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# Weather

## WEATHER PLANNING FOR PROFESSIONAL GREENKEEPERS

**"Weather is obviously a most important factor for the management of golf courses"**

*(Source: March 2002 Annual report Rye Golf Club)*

**".....Higher Standards require resourcing. Greenkeepers should be pro-active in demanding information that helps decision making".**

*(Source Greenkeeper International Jan 2002).*



The successful running of a golf club requires expertise from management, especially Greenkeepers, to enable the course to be prepared and looked after, including seeding, fertilising, watering, alterations etc. This is of enormous importance especially where attention to detail, preparation and maintenance, is essential to the enjoyment of the final product, and when costs have to be very closely looked at.

However, whereas Risk Management is now an accepted, and in some cases a statutory, requirement for corporate management, only recently have professionals outside the business environment become aware of the need to access the best available information to enable effective decisions to be made.

And it is also only recently that modern technology has enabled information to be delivered direct to the people responsible for these crucial decisions at an affordable price.

Anyone who has to make plans that involve capital outlay must do so on the basis of the most up-to-date information available, and knowing when, or when not, to contract machinery or start spraying and seeding programmes is essential not only for the management of the course, but also to using money effectively and responsibly.

Although there is a great deal of free information now available particularly on the internet, it is mostly of a general nature i.e. 5 day forecasts, and in many cases is model output, which has not had input from a forecaster, and is not necessarily from a reliable source. Almost certainly it will not be in the correct format to enable quick decision-making.



As a result of the programmes established to assist the presentation of information to the corporate sector, Weather Index Ltd has developed software that enables the rapid assimilation and transmission of site-specific - i.e. at the exact latitude and longitude of the club - forecasts over a multitude of platforms. This means that previously prohibitively expensive forecasts can be provided at prices that are very affordable to a wider market.

Particularly for Greenkeepers, but also for golf course management, it is envisaged that the following package will be delivered daily, by automatic email:

Daily. 7 day detailed forecast at the clubs latitude and longitude. This will include expected 24 hour rainfall, divided into

day-time, and night-time amounts, sunshine hours, wind speed and direction, max and min temperatures, humidity

Weekly. 30 day (monthly) forecast – national

Weekly. 30 day (monthly) forecast – regional

Monthly. 90 day (seasonal) forecast

A number of Greenkeeping indices to enable instant planning for course management. (e.g. Top Dressing; Herbicide spraying.)

Frost warnings (Sept – May).

This information will enable Greenkeepers and management to plan their course related programmes using the most up-to-date weather information available, and as a by-product, offers a useful service to club members.

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Fax: 020 7635 3239



Bill Giles ▲



Dear Greenkeeper,

**WHAT HAPPENED TO SUMMER?**

With a much wetter season than normal and hardly a week of dry days.

**What are the consequences for your Golf Course?**

Moreover, what techniques should you be employing to make sure your courses will be in good condition going into the Autumn?

Nutrients have been taken out of the soil, in **much larger** quantities, than normal: more grass has gone in the box when cutting and also from leaching into the drains - particularly on sand based greens. With the weather, it has been difficult to get onto the Greens some days and the grass will very shortly be running out of "steam".

Application rates of nutrients should be increased over the next 2/3 months, possibly by up to 50% in order to maintain adequate nutrition in the soil.

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For more information contact your local distributor or speak to myself at Angus Horticulture Ltd 01241 829 049.

Yours sincerely,

Alistair Ballantyne

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# Course Feature

## BEST OF BOTH WORLDS

Scott MacCallum ventured west and came across an excellent, and very different golf course, with a very enlightened management philosophy



▲  
Clive Moore (left)  
with Steve Jones

If you haven't been to the west coast of Wales you have actually missed out on one of the more attractive areas the British Isles has to offer. And if you find yourself in the resort of Pwllheli on the Llyn Peninsula you will find a place, which has a great deal to offer on so many different fronts. For example, it boasts a bay, which is reputed to provide the best training area for yachtsmen anywhere in the world. Yes, I know. I was a bit surprised as well.

In addition there is a golf club which probably boasts the clubhouse closest to the sea in the entire country. Look out of one window and you can smell the sea and, if the window happens to be open, feel the spray, but if you look out of another window you will be equally impressed. On one side you will see a fine example of a beautifully manicured parkland course, but turn 45 degrees and you will be confronted by a typical links layout complete with fast running fairways, heather and revetted bunkers.

Now this isn't some fancy 36 hole club, which is fortunate enough to offer its members two distinct styles of golf under the same roof. This is a regular members' 18 hole course, which just happens to be made up of completely different styles.

The man who has the task of producing, what may be the most diverse, management regime in UK golf for 18 holes is 39 year old Steven Jones, a man whose enthusiasm for the job is matched only by his enthusiasm for the area in which he is fortunate to live and work.

"Pwllheli is a top quality resort with a superb marina and some of the best sailing to be found in the world. The peninsula boasts many fine courses and relies heavily on the tourist industry to support the local economy. With improved road networks the Club has extended its membership and attracts a large number of country members who value quality golf for a sensible cost," enthused Steve.

Those who have taken the opportunity to become associated with Pwllheli Golf Club find a unique course, and go-ahead club, which on both fronts offers other golf clubs a fine example to perhaps follow. The club's pedigree is extremely strong with the links side, the first laid down, being designed by Tom Morris and the parkland side having been created by another legendary figure in the history of the game, James Braid.

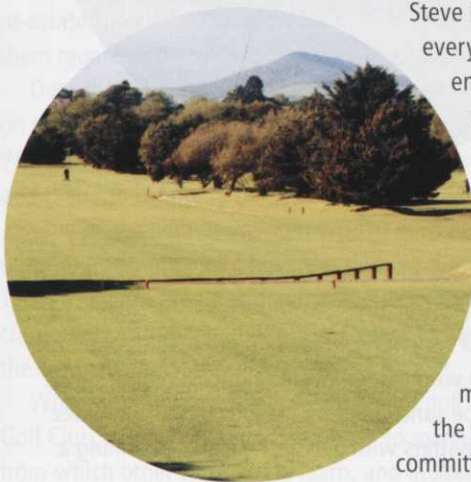
The Clubhouse was opened in 1981 by Welsh Ryder Cup star, Brian Huggett, and is represented on a professional front by the Pilkington family. The Club boasts two qualified PGA professionals John and his younger son Stuart, whilst John's eldest son Mark is competing successfully as a touring professional on the European Tour.

In 1998 in a survey for Golf Monthly magazine by a group of independent panellists, Pwllheli was listed as only one of seven Welsh Clubs to appear on the "Top 200 courses to play in Britain".

Steven, second from right, with his team



1st tee looking towards the green



Steve is provided with everything he needs to ensure that his Chalk and Cheese - Parkland and Links - course can be maintained to the highest possible standard while the entire structure of the club has been modernised to remove the conventional committee system and replace it with that of a more

professional and flexible management team.

"The first eight holes are all parkland on a clay sub base with the grasses tending to be bents and annual meadow grass while the remaining ten holes are everything you would expect of a links course and built on traditional sand through to a silt base with more fescues," explained Steve, who gives every impression of a man who relishes the challenge presented by his split personality course.

"The parkland side is low lying, and because of it's composition, slow to drain whilst the links part with its sand sub base drains freely. This provides us with two extremes both requiring differing weather conditions. This also makes planning and undertaking routine work difficult, especially during wet periods on the parkland side of the course" explained Steve, who was promoted to Head Greenkeeper two years ago.

On a more day-to-day basis the team has to differentiate the applications that are given to the course to quite a detailed degree.

"With soil conditioners, the links side will get seaweed while the parkland side will be given something like Energise."

Another complication is trying to make sure that green speeds are more or less similar under completely different conditions.

"We sometimes double up on the verticutting on the parkland side while just do it once on the other side depending upon growth levels and climate," he explained.

The bunkers are also maintained and presented in a completely different manner with the links side revetted and the parkland more shaped and contoured.

Steve is also very much the exception rather than the rule when the old truism about the existence of two types of greenkeeper is considered - a links man and parkland man, rarely do the two cross sides.

"I don't really feel that I have more empathy with one over the other. I'm very much in the middle and manage what is in front of me," he explained.

To that end he is supported by an experienced team in Alwyn Jones, Dylan Hughes, Iwan Williams, and Alwyn

Jones, while at the time of writing the team

was about to be joined by Tomos Tate, who at 16, was joining on a youth training scheme. During the

interview Iwan popped his head round the door to ask if it were possible through the article for him to pass on his thanks to Geraint Thomas of Coed-y-Mwstwr Golf Club Bridgend, for introducing him to greenkeeping. No problem Iwan.

Steve began his working life as a groundsman working for the local council looking after sports pitches.

"After a while I began to realise that as a result of privatisation, the Council was suffering and I noticed an advert for a job at Pwllheli Golf Club. I liked the look of it because it mentioned that training would be provided and I hadn't been trained by the council."

14th green looking back up the fairway!





◀ 11th tee and Cardigan Bay



Steve joined as an Assistant and soon took advantage of the chance to get himself educated. He threw himself into his training by attending the Welsh College of Horticulture in Northop, 80 miles away, on block release, and ten years on he has achieved NVQ Level 4 and his D32 and D33 assessor qualifications as well as earning a host of other certificates.

The rest of the team are following his lead with two working towards Level 3 and another towards level 2.

"The club benefits from having people with the knowledge and the ability to do their job better and the staff benefit because the club scale their pay awards based on qualifications gained," explained Steve.

With the course maintenance in safe hands the club took the giant step towards a more modern management system by jettisoning the old style committee system at a specially convened EGM in favour of a management board of five with an individual assigned to each main area of responsibility - finance, house course etc.

"The feeling was that the old system wasn't working as efficiently as it could have been and that it perhaps was a little unwieldy," said Steve.

Steve now works closely with Clive Moore, a local architect and Member of the Management Board on all matters pertaining to the course.

"Clive is passionately supportive of what we are doing, and we have an excellent working relationship. The club actively encourage the staff to take advantage of all training opportunities and ensure that our BIGGA membership is paid," said Steve.

"Communication and general administration has become much

easier following the reorganisation." Clive is also well aware of the benefits of the new club structure.

"We used to have a very hefty Greens Committee (at one time totalling 22 members) who met on average once a month. Most proposals could only be sanctioned by the Executive Committee which often delayed matters with decision making becoming a fairly lengthy matter.

Now with only five members to consult, and with the sole authority granted to them to action matters, matters can be dealt with the minimum of delay, with sometimes decisions being made over the phone."

Clive stressed however that it was important to maintain communication with officials and members and the need to keep them informed and involved in political and policy matters affecting the course.

"The Club has taken a very progressive path, especially for a small club in a fairly rural part of Wales, and we hope that it will be of benefit and that others will be encouraged to follow our example," he added.

"Steven is allowed to get on with his work with a minimum of interference, and is allowed to do what he wants on the course within reason. It is about trusting and respecting people and getting the right people to do the job, and I feel that we can already see the benefits of doing it this way.

"As long as the course is playing well, is in good condition and he is spending within budget he is allowed to get on with his job," he added, in a common sense manner... which unfortunately isn't as common as it might be.

A policy document is being prepared which will hopefully outline the future plans for the course and its management.



# Course Feature

Included in the possible future plans will be the improving of the drainage to lower holes, renewal of greens and upgrading and extending the irrigation system. After a brief absence the Club has re-established its association with the STRI and will consult with them regarding course maintenance and general improvements.

Over the last five years the Club has progressed with improving on their standard of machinery with a planned renewal programme. With the odd exception no item of machinery is over five years old and the Club is hoping to continue with the programme.

"The investment in the right type of machinery is important in order to ensure the men have the right equipment to do the job. Today's golfers expect and demand quality conditions, machinery is continually improving and it is important to keep up to date with the best and latest developments" said Clive.

While admittedly not located in one of golf's hot beds, Pwllheli Golf Club, and its go-ahead approach to management, offers much from which other clubs could learn, and in Steven and his staff they have a team keen to make the most of their abilities. It is a fine combination.

## Machinery Inventory

In 1995 following an assessment of the machinery it was decided to embark on a capital expenditure and replacement programme. In preparing a programme certain parameters were set which would enable the club to achieve the objective of replacing our major items of machinery at a maximum five year interval. Available funds were limited and initially an allowance of £25000 per annum was set aside for machinery purchases. This enabled us to achieve the objectives, and by the year 2000 the five-year programme came to an end. In 2001 the programme continued

with the replacement of a rough triplex which was purchased in 1996. The improvement in the value of the machinery has enabled the annual commitment to be reduced to £20000 at which level it is hoped we will be able to maintain a similar programme for the next five years.

The investment in equipment has resulted in a general improvement in the quality of the course together with reduced maintenance costs and improved productivity.

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- Honda 50mm Water pump
- Honda Turf Cutter
- Haraid Man Boom Sprayer
- FM 1501 Fairway Scarifier
- Richard Long Top Dresser
- Vertidrainer
- Greenscare Coremaster
- Dowdswell Roller Mower
- Proseed Overseeder
- Thatchaway Verticutting Units



# Trees

## Tremendous Advice

John Nicholson gives some practical assistance with your tree planting projects



Total blockage of a field drain

During the 60s and 70s the planting of fast growing species of poplar became very fashionable with local authorities and the trend soon spread to golf courses. The fast growth and potential size of the mature tree seemingly being the answer to all the problems that golf clubs faced from members wanting instant results. How often am I faced with the question, 'Why don't we plant large expensive root ball trees or species such as poplar or cypress which grow quickly?' The answer is simple, short term fixes are never long term solutions. If a tree grows quickly, then it will normally have a short life span and the club will be faced with the same problem in 20 or 30 years. If large root ball trees are planted they will normally remain dormant for a good few years, allowing smaller stock to overtake them in a relatively short period.

The result of such planting is often homogenous stands of even-aged poplar, which then become the main management concern of the golf course. A common sight on many courses is the ubiquitous line of poplar around the boundary of the course which now is becoming a liability to both the club

and its neighbours. Today it is even more important not to be seen as negligent with the growing American trend of liability claims.

Commercial hybrid poplar have a rotation age of 40 years which means that beyond this point they will deteriorate very quickly. They will drop twigs and branches creating a possible hazard to both players and neighbours and often suffer from disease or fungal invasion.

Poplar canker is the most common ailment. This predisposes the tree to snapping at the weakened point. Further, poplar is surface rooting which often results in damage to expensive machinery or disruption to neighbouring property.

It is often mistakenly thought that the poplar will solve drainage problems by soaking up water in wet areas. Although they have a high demand for water, short mown grass will normally require more water than a tree. Further, poplar will always find the easiest source of water, normally field drains, and will thus compound drainage problems by creating blockages. It is not uncommon to find 20m. of fibrous root completely blocking a drain. Poplar roots can be found at a spread of up to 2.8 times the height of the tree and, therefore, extensive damage can occur in areas thought to be well removed from the tree's influence.

Both from a landscape and conservation point of view, poplars have little value. Their shape, texture and colour all contrast with the native trees of the broader landscape. Their existing root system can create a long term management problem as they will regenerate aggressively from any remaining plant tissue, often to the detriment of any replanting as they will compete for water and nutrient.



Poplar roots can extend up to 3.8 x the height of the tree



Large poplar root

Finally, poplars in the wrong place can have a significant effect on the ecology and playing characteristics of the course. White poplar was planted on many coastal courses due to its hardy nature.

Unfortunately it is also an aggressive pioneer and will reproduce from its roots in the form of suckers quickly colonising the dune systems and shading out the native grasses which initially attracted golfers to the site. The result of their presence is a reduction in the quality of both the golf course and the ecological value of the site.

The removal of poplars is often an expensive project for they have little timber value and are therefore expensive to remove. In order to ensure that more desirable vegetation can be established in their place it is necessary not only to fell the tree, but also to remove as much of the root system as possible. This will avoid regeneration from any

remaining plant tissue. Depending on the site and the species of poplar, this may entail felling and grinding the stumps or the mechanical removal of both tree and the root system by either winching or dosing, the latter being more appropriate to the removal of white poplar from sandy sites. It is not possible to be categorical as to the best method to deal with the problem without assessing the site and species involved.

However, it is certain that, due to the aggressive nature of poplar, it would be wise to allow for a programme of spraying to stop future recolonisation from sucker growth.

In conclusion, I quote the words of the great golf course architect, Alister MacKenzie, "Perhaps the most serious mistake made by a golf committee is the fallacy that they will save money by neglecting to get good advice." Col/Architect 1920



Blockage removed from field drain

John Nicholson, of John Nicholson Associates Arboricultural Consultants, can be contacted Tel: 0191 384 2556





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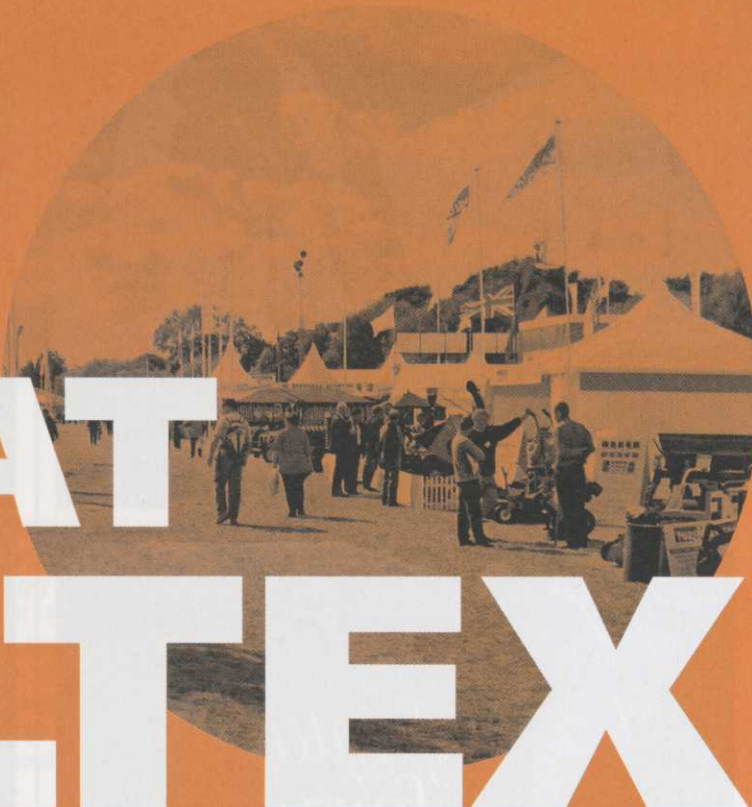


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# SEE YOU AT SALTEX



The annual trip to Windsor for Saltex gives everyone an ideal opportunity to check out what's new in the industry as well as catch up with friends and colleagues between Harrogate's.

The timing, location and nature of the show makes it the ideal foil to BTME and BIGGA staff will be their in force. Stand G01 will be open and welcoming to members, prospective new members and friends with answers to all BIGGA related questions on tap.

The IOG SALTEX exhibition for the open space management industry takes place on 3 – 5 September at Windsor Racecourse, Berkshire.

The show offers an overview of the latest developments, new products and issues affecting professionals working within or supplying the open space management industry. The show embraces diverse sectors including: fine turf & sports; children's play and safety surfacing; commercial vehicles; leisure & facilities management; modular buildings; turf maintenance equipment; IT software and security equipment.

At IOG SALTEX visitors have the chance to:

- Test the latest equipment on site
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- Attend FREE advice clinics
- Discover new methods of working

This year's show also features more demonstration plots than ever before.

During its history, IOG SALTEX has grown into a comprehensive open space management event. While still catering for specialist groundscape at a grass roots level, the show also covers every

aspect of space management from computer consultancy to contract cleaning and safety.

For more information and free tickets please visit [www.iogsaltex.co.uk](http://www.iogsaltex.co.uk)

## HOW TO GET TO SALTEX

SALTEX is held at Windsor Racecourse. About 20 miles west of Central London, Windsor is easy to reach by rail, road and air. Heathrow is only a 15 minute drive away; Gatwick and Luton are within an hour's drive.

### BY ROAD

From the M25. Leave the motorway at Junction 15, where you'll join the M4, heading west.

From the M4: Westbound – leave M4 at junction 6.

Eastbound – leave M4 at junction 8/9. Then follow brown and white signs for Windsor racecourse.

### BY RAIL

From London Paddington: Leave the train at Slough and join the local service to Windsor and Eton Central Station. Approximate journey time is 35 minutes.

From London Waterloo: Leave the train at Windsor and Eton Riverside Station. Approximate journey time is 45 minutes.