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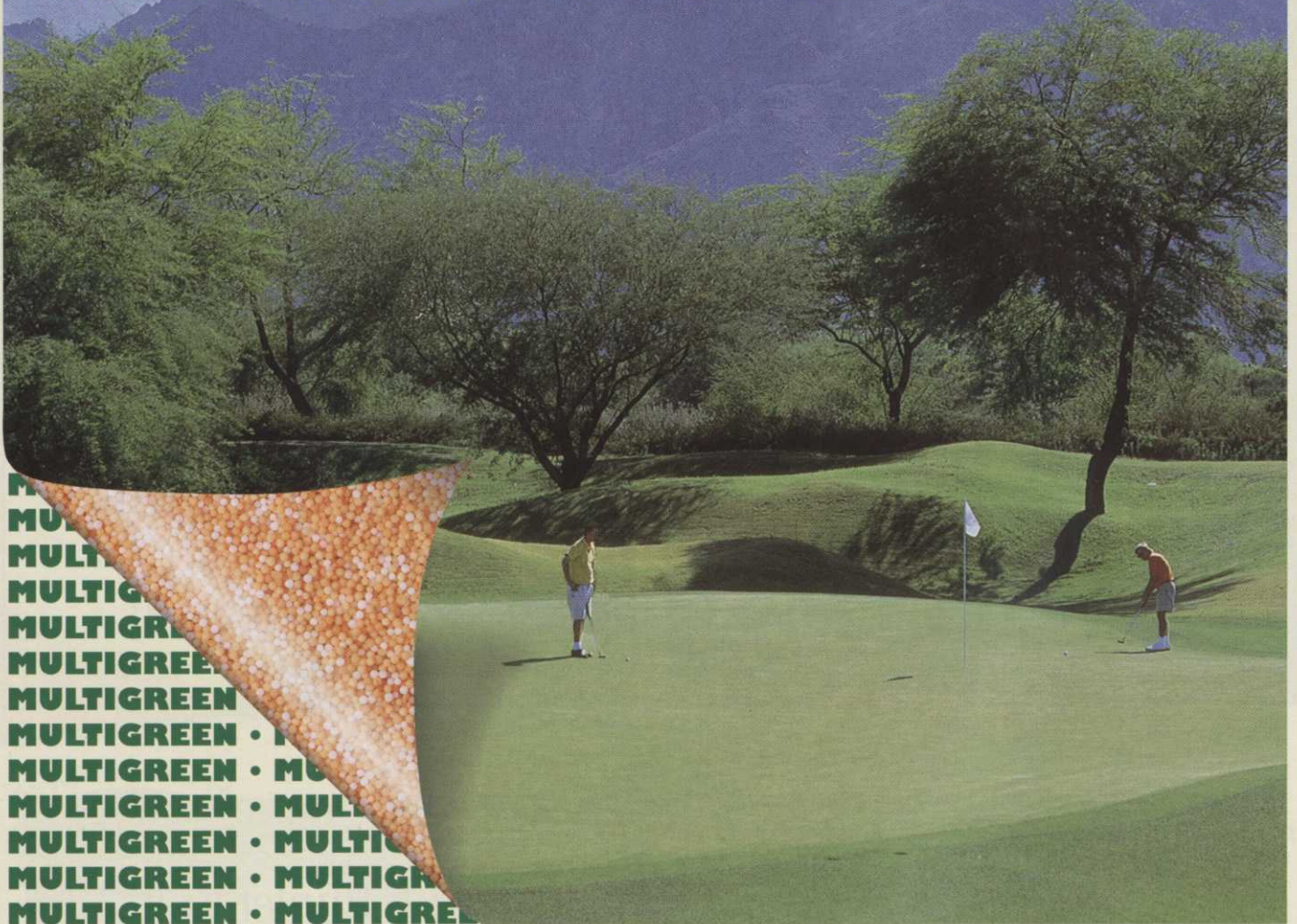


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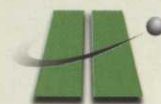
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Scott MacCallum travelled to North Wales to meet a man and machine with quite a story to tell...

A little piece of history

In 1932 Rhos on Sea Golf Club on the coast of North Wales, close to Colwyn Bay, took delivery of the first Ransomes Overgreen to leave the Ipswich factory.

Sixty-seven years later that same Overgreen - No B301 - was wheeled out, in pristine condition having been renovated by the club's owner, to celebrate the club's centenary and the 50th anniversary of Head Greenkeeper, Aneurin Hughes', arrival at the club.

That bare fact shows a level of continuity that would be the envy of most clubs. More so when you consider that in the 100 years the club has had just two Head Greenkeepers. Hughie Evans became the club's first Head man in 1908 and held the post up until 1959 when Aneurin took over. As Aneurin edges towards his official retirement age next March, the third Head Greenkeeper has been appointed. Diana Blundell, the daughter of club owner Frank Lithgow, has a steep mountain to climb if she is to be judged on longevity, but having spent time at Mere in Manchester, she brings with her the modern day skills required to do the job at the turn of the millennium.



As Aneurin admits, "She's got a lot more qualifications than I have."

The fact that the first Ransomes Overgreen found its way to North Wales was down to the club's then owner, J.B. Brear, who arrived at the club as club professional just after the first war.

"When the club came up for sale in the early 20s he bought a good share of it and by the 50s he'd bought about 90% of the shares," explained Aneurin.

"He was a very advanced, forward thinking man in terms of engineering as he had been a Chief Engineer in the Royal Navy and at the club whenever anything new came out he'd try it and if he liked it, he'd buy it. This was also the case with fertilisers which he brought to the club and weedkillers. He was one of the first to try weedkillers. He also worked closely with R.B. Dawson, of Bingley, on greenkeeping matters."

Remarkably the Overgreen was still in regular use up until the early 1970s by which time it had more than earned its retirement which it spent in Mr Lithgow's store.

"In the summer I used to

go out at first light and cut all 18 greens in about three and a half to four hours then raise the height of the units and go out and cut all the tees," said Aneurin, who added that the greens were cut every day in the summer.

Because the Overgreen didn't have a tight turning circle greens have to be cut in halves which gave them a light and shade, black and tan look.

It also had a range of Sisis attachments for hollow tining, slit tining, rollers and brushes.

"The Overgreen made the job an awful lot quicker but for special occasions like Captain's Day we used to take one of the 16 inch cutting units and push it by hand. We did that until the mid 50s."

Having worked at the club since he was 14 - he never ever considered leaving - Aneurin has seen many changes within the game and the industry itself.

"After I'd been here about a year I asked the boss if I could play and he said no. I had to have lessons from the professional, when he could fit me in, then play with the professional and the Captain to see what I'd learned about etiquette. Then I was given a leaflet about etiquette which I had to learn, and then brought before the committee to answer questions on etiquette. It was the same for any junior.

It was a shame when that was stopped," he said, adding that it was in the mid 60s when golf increased in popularity that he noticed etiquette standards beginning to drop.

As far as greenkeeping is concerned Aneurin can recall mixing his own fertilisers from hoof and horn and dried blood.

Getting back to cutting greens every day in the summer. It was in part due to the home made fertilisers boosting the grass to the extent that they grew by quarter of an inch a day.

"Mixing fertilisers was much more interesting and there was much more of a challenge to it than there is today."

Rhos on Sea has gone back to a more organic approach in the last five years.

"We starved everything for at least 12 months to get rid of all the chemicals. It did look terrible but the club decided to bite the bullet."

The moment when the Overgreen was wheeled out was an emotional one for Aneurin.

"It was thrilling. Mr Lithgow had reground and sharpened the blades, repainted it, given it a good decoke, cleaned the points and the plugs and it started first time. I cut the 18th green with it a few times before it went back into storage. To me it is priceless."



TALKING

Six of the country's top men give their views on some of the things they consider to be "Tops"

You're the tops

Compiled by Malcolm Huntington MBE



Name: Eddie Adams
Course: St Andrews Links - Old Course
Region: Scotland
Type of Course: Links
Number of Holes: 18
Number of Staff: 21



Name: Phil Baldock
Course: Ganton GC
Region: Northern
Type of Course: Inland links
Number of Holes: 18
Number of Staff: Five, plus two apprentices



Name: John Wells
Course: Brocket Hall Golf Club
Region: Midland
Type of Course: One parkland, one woodland
Number of Holes: 36, plus one nine-hole par three practice course
Number of Staff: 23 (including gardeners and mechanics)



Name: Chris Kennedy
Course: The Wentworth Club
Region: South East
Type of Course: Heathland
Number of Holes: 54, plus nine hole par three and six grass tennis courts
Number of Staff: 40



Name: Jim McKenzie
Course: Celtic Manor
Region: South West and South Wales
Type of Course: American style parkland
Number of Holes: 54
Number of Staff: 58 (summer) 38 (winter)



Name: Alan Strachan
Course: Royal County Down GC
Region: Northern Ireland
Type of Course: Links
Number of Holes: 36
Number of Staff: 15

1

1. What do think has been the single greatest invention the greenkeeping industry has seen?

1. Apart from the obvious lawn mower, I would consider the aeration machine the most important invention for golf turf maintenance.

1. The hydraulic triplex mower - when mine are running well. With one of these and a range of attachments, more tasks can be completed more frequently with less labour.

1. The strimmer as it has helped to save many man hours on the general tidiness of the course, leaving time for other important jobs.

1. Power driven aeration equipment - hollow coring and core harvesters, slit-tiners, verti-drain and hydrojet.

1. Hydraulics for mowers and virtually every piece of equipment.

1. The lawnmower! Seriously, I think the best to be the verti-drain in recent times. Compaction is one of the biggest problems on courses and a machine which helps to relieve this, generally with little disturbance, would be a worthy addition to anyone's machinery fleet.

HEADS

2

2. Who is the best greenkeeper you've encountered in your career?

2. There are two - Dave Dewar for his training during my apprenticeship and Walter Woods for his guidance and support throughout my 15 years at St Andrews.

2. My dad, Rex Baldock, who achieved results without many of the resources available to us now, such as a reasonable budget, modern machinery and well-trained staff. Closely followed by Ian McMillan, at Hankley Common, a very good greenkeeper with a progressive attitude to management.

2. I greatly admire people who work on The Open venues, but Turnberry in 1994 looked superb, so I guess, George Brown.

2. Shaig Logan, of Muirfield. He prepared his course for four Opens to the highest standards. However, when you see some of the equipment he had to achieve this standard of quality and presentation it was evident just how talented he was.

2. Old Tom Morris, about whom I have read so much. He was Keeper of Greens at St Andrews from 1865-1904 and has a reputation lasting more than 100 years, despite working without resources. How many of our top people will be talked about in 100 year's time?

2. Sandy McGregor, my first boss at Montrose Links. He gave me my first chance in greenkeeping and I am grateful for that. He quickly made me realise that there is an awful lot to do in this job other than cutting grass.

3

3. If you could chose any golf course in the world, other than your own, which one would you most like to manage?

3. Difficult question, but it would have to be Pebble Beach in California because of its design, lay-out and location.

3. Hankley Common. A beautiful heathland course with the best greens I have played on. The club also has one of the most enlightened attitudes to greenkeeping, greenkeepers and course management.

3. Any British links course, as they are beautiful, peaceful and beside the sea. This is where the best golf is played in my view.

3. Cyprus Point, California, for all round setting and quality in a naturally beautiful area - and Sun City, for its achievements in very difficult surroundings.

3. Pebble Beach, California. A spectacular course with spectacular views - and I daresay a touch better weather than we enjoy!

3. Any course which allowed no play before mid-day and close one hour later, situated beside a beach with a perfect climate of warm days, blue skies and nice soft rainfall at night! Truthfully, Royal County Down is pretty close to being the best. I feel it is the most natural and attractive links course in the world, but relatively unheard of in the UK.

4

4. What is the best piece of advice you've ever been given?

4. If a job is worth doing, do it well - Dave Dewar.

4. Free advice is exactly what you pay for it. If it's not broken don't fix it - from Alex Moore, my Deputy at Royal Portrush.

4. Grass roots do not grow in the soil, they grow in the spores of the soil, which makes me realise the importance of aeration.

4. Do not leave important duties or tasks until tomorrow, as the next day's circumstances may have changed, ie weather, staffing levels, vandalism. And... never have an affair with the Captain's wife!

4. Never put off until tomorrow what you can do today - advice given to me by Chris Kennedy when we were on the staff at Hagsgs Castle a few years back.

4. To treat all employees as equals, treat them fairly and expect no more of them than what you would do yourself.

5

5. Who delivered the most memorable seminar paper you can remember and why?

5. A seminar on irrigation water analysis I attended at the GCSAA show given by Dr David Kopec and Dr Clark Throssell. It was eight hours long, but it never got tedious. They involved the audience and encouraged dialogue and debate between fellow superintendents. It was excellent.

5. Golf Course Management by John Harris/Ian McMillan. John was and maybe still is, Managing Director of a computer company and Greens Chairman at Hankley. He and Ian gave inspirational papers at a seminar which convinced me that there were at least some people involved in the management of golf courses who knew how things should be done. I have met some more at Ganton.

5. Dr Donald White, Professor of Turf Grass Science at the University of Minnesota, gave a talk at the National Conference at Egham, Surrey, in 1990, entitled "Annual Meadow Grass, the super grass". This made a lot of greenkeepers realise that some of the best greens in the world can be of high amounts of Annual Meadow Grass content, if managed well.

5. In the United States, James Beard on theory. In the United Kingdom, Walter Woods and Jack McMillan on practical theory and greenkeeper oriented skills and for all mentioned previously. Plus, mixed with his own brand of humour, George Brown on Turnberry.

5. Dr James Beard, Professor emeritus at Texas AM University, talking at Montpellier, France in 1995. He spoke for nearly two days on a variety of subjects particularly relevant to me at the time.

5. A paper presented by Jim Moore, of the USGA Greens Section, on Water Management. He presented himself and his subject very professionally and kept the audience interested throughout by getting them to participate. He made the subject interesting and humorous and explained it in a simple manner.

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What comes next? Watch this space...

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Ad Ref 217

Roland Taylor takes a look at the kind of jobs not necessarily on your job description which can have you stretching high wide or low!

Those awkward jobs



For many readers looking after a golf course not only entails matters greenkeeping it often encompasses what amounts to estate management. This involves being responsible for a wide variety of other aspects including trees, hedges, wild flower and natural sites, watercourses and ornamental areas. In addition, car parks and paths may also come under a Course Manager's control.

To maintain all these areas can absorb a considerable amount of extra labour and time, so any jobs need to be carried out as quickly and efficiently as possible. Today there is usually a piece of outdoor power equipment that will simplify and speed up a task, so it is worth looking around when at the planning and scheduling stage of these operation.

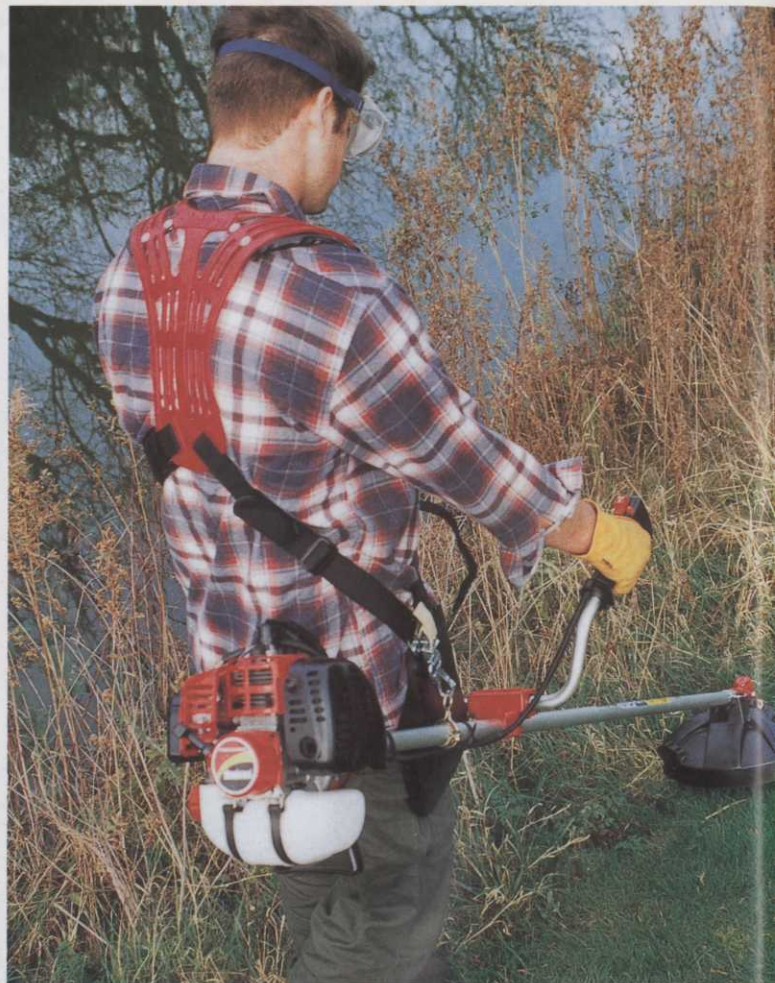
Those awkward jobs



Trees

These need attention from time to time, such as pruning, shaping, or removing dead or infected timber. Cutting back high branches can often present a problem. If a ladder or platform is used, in the interests of safety more than one member of staff should be present, thus tying up labour. Access might also be a problem, making the use of these types of structures impractical. One solution could be long armed pruners - these can reach heights up to 14ft. While they will deal with smaller branches when it comes to thicker ones a saw is needed. Although some pruners have the facility for fitting a saw attachment, the task of cutting branches at the full extension is not easy. In the last few years manufacturers have come up with another answer - powered pole pruners. These are small chainsaw cutting heads mounted at the end of a long drive shaft with a lightweight two-stroke engine to provide power. There is a choice of guidebar lengths suitable for dealing with most branches. Lengths of shafts vary between models, the average being about three metres. Longer than this and the unit could be unwieldy and difficult to operate.

If the branches to be removed are very thick then it is best to use the services of a professional arboriculturist. Once the timber is on the ground it can be quickly sawn up using a small chainsaw. The operator of this piece of equipment will need to be fully trained in its correct use,



plus all safety aspects relating to it.

Another method of dealing with material from tree maintenance, plus naturally fallen branches, is chipping. Chippers come in all shapes and sizes so there is one to suit virtually every application. This is an ideal form of disposal as the results can be left under the trees, used on paths or as weed suppressant on ornamental areas.

Hedges

Apart from shaping and giving a tidy appearance trimming also encourages new growth to thicken the hedge, especially low down.

There are plenty of hedgcutters available and these come with a wide choice of blade lengths, the longest being 42 inches. Single or double-sided cutting systems are available. Where the hedges are high, then some form of ladder or platform has in the past been necessary. These can slow the operation down and require more labour. An alternative, especially if the run of hedge is short or a ditch in front makes access difficult, is the latest introduction - extended hedge trimmers. These consist of a long shaft with an articulating head on to which is mounted a reciprocating cutterbar. This system enables the blade to be set at different angles to accommodate the shape of the hedge or bushes. The units can also be used for cutting a ditch side or riverbank.

On the edge

Keeping edges trim, especially

around bunkers, can be a very time consuming operation, but there are now plenty of machines available to make this job faster. The units are generally based on a vertical cutting blade with depth control and the speed at which the operation is carried out depends on how fast the operator walks. On some models the cutting head can be swivelled for trimming that feather of grass found around course furniture, walls and path edges.

Water courses

Because of the microclimate these create, vegetation thrives and tends to be lush and if left soon restricts the flow of water. Where there are long runs of ditches or streams, a flail mower on an extended arm can be used, but because a tractor is involved the banks must be sound. An alternative is a brushcutter or clearing saw. As these can be used on other areas around the course, they are a valuable addition to the machinery store. For clearing watercourses, the backpack models can be an advantage as they give the operator more flexibility especially in restricted areas. There are various cutting heads available for dealing with most of the brushwood and vegetation likely to be encountered in these areas.

Tree planting or fencing

From time to time, replacements have to be made, and digging holes for these takes time and often a lot of effort. The earth drill or auger makes