



This picture: August 2001. How the greens have developed, now showing 5-10cm of new rootzone development

Below: Ian Tomlinson



Ian Tomlinson describes some of the problems he has faced since beginning work as Course Manager at Rungsted Golf Club in Denmark.

Having worked in Switzerland for 14 years I returned to work in the UK for three years before my family and I decided to spread our wings once again and this time head for Denmark.

I became Course Manager of Rungsted Golf Club in July, 2000, and had just 24 days to prepare the course for the SAS Invitational Tournament!

Taking on such a challenge in the middle of the playing season and not understanding the course, the climate, or how the Danish Green Staff worked, pushed me to the limits of my greenkeeping abilities but thankfully the competition was a success.

So why Rungsted? The previous year the club held the final of the SAS Invitational with Scandinavia v The Rest of the World with stars such as Tiger

Woods, but after the competition the Poa greens failed due to stress and the members ended up playing temporary greens.

Before discussing the greens let us look at some worrying facts and imagine that in 2003 all greenkeepers in the UK were faced with the same prospect as Danish Greenkeepers. Today the only legal fungicide labelled for golf course use is Sportak, a systemic fungicide that has been used so much you may as well throw orange juice on the greens.

Imagine that in 2003 the only fungicide that you can use will be banned for use on golf courses along with all weedkillers. In fact all chemicals. Quite a daunting prospect for any greenkeeper but how long before UK greenkeepers are faced with the same situation?

In the Talking Heads feature in August some Course Managers/Head Greenkeepers were stating that they accepted having Poa greens and that you could not get rid of it and that standards would fall if they tried to eradicate the Poa. It is all too easy to say we manage the Poa when you know that you have an arsenal of fungicides available to you in your chemical storage room at the first sign of any disease.

The way forward is going back to traditional greenkeeping methods and trying to encourage fescue and bent grass to establish on the course, major aeration programmes and limit the use of water and fertiliser.

So let us go back to understand why the greens failed in 1999. The greens were 100% poa with 5cm of thatch. NPK had been applied on a regular

basis, greens were receiving 20 to 25 minutes of water every night but what is quite incredible is that six years ago a consultant had told Danish greenkeepers that aeration was bad for greens and so everyone stopped aerating. The result was at Rungsted we had 1cm of root growth and serious compaction problems.

Obviously trying to cut greens low for a major championship with no root growth the resulting failure was inevitable.

It would appear that many a golf course has been set back by poor agronomic advice in this country and with the prospect of all chemicals being withdrawn in two years time a rethink on greenkeeping practices is urgent. There is no quick fix solution here only a lot of very hard work ahead for most greenkeepers.

One man who has taken on the crusade is Chris Haspell. Chris has been in Denmark six years and has done an incredible job of turning 100% poa greens into high percentage fescue/bent greens at Falster where he worked. His traditional methods have not gone unnoticed, as he has now become Greenkeeping Consultant for the Danish Golf Union, offering advice to clubs who have found themselves in the same situation as Rungsted.

Just after the SAS last year the serious work on to the greens began. Soil tests showed we had huge excesses of fertiliser in the soil. The greens suffered with dry patch and Anthracnose disease. The irrigation water taken from a bore hole was of poor quality and turned the poa yellow if used on a regular basis (the course is only 500 m from the sea) and the irrigation system required major work to it.

The old greens still drain but the thatch holds the water on the surface. In August 2000 I hollow tined with 16mm hollow tines with a new Toro Procure aerator at

3cm spacings to remove as much thatch as possible, overseeded with 200 kgs of Bar 2 fescue/bent seed applied with a proseeder and applied 60 tonnes of top dressing. Solid tining was done with 8mm tines every two weeks followed by a light top dressing. In September we hollow tined again the same as above but did not top dress and applied 300 kg of seed. In October I verti-drained the greens with 12mm tines down to 30cm depth some six times in six weeks. I will not tell you what the members were saying.



Now, unlike the weather that you experienced in the UK from the autumn in 2000 through to the spring of 2001, we missed all the rain. Winter was perfect with cold dry weather and some snow. The temperature was down to -15 at times and I had some greens that had frost in them for three months. This was perfect for the greens as natural decompaction had taken place under the greens and fusarium was the last thing I was worried about. We also verti-drained the fairways in the autumn for the first time in the club's history. We had a very dry spring and summer and the fairways were in great shape without any fertiliser being applied. In the past four tonnes of fertiliser had been used on the fairways each season. The programme for the fairways in the future is deep aeration with the vertidrain and verticutting as required.

As mentioned previously the irrigation system left a lot to be desired. The first thing that I did was to have Bill Hawthorn come out to evaluate the performance

of the present system. I have worked with Bill for over 20 years and value his experience as a true professional. We had no isolation valves out on the course at all so if I had a burst on a green the whole system had to be drained down just to do one repair. To quote Bill, "The tees irrigation sys-

tem is a complete mess and we need to start all over again".

As we had so many other problem areas out on the course and needed major finance for new machinery it was decided to tackle the upgrade on the greens system in-house during the winter of 2000/2001 and the tee system in the winter of 2001/2002. Not only did we have seven different types of green sprinklers but also their spacings were out and then we discovered that the pipe loop around some of the greens was of different sizes. On the 15th green we discovered that the pipe down the left side of the green was a 50mm and the section round the back was 40mm and the right side of the green was laid with 32mm. It was imperative that we had each green irrigated with the same pressure and we installed new Logic impact sprinklers spaced out by Bill. The concern that each green was watered equally is because we have just installed an acid injector system, a Phairway 6,8 controller to correct the water quality problem and bring the water's pH down as the water from the bore hole is nearly pH 8 and the soil pH of the greens is 7.6 plus. I am pleased to say that the greens irrigation upgrade went very well and the difference in the greens with using water that I have regulated at pH 6.5 is incredible. Dry patch is less in evidence and disease also. We have reduced the amount of

irrigation being used to water the greens and tees by 75% compared to previous years.

It is not just one thing that will make the transition of poa greens into fescue/bent greens but at least by creating the right growing environment to encourage the finer grasses to succeed and sensible management I believe we have a good chance. One of Rungsted's members has been working every winter for seven years cleaning out the woodlands and allowing sunlight and air to enter the green and tees areas. One of my new French workers is a qualified tree surgeon so guaranteeing future good management of the woodlands.

Knowing the intense work programme that is required on the greens obviously needs the support of the Board and membership and to help the members to understand what was required in the coming five years I held a members' evening with slides and they had the chance to ask questions and understand the problems. I have 100% backing from the Board and when I was asked if I wanted to take the SAS Invitational the next three years I explained that you cannot embark on the major aeration programme to remove the thatch and also expect to have firm fast greens for the world's top golfers.

The result was that the club have turned down the competition and I

have hollow tined four times in four months so far this year once again with 16mm tines at 3cm spacings and am aiming at five times, weather permitting. I am looking to apply 750kg of Bar2 seed to the greens and 300 tonnes of top dressing this season. Is there any evidence that in the 18 months since I took on the challenge we have made any progress with the greens? The winter certainly helped, as did the dry spring. We now have between five and 10cm of root depth on most greens and a 10 to 15% increase in Bent and Fescue in the sward. The only way the new seed will survive is to keep the thatch dry and open hence the aggressive aeration programme. The members have been very supportive and can see the difference in the greens already and as we get more top dressing into the thatch layer so the greens will become firmer. Following a recent meeting with the Board members there appears to be no opposition to continuing with the aggressive aeration and top dressing programme in 2002. Fertiliser is 8.0.0 with supplemented liquids, trace elements and seaweed & Humic acid supplied by Tim Le Mesurier, of GreenBest, with whom I have worked closely for many years.

Jim Arthur states in his "Practical Greenkeeping" book that it is a very brave man who embarks on a 8.0.0



Left: The condition of the greens in 1999 after the S.A.S

Above: The greens at the start of 2000. Note the 5-6cm of thatch on the core sample and the absence of rootzone

Bottom: The Rungsted Greenkeeping Team in their uniforms supplied by the Kansas Clothing Company. Our members now comment on how professional our team looks as we look after the course.

seeding these greens with a creeping bent grass in Denmark is doomed to failure with no chemical control and the Nitrogen tax. What I didn't realise is that Denmark is one of the largest fescue seed producers in Europe which gives you hope that if it will grow naturally like that in this climate we should be able to make it grow on the golf course.

I am extremely fortunate to have a staff who have accepted me and taken up the challenge with me to make Rungsted not only the best course in Scandinavia but one of the best in Europe. Proof that we are heading in the right direction is that Golf World has just rated the course in 54th position in its Top 100 courses in Continental Europe when it was in 87th position in 1999.

I have four Danish greenkeepers, two French greenkeepers and an excellent Danish right hand man called Johnny Mortenson. The staff are really wanting to learn and there is a greenkeeping school at the top of Denmark but the courses are spread out over 11 weeks each year right throughout the playing season which

is a major problem. After some serious thought and talking with David Golding at the GTC and Huw Parry at Elmwood we have come up with a way to educate my staff to NVQ Level 2. I have my D32/33 Assessor qualification. Five of my staff have enrolled with Elmwood College and we have bought the training logbooks from the GTC. We are following the theory notes that go with the Level 2 course that the STRI helped produce. I shall assess my staff and sign them off on the practical work for each of the tasks and when I feel that one of them is fully competent he shall go to Elmwood for a few weeks to be assessed on all the underpinning knowledge and also reassessed on some practical tasks to make sure that the college is confident that I am myself assessing to the industry standards. The staff are very excited about having the chance to obtain an NVQ in greenkeeping and believe that it will not only make them special in Denmark but will allow them more opportunity to advance their career within Europe having a recognised qualification behind them.

Although fluent in French with a working knowledge of German nothing quite prepared me for the Danish language. I am trying hard to master it but when nearly every Dane speaks perfect English it is all too easy to carry on daily life in English.

We work out of a first class maintenance facility. We have a fully fitted workshop and I am fortunate to have three qualified mechanics on the staff and breakdowns are very quickly put right. The staff quarters and canteen are cleaned and washed every day by outside contractors (now that is something that you should ask your committee to implement at your next meeting, I would probably hear their

reply from here!) We have a full range of equipment from all the major suppliers.

There was talk before I joined the club about bringing in an Architect to see about lengthening some of the holes and assessing the bunkers which are in a terrible condition and need major renovation work to them. I am fortunate in that Ron Kirby who has designed Jack Nicklaus' courses in Europe for the last 16 years and has worked with Trent Jones Snr and Gary Player is a family friend and Ron came out in May of this year for two days and has given us some invaluable help on the way forward for the course. Ron was somewhat surprised that six of the holes are growing on pure peat which goes down some 18 metres before reaching solid ground. This as you can imagine creates a special maintenance practice. The grass on these fairways grows 2 cm every night! It is worth noting that Alistair MacKenzie's brother designed the course back in 1937.

Following a recent meeting of the Board, finance has been made available to start the bunker reconstruction programme. The first investment will be a 3.5 tonne 360 degrees excavator on tracks. I have sourced the materials required from sand to fill and turf and will start in October 2001. We are going to push ahead with as many bunkers as possible through out the autumn and winter and will fit in the tees irrigation upgrade as well when ground conditions means that construction of the bunkers is not possible.

The coming years look like being very interesting and exciting and I look forward to giving the members the course they deserve after all the disruption that they are facing today.

programme when greens have been used to a high NPK diet and that a softly softly approach is required which is very good advice. I am aiming at 100 to 120kg/Ha of Nitrogen this year on the greens but it is a fine line between letting the poa struggle and still having some sort of playing surface for the 1100 members. As we manage to get more fine grass to establish so I hope to reduce the Nitrogen levels each year so making the poa struggle even more.

Another reason why Nitrogen is being limited is the fact that the Danish Government has levied a tax on every Kilo of Nitrogen used. I think it is quite obvious that building greens to USGA specification and



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BREATH TAK

This month sees BIGGA's major Education and Training week, Continue to Learn, starting on the 21st of this month. Designed to give delegates greater choice of subjects and speakers, the first two days include the National Education Conference and the Workshop Programme.

Start your week by listening to Dr James Beard, the world renowned Turf Grass expert or by attending a one day Workshop on Emergency First Aid or Environmental Management.

Unfortunately, the two day, Golf Course Design Workshop is full.

Dr Beard is followed by three speakers, Keith Weatherhead from Cranfield University, John Bradwell and Agostino Gaude from Turf Seed UK and Ruth Mann from STRI looking at the effects

of Global Warming on the Golf Course.

Tuesday morning's lecture looks at Redesign and Reconstruction of Golf Course Features with Donald Steel, Tom Mackenzie and Martin Ebert covering the design and redesign of golf courses, Brian Pierson covering construction techniques and Jim Moore looking at the needs of greenkeepers.

Tuesday afternoon gives the information needed to prepare your course for winter play with Ed McCabe, Arthur King and George Shiels giving you the knowledge to answer those difficult questions.

Both one day workshops run again on Tuesday, January 22.

Wednesday, January 23 sees Continue to Learn move to the Royal Hall, alongside BTME, with Roger

Black giving the Keynote Speech. A range of seminars follows starting with Jim Moore from the USGA talking about the Design and Construction of Bunkers. Dr James Beard appears for the second time on Thursday afternoon, talking about Turfgrass Management. Come along and see if you agree or disagree with the speakers on this varied programme.

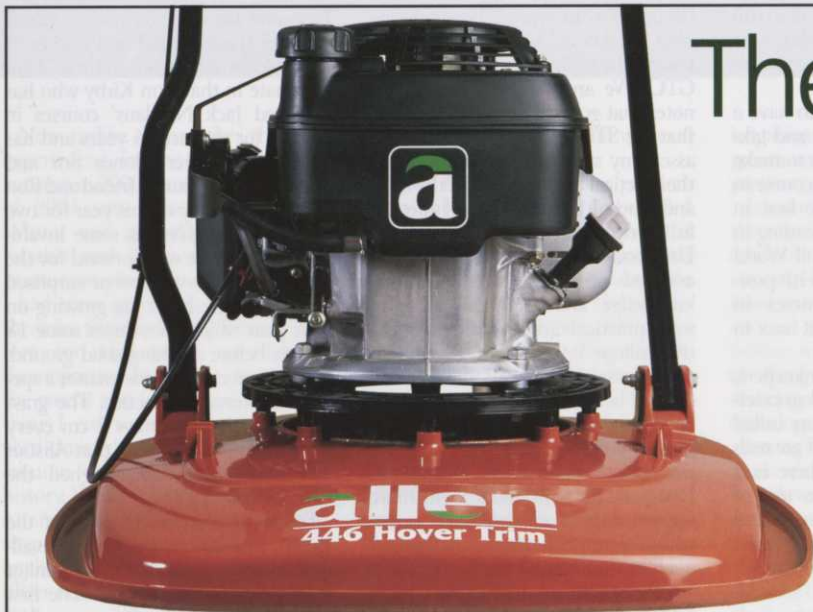
Friday morning sees the final seminar session for those remaining in Harrogate with Dr Mike Canaway leading the way with a talk on the link between training and professionalism. BIGGA Chairman, Clive Osgood, follows to tell you about his year as Chairman with Master Greenkeeper and Certified Golf Course Superintendent, Andy Campbell talk-

ing about Changing Times and Changing Jobs.

The Careers Advice Clinic returns for its third year with Brin Bendon and Frank Newberry looking to treat your career problems. Find out how to apply for jobs, write a CV and cope with interviews by attending the clinic in the HALL Q of the Harrogate Exhibition Centre.

Discuss your education and training problems with Ken or Sami at the Education and Training Stand which will be situated alongside the Royal Hall. The Royal Hall is approached through Hall M.

The Golf Club Show has its own education programme. Aimed, mainly, at Golf Club Secretaries, Chairmen of Green and other Golf Club Committee



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members, the programme begins, on Monday, January 21, with Running Golf Courses in the 21st Century, presented by experts from STRI.

Golf Club Show delegates can then attend the free Keynote Session given by Roger Black and then attend the Golf Club Show Seminars chaired by the National Secretary of the Association of Golf Club Secretaries, Ray Burniston. Thursday 23 January sees some excellent seminars

for Golf Club Show delegates with speakers looking at how to keep irrigation water sweet by using Sulphur Burning Technology, Preparing for the 2006 Ryder Cup, Strategic Planning and finally, the chance to see the World renowned expert, Dr Jim Beard, talking about Turfgrass Management.

There is something for everyone, Greenkeeper, Superintendent, Groundsman, Golf Club Secretary, Chairman of Green, Golfer and Committee member, at Harrogate this month. BIGGA has provided the largest, flexible, education and training programme in Europe. Make sure that you gain the most benefit by coming to Harrogate where it all takes place from Monday, January 21.

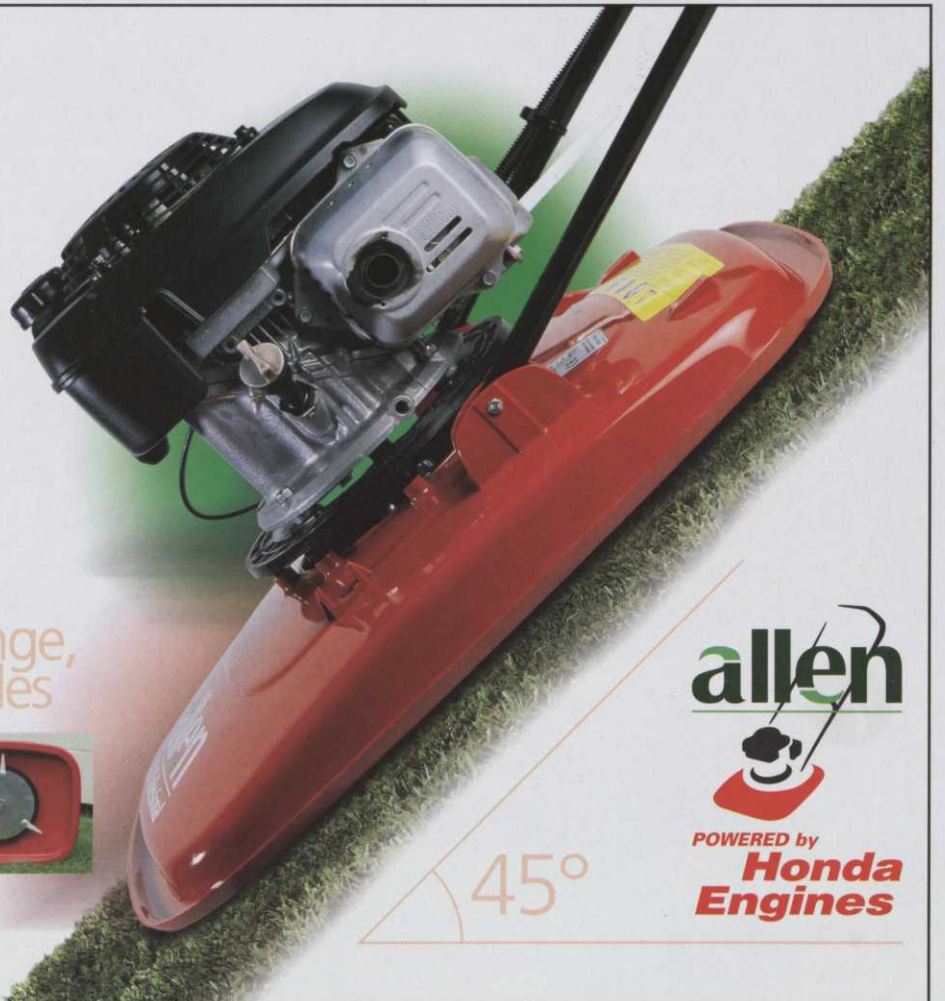


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BIGGA	Hadlow College	RainBird Europe SARL	TT Proturf Ltd
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Clive Osgood looks after the two magnificent Walton Heath courses and, as he explained to Scott MacCallum, you've got to work extremely hard to retain their heathland characteristics.



BACK TO THE FUTURE

Walk out into the middle of Walton Heath and immediately you can smell golfing history. Half close your eyes, and you can almost picture James Braid's giant frame striding down the fairway. Listen carefully and you'll swear you can catch the swish of hickory as another ball flies off towards its intended target.

Walton Heath Golf Club doesn't celebrate its centenary until next year but in the 99 years golf has been played on the famous piece of common land it has witnessed more significant moments in the game's development than the combined histories of a dozen clubs each with 200 years on the clock.

Just as a taster. In addition to the '81 Ryder Cup, which featured what is widely regarded to be the finest team ever to represent the United States, and numerous top professional and amateur Championships, Walton Heath is the home of the Parliamentary Golf Society.

Pleasingly the test of golf set by architect, Herbert Fowler, and over which the aforementioned Scottish representative of the Great Triumvirate played as long time Club Professional, has changed only minimally, and efforts to regain the 1903 look involves a great deal of on-going effort now and in the future.

Continuity is a quality

Walton Heath has in spades and something many other clubs would do well to emulate. James Braid was the forerunner of a very small band of Club Professionals, while BIGGA National Chairman Clive Osgood, is one of only six Head Greenkeepers in the club's entire history. In fact one of the old photographs on display in the clubhouse is of Thomas McNiece, the club's first Head Greenkeeper.

That's not to say that Clive is the greenkeeping equivalent of a museum custodian, as keeping things the way they are intended is a full time and demanding job.

"Heathland is a semi permanent state and it is true to say that it is always trying to revert back to woodland," explained Clive, as we sat in his 4x4 in the middle of the course.

"Heathland originally came from tree felling and sheep grazing and there certainly hasn't been any sheep here for a few years," said Clive, whose office wall carries a poster which declares, "Heathland: Surrey's Last Wilderness".

It prompted the question of how long would it take for the course to recolonise.

"If we sat back for 10 years and did no clearance work at all you probably wouldn't be able to see from one fairway to another for trees. In fact within a year the growth would be noticeable," said Clive, who has enjoyed a considerable number of years at the Club.

It was, he contends, the war years

contributed to the decline in Surrey heathland.

"The men were not around and the commons and heaths were neglected and became woodland. When that happens it takes a lot to get them back."

While Walton Heath Golf Club is well aware of the quality of the golfing heathland it has in its care and has policy documents ensuring the two wonderful courses retain their character, Clive has had to face criticism when trees have been felled and removed, not necessarily from members of the golf club.

"If we stand in the middle of Walton Heath we are surrounded by trees on all sides and a lot of the people who would criticise us for taking trees down are the same people who would, in 15 years time, say we'd been remiss and lost the heathland. It's a point about which I feel quite strongly," he said.

Clive has some old postcards of the course which show James Braid playing shots on some of the holes and one thing that does strike you is that, although anything but heavily wooded, the modern day Walton Heath does have a few more trees than when Herbert Fowler designed it.

"We don't rely on trees on the course. It was designed by Herbert Fowler to be an inland links course, not with trees in mind. In our circumstances there are still too many trees on the course," he said, adding that another feature noticeable from the postcards is that Walton





Left: Thomas McNeice was the first Head Greenkeeper at the club and a man who served on the Board of Management of the greenkeeping Association of the time. He died in the Great War in 1916.

Heath's greens which are considered large were even larger in Braid's day.

Walton Heath is found in an area covered by several blanket Tree Preservation Orders but by making a case through English Nature, the Surrey Heathland Project, other relevant bodies and local councillors that they would be replacing the trees with a much richer habitat they were able to remove the Order.

As you look around you'll see examples of some large scale tree clearance which has subsequently been carried out and Clive sees this as an on-going project.

To highlight the point of how this will return the course to its original look

Clive drove out to the 12th tee on the Old Course and told a story about a Henry Cotton feat in 1938.

"Henry Cotton was involved in a Grand Match involving, among others, Bobby Locke and he performed the previously unheard of feat of taking out the dogleg and driving the green," explained Clive, as I attempted to peer through the trees even to see the green.

When Cotton did it he had a clear view of the green and had to clear an expanse of heather and gorse, no mean achievement in itself, but it was a possibility not open to anyone who walked off the 11th green with a point to prove nowadays.

"In the Ryder Cup in 1981 we played the tee off the front, a distance of 341 yards, to invite players to cut the corner but not too many tried. That was 20 years ago and trees will have come and gone in that time but I'd very much like to get the hole back to how it was when Cotton played it in 1938."

When tree clearing is undertaken Clive and the team often use a JCB to push the tree over and remove the roots as well.

Bracken is another unwanted visitor to Walton Heath and this year Clive and his team have sprayed it with an eco-friendly chemical, Asulox, in a bid to seize the initiative from the virulent plant.

"We've invested a lot of money in bracken control but, being a systemic herbicide, we won't know until next spring how successful we've been. Hopefully it won't come up again and we can then budget to go round the bits we may have missed and it becomes just an occasional job thereafter."

While the bracken which is good to see the back of, heather is the opposite and there are on-going procedures in place to ensure the heather is positively encouraged.

"It is something which we've struggled to get on top of but in recent years the resources have been there and thankfully I think we've turned



the corner," said Clive, who has a dedicated team of three within the team devoted to the conservation work.

"Over the last few years we have carried out work on several fairways where we have stripped down to the seed bed on five metre wide strips down each side of the fairway.

"Some might consider it unsightly but after a year or 18 months the heather never lets us down and it comes through to the extent that the membership would like us to do a lot more. Heather needs to be kept young for best results.

"The important thing is not to carry away the heather seed when you lift the turf with a turf cutter. This can be used for returfing bunkers or restoring pathways or general repair work. The large scale areas are stripped with a JCB and we store it for composting," said Clive.

Labour intensive though the work is the rewards are there for everyone

to see with the ever changing colours which identify the seasons throughout the year.

"For a few weeks in March there is the beauty of the yellow gorse in flower, then there is the broom, which, if you're not careful, can get away from you, but it then comes into flower. Then we have summer before the end of August through to September when we have the beauty of the heather. There is also a certain bleakness in the winter which to me is another side of the character of the course," said Clive, spoken like a man who has never lost enthusiasm for his place of work.

It is a beauty which the Club shares with the many other people who enjoy the heathland.

"The course is on common land and I'm pleased to say that everyone who uses the heath complements each others' pursuits. We have dog walkers and horse riders and everyone enjoys and

respects the heathland. Long may it continue.

Another striking element of Walton Heath is the magnificent heather faced bunkers, many of which are fine examples of Fowler's, and subsequently Braid's, distinctive cross variety, which have helped to preserve the length of the course - although both courses can now be stretched to over 7000 yards.

"The best examples of the heather faces are on the obsolete bunkers because heather doesn't really cope well with sand blast but where we can encourage it we will. In fact you can see on some of the bunkers which side has most play because one side of the face can have better heather coverage than the other."

Clive also took the opportunity to correct the popular misconception that the courses' excellent drainage comes as a result of a sandy top soil.

"We have very heavy clay, 30 foot

of it above chalk. It is also extremely acidic which is where we get our heathland characteristics but there is not a hint of any good soil of any real consequence anywhere. Our quality drainage comes from surface run off. Any problems are always self inflicted," he revealed.

Talking with Clive you discover that he knows every nook and cranny of his golf courses. He even has an area named after him, Osgood's Corner, after he highlighted the location to a local archaeological group but those who know Clive will not be surprised that he is more embarrassed than proud of this accolade. When his year in office as BIGGA's National Chairman ends at BTME this year he will happily return to his full time role of ensuring that the Walton Heath members have a course to be proud of and that they stay ahead of the game in the battle to retain one of the finest true heathlands in the country.

Greenkeeper International takes a look at the very latest products and services available from the fine turf industry

Etesia launch new mulching mower

Etesia has launched its answer to the ever-increasing demand to recycle organic matter - the Biocut, a rotary mulching mower. The 53cm pedestrian machine has an aerodynamically designed cutting deck with specially profiled cutterbar, which lifts the grass before cutting it. The clippings are retained within the deck where they are chopped into fine particles. These are then deposited into the turf where they can quickly decompose. As the grass leaves consist of a high percentage of water plus nutrients, especially nitrogen, moisture and fertiliser are returned to the sward. The Biocut has a working width of 53cm and is powered by the latest 6hp Briggs & Stratton Intek Edge 60 engine. There are three forward speeds - 2.7kph, 4.5 kph and 8.5 kph. A central adjustment gives variable cutting height positions from 25mm to 95mm and the handlebars are fully adjustable and can be folded down for transportation or storage. The die-cast aluminium cutting deck is designed to withstand commercial use and will not rust or distort. If the grass is long and wet, the mulching cover can be removed, thus turning the Biocut into a highly efficient rear-ejection mower.

**For further information
 Tel: 01926 403323**

Vibratory rollers

A new version of the True-Surface Lightweight Vibratory Roller attachments has been launched. The new "Universal" design of roller unit fits all popular makes of greens triple mower. The one same set of units can be simply converted to fit from one brand to another by changing only the fitting kit (shown here on a John Deere



machine). This has the potential to save clubs a vast amount of money when they next change their model of greensmower. True-Surface rollers are used by golf courses world wide for a vast range of greens maintenance operations including helping to produce faster, truer greens without lowering heights of cut, restoring surfaces after aeration and topdressing, and rolling instead of mowing on the day after spraying greens.

**For further information call
 GreenTek, European distributors
 of the products on: 0113 267 7000**

New trials claim greener grass

This month sees the commercial launch of what scientists are calling 'a quantum leap in turfgrass breeding'. British Seed Houses' turfgrass breeding programme at the Institute of Grassland & Environmental Research has developed a new ryegrass-based seed mixture proven to stay green all year round.

According to IGER plant breeders, the new Grade A26 So-Green mixture - based on the first ever 'stay green' perennial ryegrass - will offer opportunities to keep turfgrass looking good, even under summer drought and other stress conditions.

The new mixture is a product of over 12 years of development and like many of the most significant scientific breakthroughs, has its origins in a chance natural discovery.

"In 1969, one of the IGER scientists noticed that leaves on a single grass plant in a field trial in Aberystwyth kept their green colour during autumn and winter, instead of turning the expected yellow colour like leaves on surrounding plants," explained IGER turfgrass breeder Danny Thorogood.

"Later it was found that leaves on plants bred from the original 'stay green' plant also retained their green colour during drought," he said.

The green colour in grass leaves is chlorophyll that intercepts light and converts it to sugars - the process of photosynthesis. Normal ageing or severely stressed leaves switch on a series of genes that trigger the production of enzymes that break down the chlorophyll. This process removes any greenness and the grass leaves turn yellow.

But, as Danny pointed out, 'stay green' grass is different.

"In 'stay green' grass, a gene controlling an enzyme involved in one of the earlier stages of chlorophyll breakdown is not active. This means the normal process of green pigment breakdown is prevented, even though photosynthesis is inactivated. This



Above: The trial site at IGER provided the latest find

Right: Danny Thorogood

results in the retention of a photosynthetically inactive green pigment in the leaves," he explained.

"Over 12 years of conventional plant breeding and backcrossing has now produced a distinct, uniform and stable 'stay green' perennial ryegrass called AberNile. AberNile combines the 'stay green' benefit with all the other characteristics required in an amenity perennial ryegrass, such as high shoot density and an ability to withstand high levels of wear," said Danny.

Trials at IGER and the STRI have now demonstrated that mixing 60% AberNile with 35% slender creeping red fescue and 5% Avalon velvet bent can deliver the best all season, greener grass.

According to Andy Newell from STRI, the 'stay green' is certainly a significant turfgrass development:

"Our trials have shown that 'stay green' grasses differ from traditional grasses in respect of increased greenness and reduced yellowness. There's



no doubt that they can increase the perceived visual quality of grass mixtures," said Andy.

The trial findings have resulted in the BTME 2002 commercial launch of Grade A26 So-Green a proven, innovative new seed mixture offering any turfgrass professional seeking to improve the year-round visual appeal of amenity grassed areas beautiful turf that literally stays green, all year round. Seed is available now for spring 2002 sowing.

Further details from British Seed Houses Tel: 01522 868714

Scotts launch new organic based fertilisers

Scotts are launching a new range of organic based turf fertilisers formulated to give turf managers the benefits of both organic and inorganic fertiliser. New Greenmaster Organic fertilisers combine inorganic and organic nutrient sources with natural bio-stimulants, ensuring accurate, reliable provision of essential nutrients while also enhancing the soil micro-flora.

The organic fraction of Greenmaster Organics is derived from chicken manure and, in addition to providing a proportion of the nutrient charge in slow release form, will help improve soil

structure, stimulate soil organisms, encourage thatch breakdown and enhance micro flora responsible for fighting turf diseases. By combining this material with a mineral-based fertiliser, NPK and trace elements the product formulation can be tailored for today's needs. Greenmaster Organics are also designed for ease of application, comprising a dust free, homogeneous granule giving a fast, accurate spread and a uniform turf growth and colour response. The product is low in odour and guaranteed free of weeds and other contaminants.

"Greenmaster Organic is designed for the environmentally aware turf manager looking for good performance and value for money. It is efficient to use, effective, based on solid science and it works. Essentially, Greenmaster Organic combines the reliability of mineral feeds with the benefits of organics - and none of the drawbacks," said Scotts Technical Manager, Simon Barnaby.

**For further information
 Tel: 01473 830492**