

# TORO® Student GREENKEEPER of the year

ple and sharing their skills and experience I've learned communication skills, computer usage, dealing with budgets etc. Equally I was imparting my greenkeeping skills to them. It was a very good partnership."

One of the interesting concepts at Hankley is the Course Management Status Report which is published every two to three years.

"It talks about greenkeeping philosophy, it talks about woodland management, the turfed areas, conservation areas, staff requirements, resource requirements. All aspects of the golf course. It also pinpoints what we want to achieve and reviews some of our successes and things which haven't worked so well," explained Ian, who has produced four of these 24-25 page reports.

## 'We do set our goals high. We like to achieve'

"I get lots of comments from members who find them refreshing and interesting because we try to write them in such a manner that they are readable for members.

"If we were to do them more frequently than we do it wouldn't give us enough time to achieve some of the goals we set," he added.

The Hankley team – Gareth Roberts, Paul Hutton, Michael Jennings, James Andrews and Gavin Baldwin – are all over the moon about the club's success and Ian is quick to give them credit.

"You are only as good as the guys around you and none of these things would have been possible without them.

Ian's self confessed passion for the environment has been with him for many years and developed from his love of heathland golf courses.

"I realised that heathland was disappearing at a phenomenal rate and that developed to an appreciation of wildlife as well. That has grown through time."

Asked to comment on what answer he would give to other greenkeepers who might ask what he possesses which has helped him to two national competitions Ian gives a practical answer.

"These competitions are there to be won and the way to do it is by application and endeavour and I think we did that. If you can exhibit the history of the work you have done on your course by keeping a well documented file of slides it also helps.

"There are a tremendous number of fabulous greenkeepers out there and what I can say to them is that I've been runner-up in both competitions before and that made me focus more and made me realise that I had to work a bit harder to win...So we came back a second time and won them both."

He also has praise for both competitions and what they do for the profession.

"They highlight the professionalism that's around in the industry. BIGGA is very much to the forefront of initiating lots of that through their education training programmes," said Ian, who is married to Karen with three children Callum, 8, Hannah, 6, and Daniel, 2.

"It has been an absolute pleasure to represent my golf and the staff at both of these competitions. I'm just the ambassador and an awful lot goes on behind the scenes."

Speaking with Jack about his son he pays him a tribute to which greenkeepers would probably relate.

"He's like me," he explained, "the grass talks to him."



Steven Nixon collects his prizes from Gordon Child, right, as Bob Buckingham and Pete Mansfield look on

# The best of both worlds

**Steven Nixon has shown he can excel in two careers**

To reach the top in one field takes dedication, effort and no little ability. It's a reason to feel extremely proud and self satisfied. After all, there can only be one at the top at any one time.

To reach the top in two fields, singles a person out as quite exceptional, and to have done it by the age of 26 is even more remarkable.

Such a person is Steven Nixon, winner of the Toro Student of the Year Award, who adds the title to that of MAA YTS Mechanic of the Year which he won seven years ago.

"Having won another national competition I didn't go into the Toro Student of the Year thinking that it was so far out of reach not to be worth bothering about. You do get a belief in yourself having won a big competition and I was quietly confident when I arrived for the final... That was until I started to talk with the others. They were all good guys," explained Steven, speaking in the foyer of the St George Hotel, Harrogate, the morning after the results had been announced.

Steven was entered for the competition by his tutors at Askham Bryan College but had been aware of its existence since he first came into greenkeeping four years ago.

In hindsight the fact that Steven ended up working on a golf course should be of no real sur-

prise. He lived on Wortley Golf Club near Sheffield from the age of 13, where his parents were Steward and Stewardess, and the golf bug really bit him hard.

"I was a fanatic. I absolutely love golf and I always fancied working at Wortley Golf Club. Unfortunately people tended to stay for a while and jobs didn't come up very often."

To that end, once he had left school it was to become a mechanic and was soon showing himself to be an outstanding apprentice.

"The Mechanic of the Year Award went on college work and I was monitored at my placement," explained Steven, who worked at David Bentley's Subaru/Isuzu dealership in the centre of Sheffield.

"My exam results were the highest in the country," he added, in a quiet manner which betrayed not a hint of boastfulness.

On the strength of his success he was chosen to appear in a career video for the Mechanical Industry and this is still shown in schools today.

Steven worked at David Bentley's after finishing college then, for two years, was self-employed during which time he worked on the machinery at Wortley.

"It is great that both jobs, mechanics and greenkeeping are moving together and that is why I got the job at Wortley when it came along. The club saw the benefit of me being able to look

**TORO**  
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**GREENKEEPER**  
*of the year*

*The* **TOROs**

after their machinery. All I had to do was pick up on the greenkeeping element of the job and I took to it better than I could have expected."

At Wortley Steven worked under Barry Heaney, BIGGA's 1995 National Chairman, and after a year Barry placed him at Askham Bryan College.

"I did a two year Level 2 course which I passed while I also passed my spraying exams while I was there.

"I can't get enough of greenkeeping. I watch videos. I read about it. It is more than just a job, it is part of our life," said Steven, who is a member of the Sheffield Section which has a strong winter lecture programme.

Part of Steven's prize for winning the Toro Student of the Year Award is to undertake a six week residential study course at the University of Massachusetts early next year and it is his attendance

at on this which will delay his starting Level 3.

"I'm going to pick that up next September, but I'm really looking forward to what I'll learn while in

**'Winning this award is going to give me a lot more confidence'**

America. I'm sure it will open my eyes and I'll learn how greenkeeping is progressing around the rest of the world. It may be a different climate where different methods

are used but I'll certainly learn things which I can bring back to Wortley," enthused Steven.

"Winning this award is going to give me more confidence and I believe it will open up many more opportunities for me."

The club helped Steven cope with the pressure of being in the final and the feeling that if he hadn't won he would have disappointed a lot of people..

"The club sent me a letter on the Friday before the final to say that in their eyes I was a winner for getting to the final and that took a bit of the pressure off me because I was feeling it at bit. It's true though because we were each one of eight who had got through to the final from hundreds who could have done."

One element of the competition which Steven did enjoy was the linking of the Student award with that of the Excellence in Greenkeeping Competition.

"It was great talking with some of the older guys and they gave me great support on the day. Bill Sparrow and I were both waiting for our interviews and when we got talking all my nerves went and before I realised I was in and the interview had started."

"I've always wanted to visit the States so I just couldn't believe I'd won when the announcement was made."

Steven's success was greeted by great celebrations from his club, family and friends.

"My girlfriend, Michelle, is 200% behind me and burst into tears when I told her I'd won, while my mum and dad have organised a celebration for me when I get back. I'm also happy for Barry (Heaney) because he started me off and was one of the main driving forces behind my getting on. I know that greenkeeping is his life and that he loves BIGGA," said Steven who also paid tribute to the encouragement given to him by Steven Hulme, a close friend who had been the Acting Head Greenkeeper at the club.

"I'd also like to thank Toro for sponsoring such a great competition, BIGGA for organising it so well and Wortley Golf Club for all their support."

In addition to the six week study course. Steven will also visit the Toro factories in Minneapolis and California and, if time permits attend the GCSAA Conference and Show in Anaheim, California.

The two runners-up, who will also attend the Anaheim Show are Alan Owen, of Royal Birkdale Golf Club and Myerscough College and Christopher Rawlings of Rodway Hill Golf Club and Hartury College.



**At the presentation: back row, from left, Jeff Bailey, Mark Hunter, Pete Mansfield, Gordon Child, Ken Richardson and David Ansell. Middle row: Andrew Baker, Daniel Crowley, Neil Robson. Front row: Alan Owen, Steven Nixon and Christopher Rawlings.**

**HUGH TILLEY looks at several distinct types of fertiliser spreader and talks to the people most qualified to talk about them – working greenkeepers**

**A**lthough the amount of solid fertiliser applied to golf courses is relatively small – frequently using a pedestrian operated spreader, or as a liquid, accuracy is important – even vital.

Several distinct types of spreader are available, ranging from trailed and/or tractor mounted broadcasters to pedestrian operated broadcasters and drop spreaders.

Of tractor mounted and pto driven machines, two spreading principles are common, those which use a spinning disc, and those with a wagging spout. Of hand machines the spinning disc model is most prevalent, however fluted roller models are available – often referred to as ‘drop spreaders’. Turf maintenance vehicles accept tractor linkage mounting models. Trailed chassis are also available, designed for ATVs, which allow any small mounted spreader to be used.

Most fertiliser spreaders will spread a wide range of materials, often including top dressings, seed and even salt as well as the more normal granular fertilisers.

How accurately and at what swath width normally needs to be assessed by a few calibration runs.

In fact calibration may be essential whenever a different material is used or there are differing moisture contents in the material.

The ideal spread tapers by weight from the centre of the machine, equally to either side. This allows two adjacent spreading runs to match to give a uni-

form spread. However the normal single disc spinner tends to spread to one side more than to the other. With some machines this can be counteracted by adjusting the position at which the material is dropped on to the disc. With wagging spout models wear and damage to the spout can have a radical effect on spread.

Speed over the ground is another variable which needs regularising. This may be difficult

with pedestrian operated machines, as it relies on the operator walking at a regular speed. On mounted machines, engine speed and gear ratio need to be constant to get a consistent spread.

Thus in selecting a machine the important considerations are the type of fertiliser to be applied, the volumes and rates to be used and the accuracy needed.

#### **Hardi 300 at Sutton Green Golf Club near Guildford**

Sutton Green has a new Hardi 300 which is mounted on a MF1020 compact tractor. This is used for fertilising fairways and semi roughs, but it was also bought with the option of using it over greens and tees etc. to apply top dressing. The course is new and to USGA spec., and the machine is in its first season of use.

Head Greenkeeper, Gavin Kyle, said that the spreader has met expectations, although it has not yet been fully tested. Applying top dressings require that the dressing is dry – which he can specify, and he aims to apply these regularly at lowish rates – going over the greens every two or three weeks putting on a hopper full – 300kg – over each green. The hopper is fitted with a very effective agitator and a cover

# REAL WORLD TEST Fertiliser Spreaders GREENKEEPER INTERNATIONAL



# REAL WORLD TEST

## Fertiliser Spreaders

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has been improvised pending supply of a purpose made one.

With fertiliser only one type of granular has been used, a 21.8.11, and no noticeable unevenness has been seen. With top dressing a 15 metre spreading width is produced and this is fully overlapped to give a 100% coverage.

The spreader, a single spinning disc type machine with a cone shaped hopper, has given no problems in setting or use, however it has been found essential to wash it thoroughly and oil the shutter mechanism after use. Gavin commented that he did not know that fertiliser was so corrosive.

#### Scott Professional Rotary spreader also at Sutton Green

This pedestrian push machine is used for greens, and has been in use for four years. Spreading is a two man operation with one man placing pegs on the green perimeter for the other to work to. Gavin commented on the need to have consistency of pushing speed. Regular greasing is a simple maintenance procedure and Gavin has encountered no problems with the machine.

#### Supaturf Evenspread and Greenland Varispreader at Eagle Star Sports Ground in Cheltenham

Run by Dave Turner who has been Head Groundsman for four years, and under Gardner Merchant Pension Fund management, the club uses the Evenspread mainly for the cricket square while a tractor mounted Varispreader is used for the outfield.

Previously the club had a drop spreader and Dave found several specific advantages to the Evenspread. In particular he likes the

fact that the fertiliser is spread in front of the him where he can see how and where it is spreading. The machine was calibrated when new, spreading, sweeping into piles and weighing the material used, and Dave has continued using the same mini-granular fertiliser.

Spread with the granular is about 3m wide and has always appeared even. Wheel marks are easily seen and the groundman can judge the width easily 'by eye'. Dave did say that the user has to maintain a constant walking speed to ensure a constant width of spread.

No problems have been encountered in use and no new parts have been required.

The Varispreader has been in use for over 12 years, being mainly used to apply granular 20-10-10 (or similar) two or three times a year. Dave, again, has no complaints about the 32ft spread. The machine is used behind a

45hp tractor and is easily hitched up being relatively light. The tractor's single speed PTO limit the gear options and require a higher engine speed than Dave would have liked, however this was criticism of tractor not spreader.

Again maintenance begins with a thorough wash off after use, again with particular attention being paid to the control slide. The original spout was damaged - in the traditional way - by backing it into something, and it has been replaced with the newer design with plastic/metal spreader.

#### Amazon EK broadcasters at Thornbury Golf Centre - Bristol

The centre with 36 holes and owned by Burhill Estates, was so pleased with their first spreader that they bought a second. Head Greenkeeper Robin Greaves commented that because these are so reasonably priced he could afford to buy two. The Amazone EK is a single disc spinner with conical hopper of about 300 litres capacity - other sizes are available.

Materials spread have included top dressing and salt as well as several types of granular fertilisers. In particular the centre uses Sierra-blen S which is a high nitrogen sulphur coated prill material which needs accurate application.

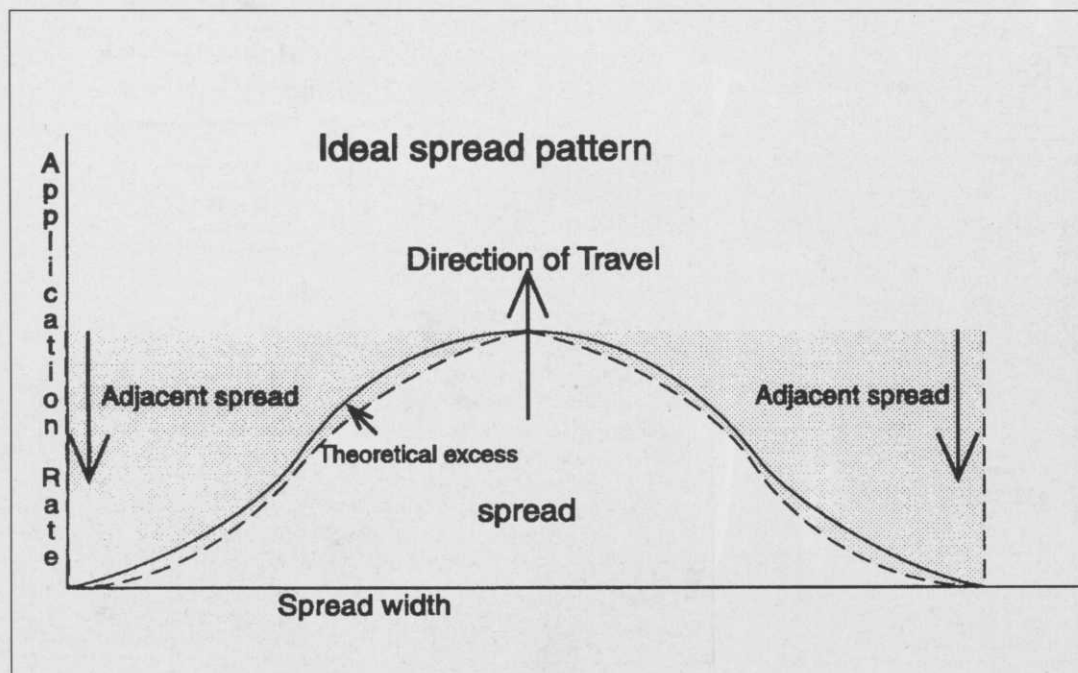
Robin commented that the

spreaders were small, robust and easy to adjust. They gave a good spread and when used for top dressing they gave a very neat and precise edge to the spread which minimised any loss of material off the green and made it easy to see where the material had been applied. One hopper full - about 300kg is applied to each green. The abrasiveness of the material has resulted in some wear to the control gate on the older machine, so that it does not shut off completely and this means that only the newer machine is used for more critical spreading tasks - such as for the 38-0-0 Sierra-blen S.

A modified - extended - control handle has been made for use with one of the centre's tractors, this can be damaged by the cab if care is not taken with setting the linkage height.

Setting the machines is by manufacturer's handbook recommendations followed by user experience.

The Centre also has two Scott Pro-Turf hand spreaders for the greens, these are set according to the manufacturer's chart and are mainly used with Scott's own products, in a recommended two pass routine. No problems have been experienced with either machine. Their construction is such that they are virtually corrosion proof.



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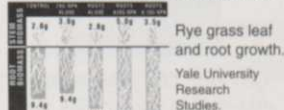


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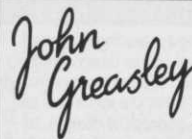
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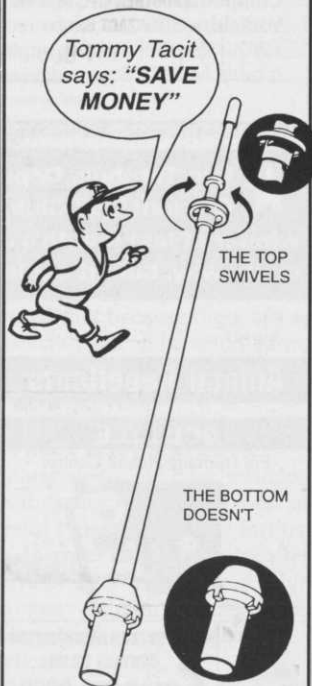
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