

added about 50kg and allowed the slitter, which has narrow tines, to penetrate to its full 7.5in. potential in most conditions.

In addition to being very cost effective the machine is fast to operate and all (18) fairways can be slit in a single day. It is also very robustly constructed and has a good working width. Slitting is carried out once or twice a month in winter, but only in summer if conditions require it.

Some tines have worked loose, they are held with two bolts with nyloc nuts, thus it is routine to check them regularly. David said that the club gets very good service from Charterhouse and has a very good working relationship with them.

#### **Grays of Fetterangus Slitter at Mount Pleasant Golf Club, near Letchworth**

Run by the Simkins family, this is a 9 hole facility with extra alternate tees to add variety. Mount Pleasant was established from farmland nine years ago with the additional tees added in the last two years. Built by a professional course builder and managed by him for the first years, the Grays slitter was suggested as being perhaps the most suitable tool for the fairways especially as those early autumns and winters were more wet than usually. However, although the machine is now some five years old David Simkins said it has not been needed for the last two which have been relatively dry. There was thought of contracting the slitter out, however this has not happened, although several courses have expressed interest. Commenting on weather, David said that it was particularly noticeable that the course is exposed and that the wind can dry out the turf rapidly. Thus care is taken not to slit in spring when it is likely to exacerbate the problem.

Most of the course is on good medium loam, but in the early years the 4th fairway in particular would waterlog – to the extent that in one year they hired a pump.

Greens are built over stone carpets with drainage led to soak-aways – although after experience most is now taken to streams rather than to soak-aways, which proved to lack capacity in very wet conditions.

The slitter is 2.5m wide and



tractor mounted, with a trailed rear roller and the ability to ballast the large diameter tine rotor. It is a large and particularly robust implement, and the Simkins use it with a 72hp Zetor tractor on turf tyres – Lodgeway Tractors being agents for both. With water ballast and extra weight on the top tray the tractor requires front weights, but penetration is then to the full tine 10 in. (250mm) depth. It is important to drain the ballast water to prevent freezing – David said they forgot one year and as a result burst a seal.

#### **McConnel Outfield Slitter at Minchinhampton GC on the Cotswold**

Originally bought for fairways the McConnel Outfield slitter at Minchinhampton is now also used for greens and tees. The club has two courses, one just two years old, plus a third in the same ownership only a couple of miles away on the common and 108 years old. The second course is 25 years old but with drainage carpets under the greens. Minchinhampton is on the edge of the Cotswolds with typical brash type soil. The McConnel slitter is a fully trailed machine.

Paul Worster is Course Manager and he made the proviso that it was essential that the greens are open to allow room for the tractor and slitter to get off the green to turn as being a trailed machine it was not very manoeuvrable.

Routine slitting is carried out every two weeks between September and January in normal years and the programme is worked in conjunction with a Ryan GA30 corer on the greens.

Used on greens the slitter is followed by a Toro 3100 greens triple with tri-roller attachments so completely repairing the surface and allowing immediate play.

In the two years that the club has had the McConnel slitter they have had no problems with tines working loose or with the frame of the machine, and very few problems with blades bending. The blades have been removed and sent to a blacksmith to resharpen, perhaps because they had contacted too much Cotswold stone. Keeping them sharp ensures that they give a good clean slit and require the minimum of effort to tow. Paul laid some stress on this, and it seemed strange that no other club has taken the same course of action. It was suggested that tines could be sharpened in-situ with an angle grinder.

Minchinhampton tow the slitter behind a 22hp MF1020 compact tractor and operate the lift from the tractor spool valve which operates the loader bucket tip – saving any need to remove the loader or fit additional valves or plumbing. No extra ballast weight is added to tractor or implement.

Paul said that they bought that particular machine because it was in the right place at the right time and at the right price, but he added that the possibility of quickly interchanging rotors, available with this slitter, was considered. In fact this option has not been exercised. He also liked the robustness and strength of the McConnel.

**Amazone Slitter SL80 at Knowle Golf Club in Bristol**  
Knowle is a long established

course around 80 years old close to the centre of Bristol, it has 18 holes in a parkland setting and on heavy clay soil, thus making aeration being as much about drainage as about getting air into the turf. The club uses a McConnel two leg moleplough regularly each autumn on the fairways and uses the slitter to assist water to flow to these mole runs.

Head Greenkeeper, Chris Light, said that although the Amazone has the ability to increase penetration by using a hydraulic ram between implement and tractor top link hitch point this ability to transfer weight has not been used since the club has had the machine – just over a season. Normally it is easy to get penetration of five or six inches.

A Toro Hydroject has also been hired on three occasions to supplement the effect of the other equipment and this has been achieving hole depths of about 10in.

Routine slitting treatment is done fortnightly fairways slitting from early October until January or February, however, this routine is flexible and depends on circumstances and the weather.

No problems have been experienced with loose tines and the few which have bent – after hitting a stone – have been easy to straighten.

The slitter is used behind a 4WD MF 250 – on turf tyres. Manoeuvrability has never been a problem.

Chris said that he looked at several makes and models at Saltex last year and decided that he liked the Amazone and bought through T H White, from whom the club has received excellent service.

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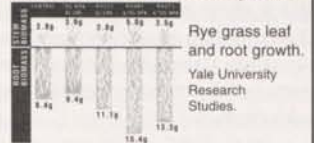


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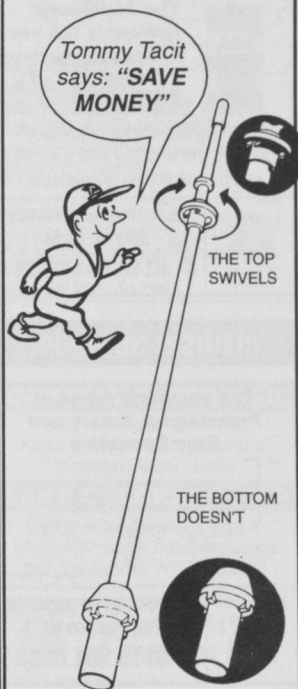
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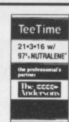
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# Wonder of Westurf

by **PAULA HUMPHRIES**  
**South West and South Wales**  
**Regional Administrator**

**W**hat a great success this show was for Gordon and Marion Child who were organising it for their ninth and last time. Gordon, who relinquished the position of South West and South Wales Regional Administrator at this event, was the instigator of the Westurf Show which, for the area, is the first opportunity in the year for suppliers to demonstrate their new machinery and greenkeeping products and for the greenkeepers, grounds-men and club officials to see what is available to them in every conceivable department.

Early on the 29th, the day before the show, we arrived in a force 8 gale to find the show site looking a bit of a disaster area. The tent poles were up but the marquee covers were fluttering overhead like butterflies with hefty men trying desperately to anchor them down. The M5 and



**Thanks very much: Gordon and Marion Child receive tokens of appreciation from Richard Whyman. Above: basking in sunshine on the big day itself**

the M25 were partially closed due to IRA threats and therefore lots of major exhibitors were held up. We sat there for some hours praying that the wind would die down and that the motorways would reopen and that the exhibitors

and their products would arrive. On Wednesday morning the sun shone and the wind disappeared – the exhibitors appeared and all was well. In fact it was such a lovely day that two or three faces were changed from white to a delicate pale scarlet by evening!

One exhibitor, who shall remain nameless, was coming from Ireland. With a strong Irish brogue and a lot of "suspect" equipment, he was stranded at Liverpool docks and not allowed off the boat for some long time. However, he made it during the night and was there in place on the Wednesday! There were some 75 exhibitors in all and around a thousand visitors attended.

This event is a wonderful showcase for clubs seeking to purchase machinery and major equipment during their next budget. They can not only see the full range of the latest equipment available but also see power driven machinery working and examine and compare performances and prices (and sometimes get themselves a very attractive show deal as well!) All the major suppliers exhibited. There were on-going demonstrations throughout the show. Long Ashton provided two very well kept practice greens

and a sizable area of fairway for these demonstrations. For any golf club considering a major purchase, this show is a must. There were also exhibitors of every other course requirement such as furniture, irrigation, signs, turf, pesticides, chemicals, accessories, sharpening equipment and seeds. Here you could compare seeds and fertilisers etc and talk in depth to the people who produce them. The people who manufacture these products are experts in their own right and many problems were resolved or at least under deep discussion at this show.

Representatives and information stands were present from the major training colleges in the region, Cannington, Sparsholt, Hartpury and Pencoed, as were the STRI and the IOG. The BIGGA pagoda was honoured with the presence of the Chairman, Patrick Murphy and Executive Director, Neil Thomas. The Captain of Long Ashton, Mr Bill Rowsell, together with Jim Fry, President of the South Coast Section and Patrick Murphy, Chairman of BIGGA, judged the stands for the best covered and best uncovered presentations. Rosettes and rose bowls were presented to OCMIS for the best uncovered and Hartpury College for the best covered stands.

The draw for holiday vouchers worth £200 was won by Andrew Mortimer of Caerphilly.

Richard Whyman, Chairman of the South West and South Wales Region, made a presentation from the region to Gordon and Marion Child in recognition of all the work they had put in over the years and in particular for promoting Westurf and making it such a successful event both for the exhibitors and the visitors.

■ Westurf '98 date for your diary: Wednesday, 29 April 1998.

## (mis)adventures of Gordon the Greenkeeper



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