



BIGGA's Membership Department would like to welcome 51 new members to the Association.



How well do you know the people who work for the Association?

In this new series we give you a chance to learn a little more about a member of BIGGA's Headquarters staff

SEE YOU AT SALTEX

BIGGA are once again exhibiting at Saltext on 2nd - 4th September at Windsor Racecourse on Stand G01.

Gemma from Membership Services is going to be available on the stand to answer all your membership questions. Whether you want to renew your membership, change your address or employment details or collect new membership forms. As ever we will have cameras at the ready for any of you still to provide a photo for your membership card. Gemma will also be able to answer your questions on the new benefits introduced this year such as Lex Personal Car Leasing and the two Silverknight products.

Sami, from the Education and Training Department will also be on the stand to deal with any education queries including the BTME Continue to Learn Training

Programme, Master Greenkeeper Certificate and Continuing Professional Development.

If you wish to discuss advertising in Greenkeeper International or exhibiting at BTME and ClubHouse, Rosie Hancher, Sales Manager and Cheryl Broomhead, Sales Executive will be available from Sales along with Pauline Thompson, Exhibitions Organiser.

Also in attendance will be Deputy Executive Director, John Pemberton and Communications Manager and Editor, Scott MacCallum who will all be more than happy to answer any queries you may have about the Association.



Scott MacCallum

Position:
Communications Manager/Editor

What does your role involve?
Producing a magazine every month and handling the Association's press and public relations

How long have you worked for the Association?
Since April '95

Where were you born and brought up?
I was born in Banff in the north of Scotland and brought up in Cupar, Fife

Where did you work before you joined BIGGA?
I've worked for the Dundee Courier newspaper, Golf Monthly magazine, the PGA European Tour and Today's Golfer magazine

What are your hobbies?
I enjoy playing golf and watching rugby union. I don't enjoy going to the gym but I do it. I also enjoy reading

What is your favourite food?
Mexican and Indian

What is your favourite film?
The Shawshank Redemption

What was the last book you read?
Chance Witness by Matthew Parris

Who is your all time hero?
Gavin Hastings

What was the best event you've ever attended?
The 1984 Grand Slam decider between Scotland and France at Murrayfield and the final day of the 1985 Ryder Cup at The Belfry

What is your claim to fame? (None not acceptable)
I had a hole-in-one while on a press trip in Rapid City, South Dakota, and appeared on local television to talk about it and in the local paper as a result

We're giving away a fantastic digital camera to one lucky member. The camera features a movie facility and a multi mode flash. It has a 1.5" LCD screen and a picture resolution of 2 million pixels. The package also includes a memory card.

To enter the prize draw all you have to do is introduce one or more new greenkeeping members to BIGGA. Make sure your name goes on their application form as the person who referred them and we will enter your name into the draw. Remember the more new members you refer the more chances you have to win!

The draw will take place on 1st October and the winner will be announced in the November edition of Greenkeeper International.

Call Gemma today in Membership Services on 01347 833800 to request a new member application form.

WIN A DIGITAL CAMERA



Message of the Month Winner

Our congratulations go to August's winner, Benjamin Allen from Queenwood Golf Club who's message was posted on the 1st July under the 'Education and Training for Greenkeepers' section. A fantastic FM desktop scan radio is on its way to you!

BIGGA welcomes...

SCOTTISH REGION

Christian Altmann, Central
Stuart Harker, East
Paul Lyon, East
Tony Mccourt, West

MIDLAND REGION

John Anderson, BB&O
Stephen Payne, East Midland
Jonathan Smith, Mid Anglia
M Varney, East Midland

NORTHERN REGION

Thomas Calder, North Wales
Robert Clare, Northern
John Firth, Northern
Philip Harman, North West
Adam Newton, Northern
Alex Noble, Northern
Craig Parry, North Wales
Richard Stubbs, North West
Christopher Willis, North Wales

SOUTH EAST REGION

Bradley Adams, Essex
Robert Bishop, London
Steven Bridgeman, Surrey
Daniel Brown, Surrey
Richard Gee, London
James MacCarthy, Kent
Tony Neve, Kent
Mark Pattison, London
Thomas Pinchbeck, Surrey

SOUTH WEST/SOUTH WALES

Greg Southgate, Sussex
Andrew Venner, Kent
Daniel Wilson, Essex
Marc Anderton, South West
Martin Gurd, South West
John Imrie, Devon & Cornwall
Luke Jefferies, Devon & Cornwall
Stuart Lee, South Wales
Robert Parker, South Wales
Tom Sleeman, South West

INTERNATIONAL

Pawel Lewinski, Poland
Nuno Sepulveda, Portugal

STUDENT MEMBERS

Robbie Pearson, East Scotland
David Pedleham, Surrey

ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

Jonathon Harrington, South Wales
Alan Hastings, East Scotland
Nigel Wadey, Surrey
Raymond Warrender, North Scotland

CORPORATE MEMBERS

Eddie Bullock, Mid Anglia
James Mann, Mid Anglia
Conor Nolan, Rep Ireland
Lee Penrose, Northern
Stella Rixon, Surrey
Alasdair Smith, Mid Anglia

AUGUST'S MEMBERSHIP DRAW WINNER

Just introduce one or more new greenkeeping members to BIGGA and your name will be placed into a draw to win a fantastic BIGGA Clock/calculator/calendar and alarm. Our congratulations go to August's winner, Geoff Smith of Abridge Golf & Country Club.

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Course Feature

The Lure of Woodhall Spa

Scott MacCallum travelled to Woodhall Spa to meet up with Peter Wisbey, a man who gave up the sunshine of Portugal to take on a great new challenge.



View of the 18th

Peter Wisbey

Ten years after taking the brave decision to move to Portugal at the age of 40 Peter Wisbey had made such an impact in his time on the Algarve, and enjoyed it so much, that those who knew him would have said that it would have taken one hell of a job to lure him back to his homeland.

The fact that seven years on from then he and I are sitting in his office, deep in the heart of Lincolnshire, and that the enthusiasm for greenkeeping he exudes says much for the position he now occupies.

As Courses Manager at Woodhall Spa, the English Golf Unions home and Centre of Excellence, Peter has all the challenges he could ever ask for - looking after the world renowned Hotchkin Course; the newer Bracken Course, which opened for play in 1998; a fabulous training academy, in addition to speaking at many of the EGU Road Shows and generally acting as the Unions front man on matters greenkeeping.

One of the attractions of returning to the UK was the chance to get back to traditional British greenkeeping.

I've always been a traditionalist. For example at North Foreland GC in Kent, where I was for 22 years before heading to Portugal, we produced our own compost and top dressings. Now we are doing the same here as well. The amount of micro flora and fauna it contains is, in my opinion, far greater than in any commercial product and aids the conversion to the finer grasses.

It was part of my upbringing, working with Jim Arthur when North Foreland became an Open Qualifier in 1981 and 1985 reinforced my own

beliefs. I'm certainly a minimalist with the regard to the amount of fertiliser and water I use.

However, one of the things I learned very quickly at San Lorenzo and Pinhieros Altos, both in Portugal, was that growing in a new course is completely different to maintaining an existing one. You almost have to grow a crop," said the man who in his time on the Algarve managed all four courses on the Quinta do Lago Estate.

"I would liken it to bringing up a child. If you fed a baby as regularly as you fed an adult it would die, so you need to feed more aggressively and then, once you have proper cover, you can start greenkeeping.

"I loved the challenges that different grasses, climate and language presented.

That said it was good to come to such a great course and be able to get back into some good traditional British greenkeeping. We do a lot of aeration, particularly on the Hotchkin Course, in the months between the end of October and the end of March and we slit the greens and fairways, weather allowing every week. Whenever possible during this same period we use the Shattermaster and Vertidrain.



The Woodhall Spa team

We solid spike on a monthly basis throughout the summer as well as using the sorrel fitment on the Toro Sandpro as frequently as possible. We apply minimal nitrogen and potassium to the greens, something along the lines of 60-70 kilos per hectare every year on the greens and tees and we've got some good grasses. I'm also a great believer in Farmura and seaweed liquids and these we apply on a monthly basis."

Being in charge of the EGU's courses does bring its pressures. "One of the difficulties of working for a place which is so much in the public eye is that the majority of the golf played is visitor golf as opposed to local members - probably 80-20. There are some 800,000 EGU members and this is their home of golf. Some of them may only come here once and they come with very high expectations. We also have to keep the pricing structures fair so we probably offer the best value of any comparable course in the country."

The Hotchkin Course has been ranked in the top 30 in the world and is currently ranked as the number one inland course in England. If people come to play the number one course they expect it to be in the first class condition.

"We greenkeepers know that it is impossible to keep a golf course in prime condition all the time, and while I don't like peaks and troughs but more of a gentle ripple, there is always a little drop off from time to time."

Peter recalls a lunch he had with the then pro at Gleneagles, Ian Marchbank, who gave him some advice he has held on to ever since.

"He told me that clients will always go away and remember the course as it was on the day they played it. It's obvious really, but sometimes not until you are told. Golfers are not interested in how the course was last week or how it will be next week, and while at members clubs the members will understand, if it is communicated well, what you are trying to achieve and the benefits to them on the longer term, here we have so many visitors year round that cannot apply this philosophy to the same extent. It is the same at the likes of Turnberry and Wentworth."

Peter has become increasingly aware of the need to be customer focussed and has some interesting thoughts on the issue.

"You hear greenkeepers saying occasionally, 'If the golfer doesn't like it, well tough.' I'm afraid that's not a reality any more, if indeed it ever was.

We are living and working in a buyers' market. If a group of golfers are considering coming here but the package is not acceptable they simply go elsewhere.

"It is important to realise that we are selling time and if we don't sell it today, it's gone forever. It's not like selling mowers or tractors when if you don't sell this week you can sell it the next" said Peter, whose machinery comes from Toro, with whom, along with Lely, he has had a strong

relationship for many years and whose praises he sings loudly. "They consistently supply us with product and service that is second to none in my experience" he remarked.

With that in mind Peter, his Deputy Sam Rhodes, Head Mechanic, Bart Wilson, and their 16 strong team, work closely with the golf operations staff to ensure everything possible is done to ensure visitors have as enjoyable experience that maintenance operations are carried out to avoid conflict.

"We know the bookings two weeks ahead of time, major events at least two years ahead, and every evening the following days start sheet is faxed to me so the next morning we know who will be out on the golf course. I put a copy of this on the mess room tables so the guys know exactly where the gaps in play are so we can, wherever possible, work without interfering with peoples enjoyment."

Woodhall Spa is a remarkable golfing venue. From most directions it appears to be in the middle of nowhere and even within a couple of miles of the sleepy little village you would wager large sums against a world class golf course being nearby.

"People are amazed when they travel across the fenland and find this wonderful heathland golf course. It really is an oasis."

The original layout was by Harry Colt and when the Hotchkin family bought it. Colonel Hotchkin changed it to the present layout in 1920.

"When I first heard that the owner has redesigned it I did not realise that Colonel Hotchkin was a renowned architect. In partnership with Guy Campbell he designed West Sussex, Stoke Rochford, Leeds Castle to name but a few in this country, as well as five very good courses in South Africa. He wasn't just dabbling that's for sure."

The Hotchkin Course is a classic with every hole presenting its own challenge with very few running in the same direction. There are three fantastic par-3s with the 12th regarded as one of the best short holes in the world. The bunkers are fabled. There are many of them and they are known for their depth.

"They say a bunker should cost you half a stroke but these can do more damage than that. We had the English Amateur here four years ago and one guy came to the 12th three under-par and when he left he was something like 10 over! Without ever being unfair it can destroy the unwary."

From a maintenance perspective the Hotchkin is very labour intensive thanks to its very steep sided bunkers and tees. At least 80% of the tees surrounds cannot be mown with a ride on mower.

Therefore there is a lot of flymowing and strimming to be done. Scotts Shortcut has been a Godsend and reduced the frequency of this operation.

Course Feature



One of the infamous bunkers on the Hotchin Course

Another interesting element of the course is the fact that it is very natural and doesn't lend itself to over presentation.

"When people do come here it is a case of educating them as to what they should expect to find. We don't have fairway irrigation so when people visit from an irrigated golf course they are sometimes surprised by what they find. In the dry weather it's firm, brown and fiery. This is how we feel a true heathland course should be presented. The Officers of the Union are 100% behind us in this philosophy. It's about education," said Peter, who is often involved with the EGU Road Shows which visit about six or

seven golf clubs a year and talk to Chairs of Green, Secretaries and occasionally greenkeepers.

"There is a view as to whether we best serve the greenkeeping community by having greenkeepers at these events or whether they should be aimed solely at the committee and Club Managers. When it is a mixed audience the agronomists who speak can only talk at a very basic level and greenkeepers can go home disappointed, but perhaps the Chairmen of Green might have learned something which could result in less pressure or more support being given on their return."

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Course Feature



View of the 5th

When the EGU bought Woodhall Spa seven years ago it was felt that a second golf course was required and Donald Steel was commissioned to design the Bracken Course and it has turned into another fine test.

"At a lot of 36-hole complexes the second course is looked upon as the poor relation no matter how good it is. What attracts people here is the Hotchkin, but once they are here they find that the Bracken is a lot better than they were expecting," said Peter, who took the opportunity to put right the myth that Woodhall Spa is supported by the affiliation fees paid to the EGU, but that the golf course operation has to be self supporting."

The Bracken has given Peter more than a few headaches along the way however.

"It is built on clay and running sand. The land was mostly commercial woodland and very impoverished with a pH as low as 3.5 in some areas. You can maintain grass at that but it not easy to establish grass cover. But never say never, we had to use quite a bit of lime to get establishment in those areas and the soil is very aggressive with such a high acid content. Indeed we found that within five years some of the irrigation bolts have corroded and disappeared. The irrigation specialists said they had never seen bolts attacked so quickly. They are now replacing them all with stainless steel."

A main framework of drains was also put in, Peter felt more were needed and worked closely with David Shelton, of Sheltons Drainage Solutions, who coincidentally happened to be in the same Rotary Club as Peter.

"He showed me some of his equipment and we hired a gravel bander from him, eventually buying one ourselves. Now nearly all the fairways have been covered to 40cm centres with slits backfilled with Lytag. We can now play right the way through the winter with no stoppages or the need to take trolleys off."

Peter admits that they have had problems establishing the bent grasses in the Bracken greens and suffered with poa infestation.

We started by handpicking the poa but quite honestly it was like painting the Forth Bridge and now we try other ways of minimising it. Some people talk about not needing to add micro nutrients but we have very low magnesium and manganese levels and we have had to put those elements down.

We've had good results and I don't think we would be where we are now if we hadn't added micro nutrient packages almost on a fortnightly basis. As I said about the lime, I don't think you can ever say never.

The magnificent training academy is the equivalent of another nine holes in terms of work for the team, with 4,000 square metres of tee and 3,000 square metres of green but it is something special.

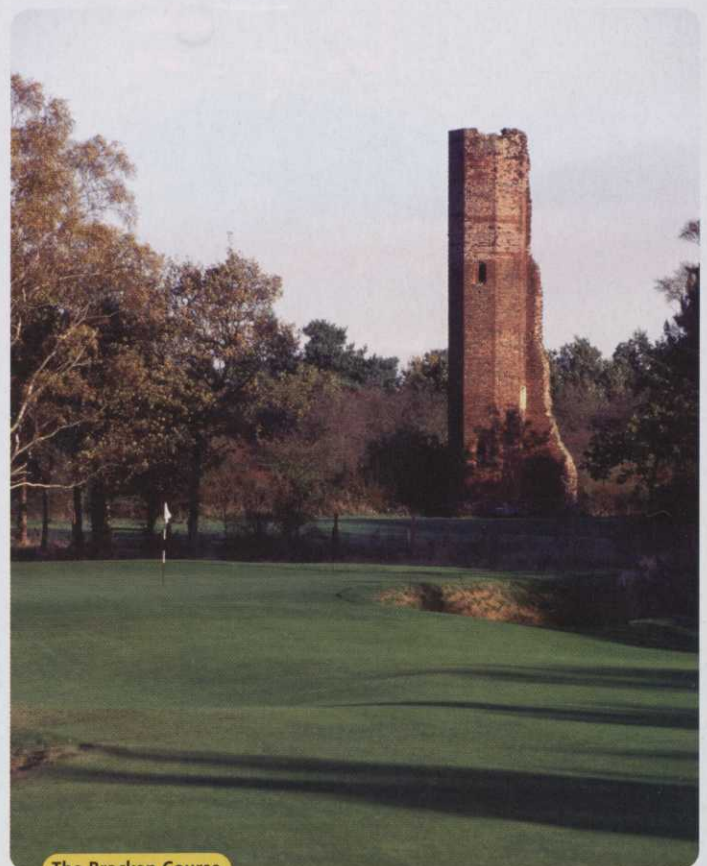
"We've got a large putting green, three chipping greens, bunkers, a

very large tee with five target greens each set at a different angle and any shot on any type of golf course can be replicated," said Peter, who explained that the facility was used by everyone from the England Elite squads through to county and even club teams.

He is well aware that as Courses Manager at the EGU's Headquarters he must be seen to be a paragon of good practice and he is quite comfortable with the spotlight on him.

"It is easy for people to be critical and I am there to be shot at, but we do try to make sure that correct practice is in place and an example set. This from record keeping, health and safety etc. right through to turf management. It's a state of affairs with which Peter is very happy and you can be sure that despite the fact that the weather is perhaps not Algarvian he is more than happy to be working back in England.

Photographs courtesy of Eric Hepworth



The Bracken Course

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AERATION...

what's on offer?

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*Continue
to learn*

Roland Taylor takes an extensive look at the various methods of aeration currently at a Course Manager's disposal

Out of all the turf maintenance operations that are carried out aeration is one of the most important. To substantiate this we need to look at the number of beneficial effects that aeration has to offer to the well being of the turf. A well aerated soil promotes strong healthy growth which in turn deters the development of fibre and thatch. Surface water is quickly absorbed into the rootzone. There is less likelihood of areas of stunted growth and bare patches occurring in which unwanted weeds and grasses can invade and become established. Soil micro-organisms beneficial to the breakdown of organic material thrive. Diseases and fungal attacks are less likely to occur on strong healthy growth.

In an ideal world the soil under the turf should always be friable and open. The roots then have the freedom to move and develop and there is always a plentiful supply of water, air and nutrients. Unfortunately, this is rarely the case and the chances of it lasting long are fairly slim. There are a number of contributory factors. The first major drawback is the increased level of players using the course and the fact that golf is now generally played all year round. Soil profile is another possibility; this is often the case where a course was built many years ago and as a consequence suffered from a lack of modern know how.

The key to good aeration is the size and consistence of the air pockets within the soil structure. Getting this right is the challenge. If a soil (sandy) is too open then any nutrients, water and air do not stay in it long enough to benefit the grass. With a heavy soil (clay) the air pockets are very small or non existent. In either case the roots cannot develop and the plants are weak.

The aim is always to produce a good playing surface, but this is not just for the benefit of the golfers but also for the long term well being of the course. A strong sward acts like a cushion when it comes to compaction. Without this cover compaction and subsequent problems rapidly develop. This is often seen on areas of grass which have a considerable amount of foot traffic. Once the grass cover has been worn away the underlying soil quickly forms a hard crust as it becomes compacted. Eventually, virtually nothing can penetrate this crust and certainly very little can grow in it. If a similar situation was occurring under a sparse layer of turf then it would not be long before the effects become evident.

RUBBER CRUMB

To help overcome this problem a number of clubs now use rubber crumb as a top dressing. This is worked into the turf and onto the soil surface - soil where it is said to protect the crowns, rhizomes and stolons. Firstly, any existing compaction problem should be dealt with. An initial dressing of no more than 6mm of crumb is worked into the turf making sure it reaches the soil surface and the crowns. After three weeks another application can be made followed by further ones at intervals until a depth of between 15mm and 19mm is reached. Like all top dressing little and often is recommended. The turf needs to fully recover before foot traffic is allowed over the area. Clubs that have used rubber crumb are reporting satisfactory results. A further extension of the use of this material has taken place during 2003 with a number of companies offering turf grown with it in the root zone.

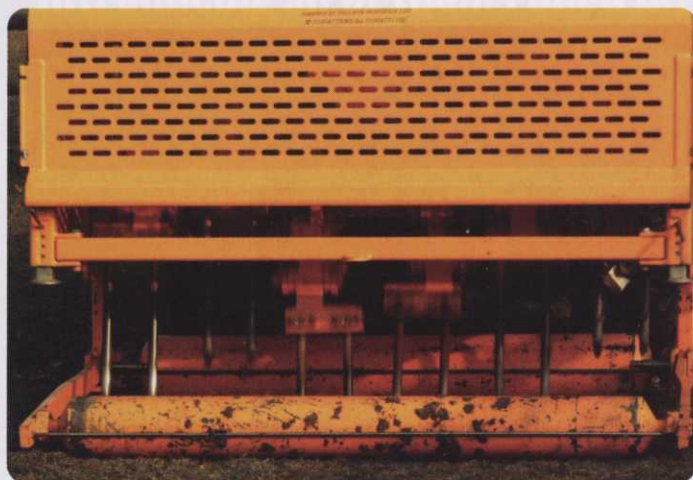


MECHANICAL AERATION

There is little evidence that any form of aeration was practised until the 1930s. If any was carried out it was probably done using a fork. One of the first pioneers of the practice of aerating the soil to improve the quality of playing surfaces was William Hargreaves. He founded the Cheshire based company of Sisis and worked closely with RB Dawson, of the STRI, in developing machines capable of opening up the soil. These early models were either a hand fork or an aerator mounted on a wheeled hand frame. They were suitable for small areas but it became obvious that a much larger unit was required. Sisis' answer, the first horse drawn aerator, was sold to Doncaster Racecourse. The Royal Liverpool Golf Club was later to buy the first tractor towed unit.

AERATION...

what's on offer?



Like the development of the mechanical mower, golf clubs were reluctant to fund new innovative products. It was not until 1964 when Sisis launched a motorised version of the pushed aerator.

One question that does arise from those early days was that were the tines actually penetrating enough to have any beneficial effect? The answer is probably no, although breaking up any surface crust must have helped.

Today, a wide range of machinery and systems are available to provide all round aeration for most types of soil.

TINES

The early machines were fitted with a solid tine but in 1950 Sisis introduced a flat tine which produced a larger hole giving a greater area of soil exposure for the intake of moisture, air and water. This type of tine was said to have another benefit. Its action prunes the roots and thus encourages new growth.

The hollow tine is the third type that is now available and whilst this helps relieve compaction its main purpose is as a method of soil exchange. Because soil is removed in the form of cores they have to be cleared up. Machines are now available specifically designed to carry out this task plus some leaf sweeping units are also capable of collecting cores. There is the possibility that if hollow tining is carried out too frequently a soft and not very resilient sward is produced. Another problem that has been known to occur is that the holes created can become breeding grounds for weeds and unwanted grass species.

Tines have their place in aeration but one aspect that tends to be overlooked is that by their action of punching a hole in the soil they do in fact cause a certain amount of compaction. However, the benefits of frequent tine aeration far outweigh the side affects.

Over the years designers have perfected ways of getting the tines into the soil. The simplest system uses some form of rotor to which a number of tines are attached at given intervals. The more sophisticated machines punch the tines into the ground using a form of cam drive. With the wide tractor operated units it is now possible to aerate large areas of turf in a relatively short period of time.

There are now over 36 companies offering various forms of aerators here in the UK.



SAREL OR SORREL ROLLER

In the early days back at the beginning of the last century some greenkeepers used a roller with spikes as a simple form of aeration. In fact this type of unit which became known as the sarel/sorrel roller has a very beneficial advantage. Used on a regular bases it breaks up any crust that tends to form on the soil's surface and allows the air, nutrient and especially water to start its journey down to the roots. One of these units is ideal to complement irrigation as it allows water access and minimises run off. A number of these units are now available including attachment cassettes for certain makes of mower.

VERTIDRAINING

The biggest change in aeration occurred with the introduction of the vertidrain in the early 1980's. Up to this point you could say aerators had been barely penetrating the rootzone layer and deep compaction was still a problem. The vertidrain principle is relatively simple. The tines are driven deep into the soil structure and a heave or levering action, similar to that of a fork when digging, is applied. The amount of lift can be adjusted to ensure any surface disturbance is minimal. Below the surface the compacted layers are broken up leaving pockets into which the plant's essential elements can percolate.

Another advantage of this type of deep aeration is that top dressing can be introduced into the holes providing extra drainage. Conditions need to be right. If the soil is wet there is a much greater chance of smearing the holes and where the soil is dry penetration is impaired. The machine also has to be operated at the correct speed otherwise surface damage can easily occur. There is a skill to good vertidrainning and when the operation is carried out is important to its success. For this reason a lot of golf courses have invested in a vertidrain rather than waiting in a queue for a contractor.

Fortunately, vertidrainers are now more competitively priced, which brings their purchase within most golf course budgets.

Vertidrainning is not always the answer and for very deep compaction an alternative solution for breaking it up needs to be sought.