idea for about a year before we went out on our own. It was a big gamble and we lived on our savings which got us on our way for the first three years which was a struggle.

"We went blind we didn't sound out the guys we knew to find out if there was an immediate supply of work. There was one club which gave us work the rest didn't want to give us work for fear of upsetting the Head Greenkeeper/Course Manager so all our work was away from our regular area. We took a job in Stratford we picked up work at Hanbury Manor, doing remedial work then we got all the bunkers to shape up and sand on the front nine. That was five years ago.

They then wrote to all the big construction companies asking for finishing work to be subcontracted to them. The only company which gave them work was Southern Golf.

"We've got a good relationship with Southern Golf. In our opinion they are one of, if not the, best constructor in this country. Through Southern Golf we've met

Jack McMillan and George Shiel – some of the big boys in our industry," said Bob.

The newest member of the team has great respect for his two new colleagues.

"Without a word of a lie I believe they are the best finishers in the country and where major constructors fall down, almost without exception, is in their finishing," said Chris Foreman. "They just can't finish a golf course. They don't know how to but ex-greenkeepers do because they know what it should look like. Most of the big companies are not geared up for that.

"We thought that by my joining the company we could become a major force in the country. We feel that we have something a little bit unique to offer. I really do believe that," said Chris Foreman.

S&G has six full time staff who have each been trained in the ways of the company by Bob and Chris Gilroy. "They would sooner get things right the first time than have us come and tell them to do it again," says Bob.

"At Hessele we have 10 people on site, including Chris and

myself, two shapers on big machines who are owner drivers tied to us but if we have nothing for them have to find their own work – it is the most economical way of doing it. It is not worth us buying two big machines and having them sitting around.

Not that anyone connected with S&G will spend much time sitting around. The company has portable bedrooms which are moved on site to allow the teams to work from 6am to 9pm to get jobs completed.

"We have enough people so we can run three jobs at any one time. We'd like to do more but wouldn't want to spread ourselves too thinly," said Bob, who readily admits to have got it wrong on one occasion.

"We were offered a job at Penina recently which I jumped at but having spoken to the two Chrises I realised I was wrong as we would be overstretching ourselves."

"Unlike the big boys we can still send our "A" team to every job we do," said Chris Foreman.

The company has worked in Ireland and France and in future would like to do more interna-

tional work.

S&G picks up a lot of its work from word of mouth and it is testimonials from clubs like Hessele which lead to more work.

Hessele GC has been extremely impressed by the quality of the work done by S&G.

"We are an ambitious club and wanted the quality of the greens and the course to match the quality of golf we wanted to play on them," said Chairman of the Greens Committee, Geoff Hardaker. "David Hemstock re-designed the greens and surrounds and we chose S&G for the construction work."

"We were extremely pleased with S&G as they struck us as a growing company with a good pedigree. We were impressed by their initial presentation and they took the trouble to send both Bob Savine and Chris Foreman to take a look at the site before we interviewed them.

"We had an excellent relationship with them while they were on site and cleared up the site superbly at the end. Also they finished on exactly the day they said they would, having taken nine

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One of the re-designed greens and bunkers at Hesse

weeks to complete nine greens," said Mr Hardaker.

Another avenue for business comes when the company is brought in to finish work which has been left incomplete through disputes between other developers and contractors.

"Mid Sussex - another of the company's recent works - was a case where the developer ran out

of money and the banks took over and sold it on to the company we worked for. We'd worked for him previously and he knew what we could do and wanted us to continue. He was the third owner and he's the one making the money. He has a great golf course," said Chris Foreman.

"It's a case of getting the course

in play as quickly as possible and it's a case of the devil you know and getting in people they know do a good job and not going out to tender," he added.

Another good provider of work has been the VAT windfall which is producing money for work on courses and an area which S&G has a policy of chasing.

"It is opening a large sector of

the market up and hopefully the big boys aren't interested in it. It's work that Chris Gilroy and I have been doing for the last six years," said Bob.

Speaking with the Bob and the two Chrises it is hard not to be impressed not just by their work ethic and commitment to excellence but by their ability to carve a place for themselves in a very competitive market.

WHAT I'D LIKE FOR CHRISTMAS

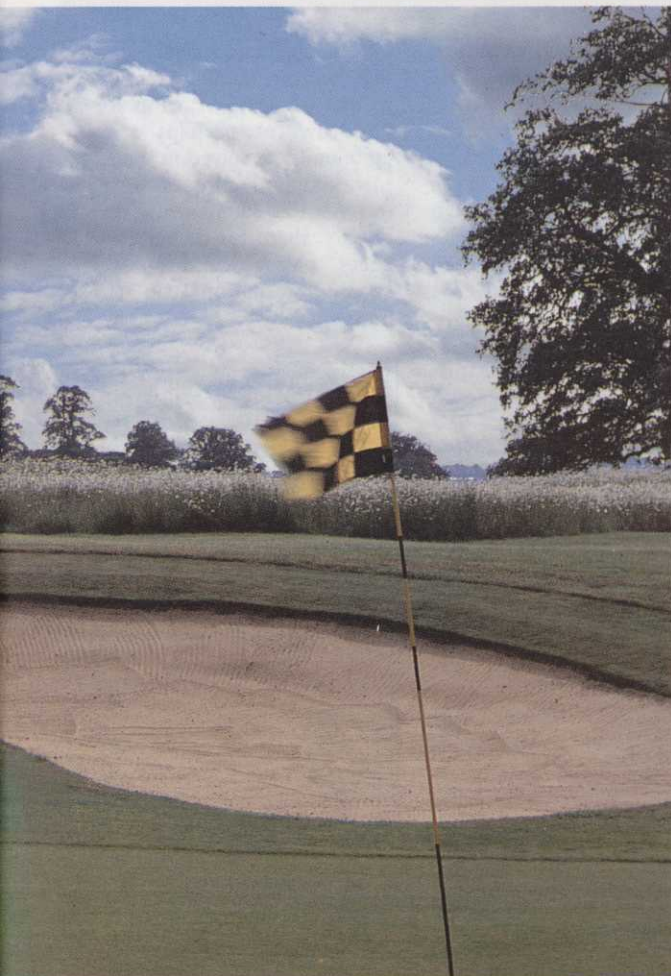


Paul Tatlow, Kedleston Park GC:

"To have all our members do the fairway divoting for a year."



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# In the clutches of pythium

**Royal Porthcawl Course Manager David Ward looks back at the disease which hits his course just before this year's Walker Cup match.**

Royal Porthcawl will go down in history as the venue for a magnificent performance by Great Britain and Ireland's amateur golfers who inflicted a rare defeat on their American cousins in the Walker Cup match in September.

The whole occasion was a triumph for all concerned not least for Course Manager David Ward and his team who survived an outbreak of disease which affected the Royal Porthcawl greens just before the event.

Now two months after the Walker Cup David can look back, reflect and analyse the events leading up to and after the match.

"Fortunately the disease affected the presentation of the greens but not the quality of the putting surfaces. The daily stimp-meter readings showed the greens to be running evenly at 10 feet," recalls David.

"A preventative spray had been applied three weeks earlier as the odd and feint yellowing patch – as with fusarium – could be seen on the 16th green. Taking no chances all greens were again sprayed but 72 hours later the disease had ripped through five greens with early signs of the disease showing on a further three," explained David.

"It was running randomly through the sward, sometimes forming into circular areas. The affected areas were a brown/orange colour and it was difficult to ascertain which grass species were affected most."

The agronomists appointed by the club and the R&A diagnosed the disease as Take-All Patch as the circular areas showed the classic signs of the disease but the extent and rapid spread were unusual and it was decided to send soil samples to a plant pathology unit for further diagnosis. In the meantime Rimidin was used at its maximum dosage rate.

The prolonged dry spell and the need for irrigation may have contributed to the outbreak.



David Ward (centre) with his team

"The club extracts water from an on-site bore hole and the pH of the water does not change dramatically even in drought conditions," explained David. "Water samples tested in September '95 had a pH reading of 7.3 while a reading of 7.6 had been recorded in August '94."

Pop-up irrigation was kept to a minimum and supplemented by hand watering. Ridges and the tops of greenside bunkers are the areas that stress out the most and where hand watering is most concentrated.

"These were the areas that were severely hit by the disease. We then stopped night time irrigation altogether and restricted hand watering even further in an attempt to reduce the spread of the disease," said David.

"In isolated areas the Catch 22 situation applied when turf affected by drought mingled with turf affected by disease.

"After 14 stressful days the disease finally stopped spreading. The fungicides used appeared to have had little or no effect while reducing the irrigation had certainly helped to slow the spread

and a drop in day and night time temperature did have a beneficial effect."

The orange colour faded to dull brown and the early signs of natural regeneration could be seen in some areas although other areas were completely lost.

Laboratory Diagnosis revealed that Take-All Patch was not detected but that the disease was the even rarer Pythium.

"Pythium is at its most destructive in hot humid weather and increases at an alarming rate. The Lab report concluded by saying that there is no approved product available in the UK to control Pythium," revealed David.

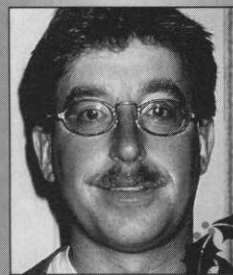
"It would appear that climatic changes, whether it be wettest winters or driest summers are bringing about problems in turf management which have not been seen before in this country.

"In my view it is important that information is pooled and therefore it would be interesting to hear from greenkeepers, plant pathology units and pesticide manufacturers about the problems they have encountered this year and how they see trends

developing," said David.

● If you have similar experiences to that of David Ward at Royal Porthcawl or perhaps are an agronomist involved in the identification and cure of unusual diseases this summer and would like to share his or her experiences please contact Greenkeeper International on 01347 838581.

## WHAT I'D LIKE FOR CHRISTMAS



**Norbert Lischka, Hamburger GC, Falkenstein, Germany:**

"More hand mowers and from a personal point of view that my family stays healthy."





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In golf it is The Open Championship or the Augusta National lawn during the Masters. In horse racing it is either Ascot or Cheltenham. In greenkeeping it is undoubtedly Harrogate in January for BTME. If a pound was donated to BIGGA's Building Fund for every conversation which ends "See you at

Harrogate" we would have shot past our target figure already.

The popularity of BTME continues to grow by leaps and bounds not only with the number of companies which choose to exhibit or by the increasing numbers of delegates who take the time to fill in pre-registration cards thus avoid queues on arrival but by top class speakers who have reserved space in their hectic schedules to talk at the National Education Conference, Educational Workshop Programme or the Educational Seminar Programme.

**Looking ahead to BIGGA's main event, January 24-26, 1996**





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