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Education Update

Ken Richardson explains why the Education Department have been so busy this last month.

I hardly seem to have been in the office lately. I spent all of last week 'on the road' doing the interviews for the TORO Student of the Year Competition. I always travel over 1000 miles but three of this year's candidates added to the miles, as one drove back from a holiday in North Wales to Manchester for his interview then back to Wales, one flew from Majorca to Manchester and then back to Majorca - leaving his wife and children 'on the beach' and a third returned from Sri Lanka for his interview in the Midlands.

TORO Student of the Year 2006



37 candidates were nominated for this year's competition from a total of over 3000 greenkeeping students. They ranged from those just entering the industry from school, to those entering the industry as a second or third career.

Delegates to this competition, come better prepared each year and it is not easy for the judges to choose the eight candidates that will go forward to the National Final in September.

Sunday, July 2, saw me flying to Edinburgh Airport where I was joined by Ian McLeod to judge the Scottish candidates. A long day of judging was followed, a flight back to Leeds/Bradford and a night at home before I was up early to drive to Manchester Airport to judge the Northern and Irish candidates. I was joined at Manchester by: Sami Collins, Warren Beavan and Trevor Chard from TORO. After a late afternoon finish, I set off for Hemel Hempstead via a massive thunderstorm in the M1 Road Works at Luton.

Wednesday was judging day in the South East where I was joined by Master Greenkeeper Lee Strutt and John Pike from TORO. The next stop was Cheltenham where Gavin Robson joined John and I to judge the candidates from the South West and South Wales on Thursday. Then it was back in the car to dive to Peterborough where Peter Mansfield from TORO joined Gavin and I to judge the candidates from the Midlands.

Next it was time to select the eight National Finalists.

They are: Barrie Lewis and Kenneth Gilroy from Scotland; Stephen Eager from Ireland; James Billington from the North; Michael Emptage and Stephen Stroomer from the South East; Abigail Crosswood from the South West and South Wales and Graham Brumpton from the Midlands. Congratulations to all eight Finalists.

BIGGA Golf Environment Competition



The judges at STRI have finished their initial judging and are busy visiting clubs around Britain to determine the prizewinners. More details will appear in the next issue of Greenkeeper International.

Regional Training Courses

BIGGA continues to support education and training in the Regions and the following courses have been arranged at Gay Hill GC in the Midland Region:

Sit In ATV - 4 October 2006

Cost to BIGGA Members £60 + VAT (£70.50)

Cost to non members £160 + VAT (£188)

Chainsaw Maintenance & Cross Cutting - 6/7 November 2006

Cost to BIGGA Members £225 + VAT (£264.38)

Cost to non members £325 + VAT (£381.875)

Communicating with Committees - 5/6 December 2006

Cost to BIGGA Members £110 + VAT (£129.25)

Cost to non members £210 + VAT (£246.75)

The following course will be held at a tree felling location in Staffordshire

Chainsaw Basic Felling Techniques (up to 200mm in diameter) - 8/9 November 2006

Cost to BIGGA Members £205 + VAT (£240.88)

Cost to non members £305 + VAT (£358.375)

For more information please contact Sami Collins on: 01347 833800.

The Alps Golf Tour

You may have read about a proposed Greenkeeper's Tour of the Alps in the April edition of Greenkeeper International. Some more information about this educational, as well as enjoyable tour, is given below. Further details will be published in future editions of this magazine.



CHALK GRASSLAND MANAGEMENT FOR GOLF COURSES

September 12 2006 - Epsom Golf Club, Surrey

A seminar to explore the best practice in chalk grassland course management. Guest Speaker - Lee Penrose, Ecologist Sports Turf Research Institute.

Seminar Fee: £30

For further details and to book your place contact Aimee Jones on: 020 8770 4203 or email: aimee.jones@sutton.gov.uk

Rachael and Gemma would like to welcome 54 new members to the Association and put the spotlight on the Personal Accident Insurance scheme.

Membership Update

Personal Accident Insurance

Personal Accident Insurance cover, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year is provided for all Greenkeeper members of the Association. Members are covered not only at work but also at home, on holiday or during leisure activities if they sustain an 'Accidental Bodily Injury' that causes, death, permanent or temporary disablement.



The policy does not cover illness or disease not resulting from an accident or injury, any naturally occurring or degenerative disease/illness, or any gradually worsening condition such as arthritis or osteoporosis. The policy offers the following:

HOSPITALISATION: If an accidental bodily injury is sustained and you are admitted to hospital the company will pay £25 per full 24 hours up to a maximum of 52 weeks.

TEMPORARY AND TOTAL DISABLEMENT: After the first 28 days of any period of incapacity the company will pay £35 per week for the first 12 weeks of benefit and then £45 per week thereafter up to a total maximum benefit period of 104 weeks.

MEDICAL EXPENSES: If an accidental bodily injury is sustained and medical expenses are incurred, reimbursement will be paid up to 25% of any amount paid under the schedule of benefits up to a maximum of £10,000.

DEATH BENEFIT: If an accidental bodily injury results in your death then a death benefit of £7,500 applies.

FUNERAL EXPENSES: Incurred as a result of a death following an accidental bodily injury up to a maximum of £2,500.

LUMP SUM PAYMENTS: If an accidental bodily injury results in Permanent Total Disablement you will receive a sum of money up to £7,500.

A copy of the full schedule of benefits is available in your membership folder, alternatively you can contact the membership department for a replacement.

To make a claim please call 01277 251000 and ask for Michaela Edwards.

WIN THE ULTIMATE FERRARI EXPERIENCE

Ever wanted to get behind the wheel of a Ferrari? Well now you can! Drive a Ferrari 328 and F360 or drive a Ferrari F355 with an opportunity to drive a single seater. The prize also offers the chance to put a Land Rover through its paces on an off-road course or drive an MG on the track. The experience also includes a full safety briefing with training laps in a hot hatch and the day finishes with a high-speed passenger ride.*

To enter the prize draw to win this fantastic prize 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 in the draw. Remember the more new members you refer the more chances you have to win!

It doesn't stop there either, if you win the Rally Driving experience then the New member you referred also receives a RED LETTER DAY VOUCHER that can be used on an experience of their choice on a range of at least 20. Typical experiences include Snow Boarding, Zorbing or Capoeira.

The draw will take place on the 16th October 2006 and the winners will be announced in the November edition of Greenkeeper International.

Call either Rachael or Gemma today on 01347 833800 to request a new member application form or fill out the slip on the outer cover of this magazine.

*Choice of activity is dependant on which location is booked. A full manual driving licence is required. The minimum age for this experience is 18.



BIGGA welcomes...

SCOTTISH REGION

David Cowan, East
Andrew Keith, West
Paul McCormack, West
William McMeikan, Ayrshire
Christopher Ormiston, East
Ian Scott, Ayrshire

NORTHERN REGION

Alan Ainscough, North East
James Billington, North West
Michael Cooper, Northern

MIDLAND REGION

Paul Baker, Midland
Vaughan Bednall, East Midland
Paul Harden, BB&O
Frank Whittle, Mid Anglia
Christopher Withers, Midland

SOUTH EAST REGION

Stephen Burroughs, Essex
Chris Dodds, Surrey
Stuart Morley, Surrey

Richard Penson, Surrey
Andrew Royall, Surrey
Kyle Smith, Essex
Mark Solomans, Essex
Simon Watkins, London

SOUTH WEST AND SOUTH WALES

Shane Bennett, South Coast
Martyn Bennett, South Coast
David Bodger, Devon & Cornwall
Mark Brewer, Devon & Cornwall
Colin Brewer, Devon & Cornwall
Thomas Clements, South West
Malcolm Conduct, South Coast
Andrew Gogan, South Coast
Matthew Graham, South Coast
Steven Jones, South Wales
Christian Pink, South Coast
Andrew Wheadon, Devon & Cornwall

STUDENT MEMBERS

Dean Bridges, London
Raymond Bridgewater, USA

Craig Roberts, North West
Radoslaw Suchomski, London

ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

Barry Dolan, East Scotland
Carol Dutton, Northern
Stephen Fell, Northern
David Green, South East
Mark Gunter, South Coast
Andy Russell, Mid Anglia
Clive Williams, East Midland

CORPORATE MEMBER

Julie Wall, Midland

GOLDEN KEY MEMBERS

David Broad, East Midland
Andrew Burns, East Midland
David Chinn, East Midland
Tony Cox, East Midland
Robert Dunk, East Midland
Guy Gibson, East Midland
Lucy Mitchell, East Midland

AUGUST'S MEMBERSHIP DRAW WINNER

Just introduce one or more new greenkeeping members to BIGGA and your name will be placed into a monthly draw to win a £10 Music Voucher. Our congratulations go to Alan Elliott of Clandon Regis Golf Club.



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YOUR LETTERS ARE REQUESTED!

Send to: Scott MacCallum, Editor, Greenkeeper International, BIGGA HOUSE, Aldwark, Alne, York YO61 1UF, or email them to: scott@bigga.co.uk.

Letters

Congratulations to Nick

What a pleasure it was to see a picture of Nick Bisset, in the GTC News. How it brought back happy memories of committee meetings of the GTC, way back in the days when, we as greenkeepers with some future outlook for our profession, held the GTC meetings at Askham Bryan College. Nick was stuffing theoretical knowledge into the heads of the few enlightened assistant greenkeepers, whose clubs had the foresight to send them to college. Nick held the GTC committee together for many years.

I can't remember where the money came from to run the GTC but somehow through perseverance and dealing 'quietly-quietly' with awkward committee members, he pulled the strings in the right direction. The one thing which is still clear in my mind, was the Certificate of Registration – Conditions of Registration:

1. Employment of the greenkeeping staff at a golf club or a public course for at least six month's prior to registration.
2. Undertaking to attend course approved by the training committee.
3. Membership of the BIGGA.

I pulled out my old folder on the GTC and saw that Nick's title in those days was Administration and Secretary – unpaid of course. All your friends in Scotland Nick, and that includes greenkeepers, wish you all the best as Chairman of the Technical Committee (we know it makes sense).

C H George

New Grass leaving its mark on Spain

Malcolm Huntington, a freelance golf writer from York, recently visited Gran Canaria for a golfing holiday, it was there he discovered the remarkable transformation of the greens - thanks to a virtually unknown type of grass - at Campo do Golf in Maspalomas.

It is more than 10 years since I first visited Maspalomas in Gran Canaria, the venue for two European Tour events won by the Swede Jarmo Saridelin in 1995 and by Jose Maria Olazabal in 1997.

I have returned each year to find that the greenkeeping team were always struggling with the same problem - how to find a solution for keeping the club's greens in good condition in the face of changing temperatures.

Greenkeepers in Britain have had problems of their own with recurring diseases, so they will be sympathetic to the problem, which has faced Juan Bosch General Manager at Maspalomas, who has had overall charge of the golf club for the past 17 years.

Juan has been to a number of conferences in the United States to learn more about warm weather golf - but for 15 years was no nearer to finding the answers - until he discovered a new type of grass.

Let Juan take up the story. "When I first came to Campo de Golf 17 years ago, the greens were made of Bermuda, but we always struggled with it because it hibernates in winter and the amount of traffic on the course meant that the greens became sandy and there was hardly any grass to be seen.

"I switched to Pencross, but that didn't solve the problem because we are a pay and play course and I couldn't close the course for the minimum of 45 days which was needed for the change.

"In the summer of 1998 there were water restrictions. We use re-cycled water - about 500,000 cubic metres a year - the local parks needed water for their plants and trees. The result was that our greens were burned for two or three years.

I had first heard about Paspalom at a conference and when someone mentioned it again at another meeting in Cadiz, I began to seek out some facts and after talking things over with several experts decided, as an experiment, to make our 15th green from spindles (roots) of this grass.

"I ordered boxes and boxes of it and I have to say that for me Paspalom has been a miracle because it has solved all our problems in winter and summer. It is not affected by the seasons and we use fewer chemicals and less water. It's not fussy about quality of water either and puts up with everything, even a little salt from the sea winds.

"We were so pleased with the outcome that all our greens are now Paspalom and as you will have seen they are 100 per cent better."

I can certainly vouch for that with the truly magnificent practice putting green next to the excellent clubhouse restaurant, the best I have seen anywhere in the world, being as fast and true as a snooker table.

In the Shed

Greenkeeper International brings you 'In the Shed', a puzzle page to keep you entertained when the weather forces you in or for when times are slow.

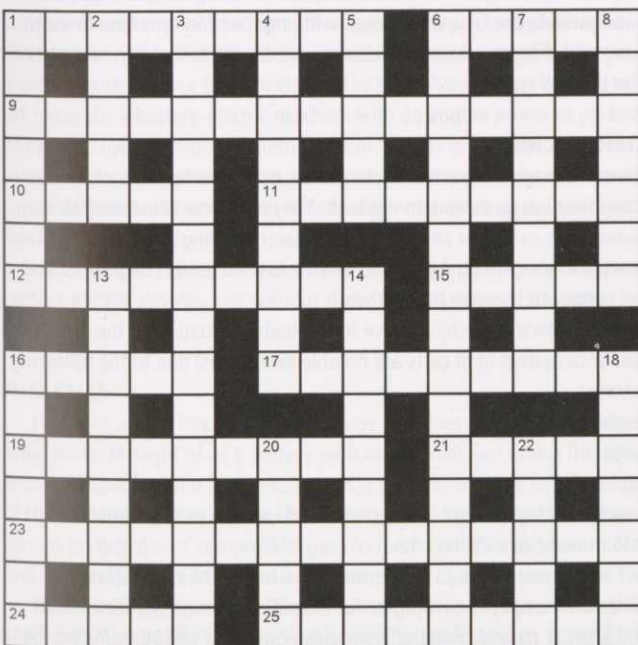
CROSSWORD - Compiled by Anax

ACROSS

- 1 Immediately (9)
- 6 Hindu social class (5)
- 9 Unimportant (2,2,11)
- 10 Poem or piece of music depicting rural life (5)
- 11 Diversify (6,3)
- 12 Sir Alan ---, playwright who wrote A Chorus Of Disapproval (9)
- 15 Constellation which contains Betelgeuse (5)
- 16 Colloquially, one's local area (5)
- 17 Northamptonshire town between Wellingborough and Corby (9)
- 19 Street in Covent Garden, location of the Theatre Royal (5,4)
- 21 Keep watch over (5)
- 23 Indicator of a person's salary potential (7,8)
- 24 Enchantress, femme fatale (5)
- 25 Road safety device, "sleeping policeman" (5,4)

DOWN

- 1 US state, home of the Everglades (7)
- 2 Characteristic of a liquid (5)
- 3 Mischievous titular character of a Mark Twain novel (11,4)
- 4 Austrian city, popular ski resort (9)
- 5 Carrion-feeding African dog-like mammal (5)
- 6 Religious movement centred on Canterbury (6,2,7)
- 7 Greek holiday island noted for its volcano (9)
- 8 English soccer club which has a church within its boundaries (7)
- 13 One who gains victory by force of arms (9)
- 14 Gothic cathedral of Paris (5,4)
- 16 British band, reached number 1 with House Of Fun (7)
- 18 Childish encouragement to horse (5-2)
- 20 Black hornless breed of cattle from Scotland (5)
- 22 Farewell (5)



ANSWERS TO ALL THE PUZZLES ARE SHOWN ON PAGE 58

ANAGRAM

Recently lost to Sri Lanka.

CAN MEET HATTRICK LEGEND

QUICK 'NINE HOLE' QUIZ

1. Don Budge was the first to do it in 1938. Who is the most recent player to have won a career Grand Slam?
2. Andy Cole was the first player to score five goals in a Premiership match, against Ipswich Town in 1995. Who in 1999 matched his feat against Sheffield Wednesday?
3. From which bridge does the Oxford/Cambridge boat race start?
4. By what name is Edson Arantes do Nascimento better known?
5. In which type of wine has all the sugar been converted into alcohol?
6. How many events are there in the decathlon?
7. Which English premiership team are known as the gunners?
8. Which alcoholic drink uses the slogan "No nonsense?"
9. What is the real name of the darts player known as 'The Power'?

SUDOKU

Fill in the grid so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the numbers 1 to 9.

5	9		1		3	4		8
6	4	8						5
	3						9	
			4	5				
7		6				1		9
				9	1			
	7							3
3						9	6	4
8		9	3		4		5	1

Supplied by www.dailysudoku.com

SPOT THE DIFFERENCE

Look closely at the pictures below and try and spot the difference between them. You should be able to spot six!



The Changing Role of Technology in Golf Course Equipment

Predicting the future has proved to be a perilous profession - at best. There are many examples of 'sure things' that have not panned out or unexpected successes that seem to come out of nowhere. The future, by its very nature, is dynamic and ever-changing and a myriad of influences can affect its outcome.

*Continue
to learn*

The same rule applies when predicting technological advances. Simply having technology available does not ensure it will be broadly implemented - it has to be desirable and functional. Technology always has and will continue to be driven by people's needs. Often, new emerging technology is a different (yet better) way to solve an old problem.

A Golf Course Manager's basic needs, include understanding plant health, better management of water resources, improving productivity, managing labour and being a responsible steward of the environment. If new technological applications address these needs better than an existing approach, then technology has a good chance of success. If the application is simply different or if it introduces other problems that are more time-consuming, it is likely to fail.

Rarely does technology burst on the scene overnight - it is usually a gradual process, which occurs after the initial invention. For example, while the computer was invented in the 1940s, its use has only recently become widespread. This is often the case with new technology - once created, it quickly evolves into a functional form used by a small group of customers categorised as early adopters. Then, it is refined and improved until it is accepted (or in demand) by a much larger group.

Often, new technology evolves and is used to solve problems other than its original intent.

When it comes to assisting professional turf managers in their day-to-day tasks, there are many technologies being pursued. This article will touch on just a few of them.

WATER MANAGEMENT

Water continues to become a more valuable resource. In many parts of the world, watering restrictions limit the timing and amount of water that can be used to irrigate a golf course. Generally, water quality is diminishing. For example, effluents, which increase salinity, are being used for irrigation. Consequently, the cost, availability and water quality are becoming a major factor to deal with.

Managing water is a critical job for the Course Manager, and, for the most part, irrigation water is not managed precisely. Traditionally, water schedules are set via minutes of run-time versus dispensing only what the plant needs. (This is comparable to running your home heating or air conditioning for ten minutes every hour, regardless of the outside temperature.) If a golf course were flat, had homogenous soil throughout and micro-climates did not exist, this method would be suitable. However, this is not the case.

Today's irrigation control systems, frequently incorporate digital maps of the golf course to help control individual sprinkler heads. Evaporation-transpiration (ET) devices are currently available to assist in calculating how much water is lost on a daily basis due to current weather conditions (eg, sunlight, humidity, wind, etc.) While these tools help manage water over a broad area, more precise technologies are being pursued.

The future of turf irrigation is likely to revolve around precision turf

management, a closed-loop or supervisory-based method of identifying what a small area of turf requires and being able to precisely supply the amount of water, nutrients or chemicals needed to that area. Some of the technology used to accomplish this will include: more sophisticated irrigation heads and controllers; accurate digital maps of the golf course; global positioning systems (GPS); remote sensing and in-ground moisture sensors. For example, soil moisture probes,



Evapotranspiration (ET) weather station

which measure moisture content at varying depths, could be deployed at multiple sites around the golf course to report on a specific area's moisture state.

Another new technology, called remote sensing, uses near-infrared (NIR) spectroscopy, which can detect plant stress before the human eye can. For example, NIR sensors mounted on a fairway mower with a GPS could monitor plant health while mowing and report via wireless radio to a central computer. The greenkeeper would receive a colour-contour picture of the turf on each of the fairways. The central computer would then assimilate this data and provide the Course Manager with improved information to make watering and disease-treatment decisions, which are tailored to each specific area on the golf course.

ELECTRIC MACHINES

Course Managers are attracted to electric machines because of two key qualities: they are quiet and do not leak. They also have other desirable attributes, such as low or zero emissions, fewer wearing parts, higher efficiency and the potential (through electronics) for better diagnostics and precise control to improve productivity.

However, electric machines have made limited inroads into the turf maintenance market (golf carts are notable exceptions) due to the following restrictions:

- Weight
- Range
- Cost

New technology cannot be successful if it introduces new problems in order to remedy an existing one.

Turf equipment needs to be gentle on the turf and battery-electric machines are hampered by weight. For example, the work obtained from just 3.8 litres (1 gallon) of petrol is roughly equivalent to 300 to 400kg (661 to 882lb) of lead-acid batteries. This weight issue can restrict the daily range

By Jack Gust

of operation and has limited battery-electrics to the lower power applications on a golf course, such as small utility vehicles, golf carts and, to a certain degree, greensmowers and bunker rakes.

Further, unlike petrol/diesel machines that can be quickly refueled, batteries also need a long time to recharge and cannot be deployed for unscheduled tasks (eg, replacing a machine in repair) or occasional tasks, which require higher energy (eg, Verticutting).

Fortunately, new technology, such as advanced batteries, hybrid electrics and fuel cells, are becoming available to address these limitations.

ADVANCED BATTERIES

Advanced battery chemistries, such as nickel-metal hydride (NiMH) and lithium polymer, can significantly extend the runtime of battery-electric machines to make them more viable. NiMH batteries are extremely durable (potentially lasting the life of the machine), and can deliver up to twice the runtime of an equivalent weight of lead-acid batteries. Lithium batteries, commonly used in cell phones and digital cameras, are capable of delivering up to three times the range of lead-acid batteries and are relatively inexpensive. Either of these advanced battery technologies could vastly improve battery-electric products, such as electric greensmowers or bunker rakes.

Currently, both of these battery technologies are prohibitively expensive in larger sizes, but their costs should come down as they are gradually applied to other industries. Unfortunately, the turf industry itself is not large enough to drive the commercialisation of these advanced batteries. Their use will need to become prevalent in other higher-volume applications, such as forklifts or automobiles before they become affordable for turf products. It is difficult to predict how rapidly this will occur.

HYBRIDS

Hybrid-electric vehicles, particularly hybrid-electric automobiles, which combine electric motor and engine-based power sources, are frequently in the news.

There are two categories of hybrids: parallel and series. Parallel-hybrids, which are most common in the automotive industry, use sophisticated electronic transmissions that decide whether to use the engine, electric motor or both to drive the wheels. On the other hand, series-electric hybrids act more like a battery-electric machine with an engine powered on-board battery charger. Common to both types of hybrids is a smaller engine sized to deliver enough power for the average load with a battery pack (or ultra-capacitors) sufficient enough to handle any intermittent peak loads the machine might encounter.

Hybrids allow the creation of machines offering many of the attributes of battery-electric devices, but without their inherent range and weight limitations.

FUEL CELLS

Fuel cells are an interesting technology, also frequently in the news. Fuel cells can be thought of as a battery with an external fuel tank. (This is not an accurate depiction of a fuel cell, but it is a suitable analogy for the purpose of this discussion.) The fuel for this 'battery' is hydrogen, and it is typically carried on-board as a compressed gas. As long as the hydrogen tank has fuel, the fuel cell can continue to produce electricity at full power.

Electricity is produced by a fuel cell when hydrogen passes through a special membrane to encounter oxygen on the other side. As a hydrogen atom passes through this cell, its electron is stripped off and collected, which



Hybrid riding greensmower prototype

is used for power. This hydrogen ion proceeds through the membrane and encounters oxygen on the other side. Here, it combines to produce water, which flows out of the exhaust as a mist. Simply increasing the oxygen flow to the membrane via an air pump produces greater electric power output.

While a fuel cell appears to operate much like a battery, in many ways it is similar to engine-powered equipment. A fuel cell requires a radiator for cooling, a fuel tank for the hydrogen, as well as hoses and pumps, etc.

ELECTRONICS

It doesn't take a psychic to predict the use of electronics will proliferate on the golf course much as it has done in the rest of modern society. However, it is more difficult to predict just how it will be used.

Electronics are critical in achieving water management control and electric-machine technologies previously described. It is integral to the sensors, displays, wireless and GPS technology envisioned for precision turf management. Electric machines require microprocessor-based controllers to distribute power to the drive wheels and cutting units.

Electronics will allow the design of 'smart' equipment - machines offering enhanced performance and diagnostics through the use of on-board electronics. This technology, often dubbed 'drive by wire', uses a computer to help the operator more effectively operate the equipment. For example, it could sense the speed of the machine and automatically adjust the optimum reel revolutions per minute (RPM).

It's not too far-fetched to combine drive-by-wire technology with GPS positioning to create an autonomous machine (ie, a robot). These machines are able to accurately mow straight lines to within a few centimeters and are even capable of mowing at night.

Electronics can also assist in maintaining turf care machines. Wireless hour meters can automatically radio the machine's hours to a central computer in the service bay, whenever the machine is near the maintenance shed. This information will save time and help plan routine care. Upon reading the machine's ID with a scanner, a touch screen at the technician's workbench can allow immediate, fingertip access to the parts look-up and maintenance instructions.

These are just a few of the advanced and exciting technology in the works for future golf course equipment. While it is difficult to predict when and which ones will ultimately become commonplace, it is safe to say maintaining the golf course of tomorrow will be different from today.

Jack Gust is an R&D Chief Engineer for the Center for Advanced Turf and Technology, at The Toro Company, Minneapolis, USA.

Course Feature

On the Up

Scott MacCallum visits Burton Golf Club, which through vision and hard work of members and staff, is going places... it's also hosting this year's National Championship.



Burton Golf Club, in Derbyshire, is thriving. There is a waiting list for membership; competitions are oversubscribed, with golfers even scrambling to get their names down for the following year's event, and money is being invested to improve facilities for both member and staff alike. Oh, and they will be welcoming BIGGA members for the National Championship, supported by Ransomes Jacobsen, at the beginning of October.

The root of this success, as is so often the case, can be traced to some committed and far sighted people both from within the membership and on the staff.

John Haley became Chairman of Green three years ago and a few months later Gavin Robson joined the club as Course Manager and since then the giant strides have been made.

"When I took on the Chairman of Green role, unhappy members were button holing me and asking what I was going to do about this and what I was going to do about that. I didn't even know what hollow tining was. To me it sounded like something a musical instrument would do," said John.

"Now I don't get moaning from the membership, only constructive criticism and that's great."

So what magic dust was scattered to improve the club's fortunes? Well, magic didn't come into it. Just good old fashioned greenkeeping and an imaginative use of club resources.

"Before I started the job I played a few rounds and walked the course by myself and the first thing I did when I arrived officially was define the

fairways and put in a bit of shape," explained Gavin, who had previously been at Lingdale Golf Club.

"I sat the staff down and we had a good chat about what I wanted and outlined my ideas for course maintenance and presentation," said Gavin, adding that he has been extremely impress by the qualities and commitment his team has shown over the last two and a half years.

An intensive aeration programme was introduced and the condition of the course turned around. But more than that, the membership noticed the green staff out of the course much more which, in itself, made the next phase of the club's development an easier sell to the members.

"The maintenance facilities were pretty antiquated. They were prone to dampness and flooding, while the mess room was only eight foot by six foot, for five of them. The workshop wasn't too bad but couldn't cope with more than only large piece of machinery," explained John, who added that the main machinery store was damp and in the event of a fire there was no way the kit could have been removed safely.

"This is the 21st century and the days of green staff doffing their caps





and sitting in a wooden hut should be long gone. From my previous life in business I know that it is important that staff are properly looked after - if you have a happy more contented workforce you are more likely to get results," said John, who added that it coincided with the need for a new irrigation system, with its computerisation requiring a secure dry environment.

Having determined that improved facilities were a necessity it was then agreed that repair wasn't a viable option and the prospect loomed of persuading the membership that £250,000 should be spent on greenkeeping facilities.

"With Gavin having got to grips with the course and results starting to show the members' attitude towards the greenkeeping staff was much more positive than it had been. They could see Gavin and the team working out on the course and it was a chance for me to say that we've got to give Gavin and his team what they need to conduct their business properly."

They also showed those who expressed an interest around the existing facilities and to a member they returned convinced of the need for a rebuild.

"We had around a dozen come over and they tended to be among the more influential members - some of whom were of the opinion that the existing units were only 10-20 years old and shouldn't need replacing - and they all came back convinced of the need for change and passed that view on to others," said Gavin.

A small committee was set up to look at the project and some groundwork revealed that they were looking at estimates of around the £180,000 mark. As it turned out the figure turned out to be closer to £250,000.

"We owned a greenkeeper's cottage at the back of the course which the modern day Course Manager tends not to want, so I proposed that we sell it to fund the new maintenance facility. This is what happened," said John.

The club called an Extraordinary General Meeting to approve the project, attended by around 100 members, and during the meeting people with relevant skills were identified as useful for the work that was to follow.

"One member who had been a Site Manager, said that we should have a Site Manager to oversee the work and I approached him after the meeting and he agreed to take on that role. He has been a rottweiler, here every day apart from holidays, and he did it all for nothing," said John.

Having initially produced drawings themselves to give them an idea of cost the committee passed the work on to a professional architect whose plans turned out to be similar to the original plans

Designing and building the new facility was made slightly more complicated by the fact the site was sloping, which meant the main administration, mess room, workshop element was on two levels with the workshop taking the lower tier.

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Course Feature



"Funnily enough, the fact that it was split level didn't add significant money to the costs, although I had feared that it would," said John, who will be Burton's Captain next year, although he hopes to retain his Chairman of Green role as well - "I'll be up here even more than I am at the moment," he laughed.

Work began on February 4, when one of the old units was knocked down and as we spoke, in early July, there was around four weeks to go until completion.

"We were due to finish around the end of May beginning of June but the difficulty of coordinating time tables of contractor and sub-contractors, and one slight amendment to the plans, slowed the process down," said Gavin, of a delay which is by no means Wembley Stadium standard.

Elsewhere, a new group, the Strategy Committee on planning ahead for the year 2012 on three fronts - course, clubhouse and membership.

