

# Practical Thatch Control

Marcus Oliver gives some practice advice in dealing with thatch.

Very few Greenkeepers will need much of an introduction to the effects of thatch. Greens that are soft and spongy in damp conditions and quickly dry out and scorch when it is dry, are immediate giveaways.

Such symptoms can be quickly analysed by taking soil profiles. Any build up of yellow-brown thatch interspersed with anaerobic black streaks will be immediately apparent, as will the characteristic sour smell that goes with it.

A widely accepted definition of thatch is: "a tightly intermingled layer of dead and living stems and roots that develops between the zone of green vegetation and the soil surface". As such, thatch starts to accumulate where the production of dead organic matter exceeds the rate at which it decomposes. Therefore, much can be done to prevent thatch accumulating by the use of sound greenkeeping practices.



Note how much easier it is to identify the thatch layer on larger soil profile

## THATCH PREVENTION

Because the natural decomposition of thatch is accomplished by the activity of aerobic bacteria, an effective aeration programme is essential to keep those bacteria alive and active. Slit tining is favoured by many Greenkeepers, due to its non disruptive action which enables it to be used repeatedly through the season.

Much greater care must be given to the timing of hollow core aeration - this is not merely to choose a time that will least frustrate the members, but in particular to prevent opening up the surface to the invasion of weed grass seeds. To avoid getting a polka dotted invasion of dark green *Poa Annua* plants in the midst of your fine turf, make sure you don't hollow core when *Poa* is flowering.

Besides aeration, good drainage and the avoidance of over-watering and over-fertilisation, are the other main factors in preventing thatch build up.

## TIME FOR ACTION!

So what if, for any number of reasons, you have inherited a deep thatch problem - what are the steps to curing it?

### Step 1 - Analyse and Report

Analyse the extent of the thatch by taking soil profiles of all greens and any other problem areas. Show these or photos of them, to your management and members to get their support for the necessary remedial action. Let them know that the desired improvement in putting surface quality and firmness can only be achieved if you have their practical support for carrying out the following steps.

### Step 2 - Reduce the Causes

Review your feeding programme and check with other Greenkeepers, whose greens you admire, what they are applying and at what rates. You may be surprised how little feed many of the best courses use.

Check your irrigation sprinklers are effectively positioned without excessive overlaps. Far better to hand water certain areas when necessary, than just to turn on more automatic irrigation everywhere.

Install additional drainage, both to the greens themselves - if this is needed and also to prevent flooding from water running onto greens from slopes above.

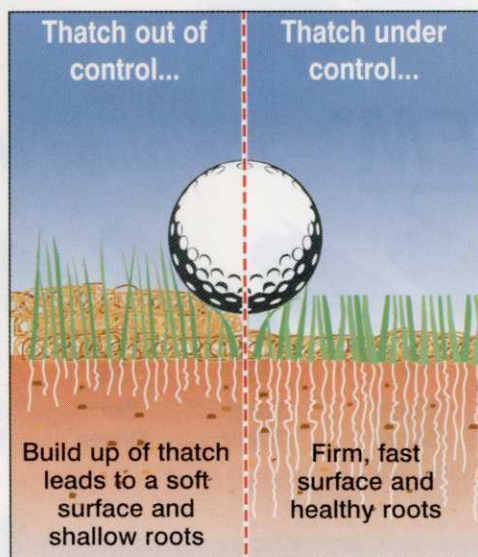
Avoid using topdressing mixtures with a high content of fine particles, which clog the surface and impede drainage.

### Step 3 - Aerate Regularly

As mentioned earlier, a carefully executed programme of slitting and hollow core aeration, is one of the basic weapons in the battle against thatch. The important thing, especially with hollow coring, is to warn the members in advance as to what you are doing and why it is essential. Putting up copies of the poster "Aeration - what it is" (available from BIGGA) on the notice board and at the first tee, is a proactive step you can take towards gaining their understanding.

### Step 4 - Verticutting and Scarifying

Once the underlying causes have been tackled, it is time to establish a programme of regular mechanical treatments to start reducing your thatch layer. These treatments are also the ideal accompaniment both before and after using the biological methods covered elsewhere in the feature. With a liquid product, your verticutting frequency can continue unaltered, but after applying a granular thatch remover, you should wait a fortnight before resuming verticutting.



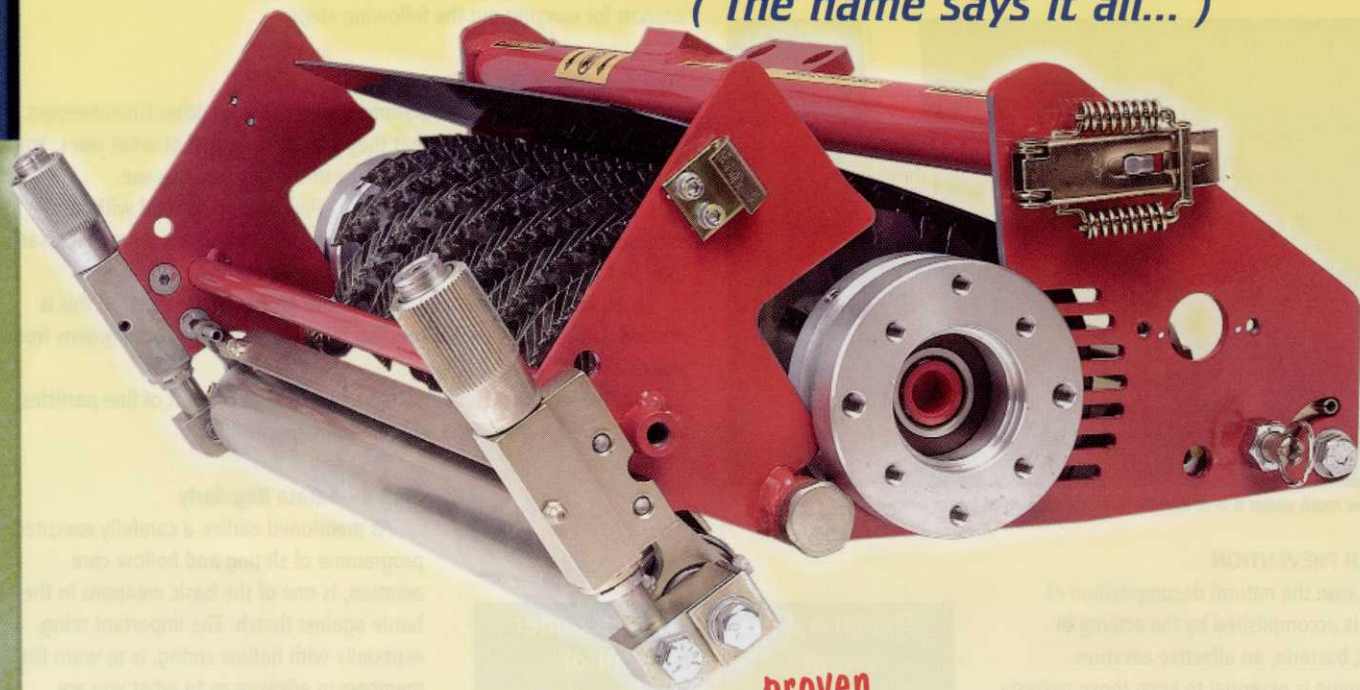
Keeping thatch under control is vital for healthy turf and a fast true ball roll

# THATCH...



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Let's now look in more depth at these various mechanical methods, which have themselves been going through quite a revolution in recent years.

Probably the most significant development in greens maintenance, was the introduction of the worlds first ride-on greens triple mower by Jacobson in 1968. This was soon followed by "vertical mowing" or "verticutting" attachments which fitted in place of the standard mowing units. Thatch control was then a triplex operation, but was still barely able to keep up with the amount of thatch that the new automatic irrigation systems were starting to cause.

The most recent developments in this sequence were when in 1998 Thatch-Away introduced the worlds first verticutting units with tungsten tipped Fan-Force blades. This was followed in 2002 by the Supa-System, which was the world's first Interchangeable Cassette System for triple mowers. This now enabled genuine scarifying, as well as verticutting, to be carried out using a ride-on greens triple mower.

### SO WHAT DO YOU USE AND WHEN?

Verticutters, continue to be the most widely used attachments and can be used virtually all season long at different working depths. Start at 1mm below surface level increasing this to 2mm, on a weekly basis once the grass is growing strongly. Reduce to monthly usage, in the height of summer and then increase again to weekly use in late summer and early autumn.

Scarifiers should only be used when there is strong growth in the late spring, late summer and early autumn. Never scarify (or verticut deeply) when *Poa Annua* is flowering. Typical working depth for scarifying is around 8-12mm and this has the two-fold effect of both removing a substantial amount of thatch and also allowing oxygen to penetrate the root zone, which further assists the decomposition of thatch.

Sarel Rolling and Deep Slicing to a depth of approximately 20mm, are two further treatments which are non disruptive of the playing surface, but which assist oxygen entering the root zone and therefore help promote the natural decomposition of thatch. Both pieces of equipment are now available as cassettes to fit the Supa-System, enabling these operations to be quickly carried out using a greens triple mower.

### Step 5 - Topdressing

Topdressing is an important element in creating a free-draining surface, with capillary continuity to the root zone. This in turn, helps to provide an environment in which thatch decomposition can naturally occur. Effective brushing-in is vital, to fill coring holes and to avoid burying the thatch under deep layers of topdressing which can result in the development of anaerobic black layer.

Choose your topdressing material carefully, avoiding mixtures with a high concentration of fine particles which can lead to sealing of the surface. For USGA specification greens, the recommended objective is to maintain the root zone at 3% organic matter by weight by diluting the thatch with regular sand topdressing.



Modern tungsten bladed verticutters can remove vast amounts of thatch whilst leaving an immediately playable surface

### CONCLUSION

To sum up the key elements of a successful thatch control program:

- Don't be complacent. Diligent soil profiling may reveal more thatch than you might imagine.
- Don't over feed or over water. These are two of the most common causes of thatch.
- Do aerate regularly
- Do verticut regularly. A little and often approach is by far the safest and can be highly effective in reducing thatch layers as deep as 3" down to an optimum level within a couple of seasons.
- Do scarify if you have a serious thatch problem but use discretion as to how deep you go and when you do it. Aim for periods of strong growth, to give a quick recovery and avoid times when *Poa Annua* is seeding.
- Do verticut deeply, or scarify, before using biological thatch control products, to enhance their effectiveness.
- Do keep a good supply of oxygen into the thatch zone by regular sarel rolling and deep slicing.
- Do topdress after scarifying and hollow coring but be certain to use a compatible, free draining material and to brush it in evenly.

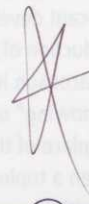
Marcus Oliver is Managing Director of Greentek Tel: 0113 267 7000.



Cassette mounted equipment has opened the way for most greenscare operations to be done using a greens triple mower

# Bank on Microbes to Minimise your Thatch Account

Hugh Frost advises you look after the microbial population in your soil, so they will assist you with your thatch control.



The role of soil microbes (bacteria) in turf grass management is discussed, outlining why they should not be ignored and also how they can be managed to keep a thatch layer under control.

## THE THATCH BANK

In some respects, the thatch layer in turf grass is like a current bank account. You need to keep the balance to a minimum, as you get no interest in letting it get too large - tying up resources in the wrong place. On the other hand, if it is too small, then you have no buffer against larger withdrawals from the system.

Of course this analogy only works so far, but essentially thatch accumulation has incomings and outgoings, the same as a current bank account and to attain a problem-free life, these components need to be kept in equilibrium.



So what are the contributing factors to thatch income and outgoings?

**Thatch Income:** Plant growth (particularly the heavily lignified plant components).

While thatch formation is generally attributed to excessive nutrient and water applications, perhaps in recent years too much emphasis has been paid to the total quantity of fertiliser and irrigation, rather than the types and timing of these two inputs.

Grass has to grow and it requires fertiliser to achieve the performance expected from a modern-day golf course. However, if fertilisers are applied too heavily, especially those that decrease pH, not only do they produce excessive plant growth, they can result in a reduction of soil microbial life. These soil microbes are both responsible for efficient uptake of plant nutrients and also play an integral part in plant residue breakdown, therefore thatch reduction.

Similarly, irrigation is obviously vital to high quality fine turf, though once again, if over applied can produce excessive growth. More importantly, poorly timed irrigation can cause the soil to stay in a continuous state of saturation which will block soil pores that take vital

oxygen to plants and microbes.

Any reduction in soil microbial activity will lead to a decrease in thatch breakdown.

**Thatch Outgoings:** Continuous microbial activity, assisted by regular aeration, will result in an infrequent need for thatch reduction remedies.

There are two categories of thatch reduction; preventative and curative. In the medium to long-term, preventative is easier and far more cost efficient. Therefore priorities should be:

1. Continuous preventative thatch formation by: Microbial activity (see below for advice)
2. Regular preventative thatch formation: Aeration and verticutting
3. Infrequent thatch curatives by: Mechanical removal & use of "thatch eater" products

## PREVENTATIVE: Encouraging The Microbial Workforce

Golf course greens can be a sterile and unwelcoming environment for beneficial microbial life, though unfortunately it seems that the undesirable pathogens flourish all too easily. This is partially due to the fact that the beneficial microbes, which compete with these pathogens, have been neglected and unnecessarily lost by over application of a range of inputs which scour the soil profile of microbial life.

So, it is important to make sure that, even in an artificial plant growing environment such as a USGA spec golf green, there is a level of microbial activity that promotes the breakdown of decaying plant material. The process by which microbes are able to reduce the organic matter is by means of enzyme production and this process is largely determined by temperature, moisture and food availability. Therefore when soil temperatures are around 10+ °C, usually from mid-spring, this is when it is vital to seize the opportunity to encourage microbes to work on the thatch on your behalf, without any disruption to play.

The course of action that will be most beneficial to thatch control will be:

Firstly, look after the microbes that already exist in the soil. This should be done by:

- a. Regular (and frequent) aeration of the root zone (to provide both oxygen and good drainage)
- b. Avoid using fertiliser that will significantly decrease pH
- c. Add a feed that will sustain microbial populations (see below for more details)
- d. Verticut turf in the growing season (aerates and aids microbial action)

Secondly, take every opportunity to supplement microbial populations.

A fertiliser with an organic, rather than a mineral, base can be used to inoculate soils with short-term populations of microbes that cannot only assist in thatch breakdown but allow fertilisers to function more effectively.

Good quality biological fertilisers will not significantly alter the organic matter profile of a rooting zone. This is because they contain organic

nutrients that are readily available to the grass plants and do not utilise slowly degradable organic matter, which would disrupt the root zone profiles. To this organic base of fertiliser can be added extra microbes, which will both make the nutrient content of the fertiliser more available and slowly convert existing decaying plants to new plant food.

Should thatch already be a problem, then a curative course of action should be:

1. Identify and start to remedy the cause(s) of the problem (usually too little aeration, low microbial life)
2. When appropriate, remove thatch by mechanical means, using scarification
3. Apply curative products that will speed up the microbial action on the thatch layer (see below)

#### CURATIVE: Rapid Microbial Digestion and other practices

While scarification is commonly carried out and is highly beneficial where it can be practiced, greenkeepers are naturally attracted by products that seek to work on the breakdown of thatch. Generally speaking these products are granular in nature and work in a similar fashion to microbially-enhanced fertilisers. However, while some will only feed existing populations of microbes already in the soil, others will provide greater benefit by adding higher concentrations of microbes. This latter category of highly concentrated products, which significantly speed up thatch degradation, are most effective and well formulated liquid products that can provide an even more rapid action.

To cure the problem of thatch it is important that any "thatch-eater" product produces a high microbial enzyme action, if it is able to get straight to the heart of the problem. Although a microbial fertiliser will



keep the income of thatch to a minimum, to create significant outgoings from an existing thatch bank, a far greater intensity of digestion is required.

A liquid product will penetrate the top of the turf and get into the dark recesses of the thatch within seconds of application. If this liquid then contains, not only the high quantity of microbes required for rapid action but also enzymes themselves, the product will

start to work immediately. Of course the liquid formulation has the additional benefit of providing the moisture that microbes require, without the risk of over-irrigating granular products into the sward.

#### CONCLUSIONS

- Prevent incoming thatch by promoting conditions beneficial to microbial soil activities
- Fully utilise all mechanical aeration practices to enhance natural thatch breakdown
- Apply microbial amendments in either preventative or curative forms as appropriate

If you generate and enhance your own microbial population, this will keep your thatch bank account in a lean and healthy condition, which will pay dividends in the future.

*Hugh Frost, UK Technical Manager, Novozymes Biologicals.  
Tel: 01789 290906.*

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# Can you beat these?



Don't forget the closing date for the BIGGA Photographic Competition is June 30 2006 so hurry and get your entries in!

# THE FIRST DROUGHT ORDERS FOR 11 YEARS HAVE BEEN ISSUED IN THE SOUTH EAST. HOW WILL THIS AFFECT OUR GOLF COURSES?

With the onset of drought conditions, irrigation restrictions imposed by the Environment Agency, look set to add to the woes of greenkeepers this season. JDIH (Water & Environment) Ltd is concerned that greens and fairways will suffer unless steps are taken to offset the reductions in water abstraction.

As the drought impact spreads and deepens, the Environment Agency can impose cutbacks on spray irrigation, leading to problems at key growth stages resulting in lower quality overall.

James Dodds, Managing Director of JDIH (Water & Environment) Ltd, urges greenkeepers to liaise with their local Environment Agency office, to help minimise the impact of the abstraction reductions. He adds: "Early discussions will help greenkeepers and course management, to plan their water requirements over the next few critical weeks and months. Only by good planning now will problems be minimised in the future".

There are some situations where water usage is not classed as spray irrigation, but it is important that groundstaff understand exactly how their situation relates to the Spray Irrigation (Definition Order) 1992, to ensure that they don't come into conflict with the Environment Agency.

## EMERGENCY VARIATION OF LICENCES FOR SPRAY IRRIGATION

Under Section 57 of the Water Resources Act 1991, in the case of an "Exceptional shortage of rain" the Environment Agency has the power to:

- Impose a temporary reduction on the quantity authorised in a licence for abstraction, for the purpose of spray irrigation - this has the potential to directly affect golf courses, driving ranges and putting greens.
- Restrictions on abstractions from surface waters are likely to be commonplace during a drought, however, restrictions cannot be imposed on groundwater abstractions, unless an abstraction is thought by the Environment Agency, to be having an effect on the flow, level or volume of a surface water feature, such as: a stream, river, pond or wetland.

The Act requires restrictions to be imposed evenly - specific uses of water cannot be taken in isolation, or specific users targeted in isolation.

There are a number of situations where water usage is not classed as spray irrigation, by virtue of the Spray Irrigation (Definition order) 1992:

- Where the water is mixed with substances to protect plants against pests, disease and weeds, or quality additives / growth regulators / nutrients / manure or dung - provided the apparatus is moveable.
- Irrigation is carried out undercover where the plants have no access to water falling as rain.

- Irrigation of plants grown in pots / containers in the open where they are unable to take moisture from the soil.
- Irrigation of land in the immediate vicinity of cloches for the purpose of securing a supply of moisture to the plants growing within.

## WHAT THIS MEANS TO ABSTRACTORS

These powers affect spray irrigators - such as golf courses. This only applies to irrigators who abstract water for direct use. It does not apply to irrigators who abstract water during the winter, to be stored in reservoirs for subsequent use in the summer.

JDIH (Water and Environment) understands, that the Environment Agency will seek to gain voluntary reductions in abstraction quantity rather than to impose reductions. For instance in some areas, the Environment Agency has already spoken to some growers and has obtained agreements with them as to how a drought will be managed.

In other areas, the Agency has encouraged night time irrigation where appropriate, to reduce losses of abstracted water through evaporation. In order to get voluntary restrictions the Agency will need to negotiate or discuss arrangements with a representative body. In the last main drought this proved the impetus for setting up "Abstractor Groups", which have continued to provide support and liaison for abstractors within an area.

If no such group exists in your area, then we strongly recommend that you discuss your abstraction with your local Environment Agency office - especially if you are in one of the sensitive areas (Southern, Thames, Anglian).

If the drought continues and river flows are low next autumn and winter, then abstraction for winter filling of reservoirs may be at risk in certain areas, particularly where baseflow to streams is low, due to low groundwater levels. Winter fill abstractors should monitor the situation and, if possible, reduce the amount of water used this summer.

*What are your thoughts on how the drought might affect our golf courses? Write to me, Melissa Toombs, at: Greenkeeper International, BIGGA HOUSE, Aldwark, Airedale, York YO61 1UF, or email me at: melissa@bigga.co.uk*

*Look out for more information on the affects of the drought next month.*



# News from the Chief Executive

By the time you read this I shall have been on holiday and I must say I am looking forward to escaping from the Northern, if not the English, weather. It seems odd that we have a drought order in place in the South of England and yet travel 200 miles north and we are all growing webbed feet!

May has been a month of meetings for me, having had two discussions with the R&A; a talk to Northern Section of the AGCS; a talk with Kerran Daly to Chairmen of Green at an EGU conference; a meeting with BIGGA Section Secretaries in Scotland and finally a meeting of the BIGGA/AGCS Health and Safety Group.

The R&A are keen to promote their website, [www.bestcourseforgolf.org](http://www.bestcourseforgolf.org), and the principles contained therein. They urge golf clubs not only to register but also to complete the checklist. I encourage anyone who has not visited the site to do so. The debate on sustainability continues long after the Seminar at Harrogate Week and the R&A feels that the event was so successful, that they have agreed to fund further educational opportunities on this theme at Harrogate Week 2007 - details will appear in the Continue to Learn brochure in due course and in Greenkeeper International.

In our discussions, we identified the need to get a clear message on the issues involved to golfers, golf club committees and in many instances, the general public. It is simply not enough to 'win over' Course Managers and their staff without them having the FULL support of their club.

During our conversation the R&A confirmed that it would be withdrawing its annual grant to the Association after this year, however, I was advised that there was still funding available for special projects that warranted support. It is now up to the Association to identify these and put forward an appropriate bid. The R&A continue to be very supportive of the work undertaken by both BIGGA and the GTC, however, they wish to divert more funding into aiding the development of golf overseas excluding areas already involving the USGA.

In April I wrote to the R&A requesting them to consider free admission at the Open Championship for Greenkeeper members of BIGGA. This was received with some reservation and a final decision will be taken at the next meeting of the Championship Committee in June. Keep your fingers crossed that this will be approved - if initially only for a practice day.

I was pleased to be invited to give presentations to members of the AGCS and at the EGU conference, and I feel that this reflects the developing working relationship between our organisations. The Health and Safety group, an initiative of the AGCS, met with industry consultants to explain the work undertaken so far and the aims and aspirations of BIGGA and the AGCS in this regard. Our proposals for an industry accepted Standard Health and Safety Management System, were well received and we were promised full support from those in attendance. The target date for availability is Harrogate Week 2007 but an awful lot of work must take place before then. A basis of the scheme has been drafted and work has started on producing Risk Assessments for both golf course and associated facilities, and the clubhouse. It is our intention to make the final product available over the internet, at a significant financial discount to members of either the AGCS and BIGGA. The final costings will need to be decided in due course.

Finally, I hope that the BIGGA Support Team for the BMW Championship at Wentworth enjoyed good weather and needed sun tan lotion instead of squeegees!

**John Pemberton**



## Central

With a very dry, cold spring, it has been a slow start to the year, in complete contrast to happenings around the Section. There has been a huge amount of movement within the area and without mentioning everyone by name - good luck to all those moving on, our best wishes go with you. To those new to the Section, welcome.

Congratulations to Mark Laing and his staff, at Aberdour GC, who despite the tough conditions, turned out a very well presented test of golf, for the Section Spring Outing. The best scratch of the day was by David Simpson, from Crieff GC, who carded a one over par 68. Best nett was by Stuart Pearson, from Aberdour GC, who carded a nett 63 (70 - 7). The Stewarts Quaich (best two from the same course) was won by Stuart Pearson and Paul Armour. More news, pictures and other scores can be read on our website (see below). Many thanks must also go to the Scottish patrons for their continued support within the Section.

The Scottish National Tournament will take place at Leven Links on June 22. I'm sure you will all do your best to attend and ensure the Section is well represented. Forms can be obtained from Peter Boyd (0141 616 3440).

As part of their studies, HND students from Elmwood College held a seminar in March, at St Andrews Bay Golf & Leisure resort, for over 50 greenkeepers and golf club officials.

The theme for the day was expectations of the modern golfer, with an underlying question - 'Can we still produce high quality golf courses to a demanding public in conjunction with sustainable management practices and a workable business plan?' Speakers for the day were George Brown, Course Manager from Westin Turnberry Hotel, Golf & Leisure resort; Graeme McDowall, Golf Professional; David Roy, General Manager, Crail Golfing Society, and Paul Miller, from Elmwood College. The presentations were encouragingly optimistic and the debate that followed raised some interesting questions, based mostly upon communication.

Another first for the Section was the "going live" of our very own website - [www.biggacentralsection.org.uk](http://www.biggacentralsection.org.uk). Please take a look and contribute as you feel necessary to ensure that it becomes an essential tool for the local greenkeeper. Please note that the first Wednesday of every month we intend holding a free seminar evening at Elmwood GC, with a selection of speakers invited to address topics of your choice and the opportunity for some much needed communication and refreshment afterwards.

Euan Grant

## East

May 1 has arrived, with a cold and extremely dry April behind us and no growth being the general complaint amongst members of the Section. The usual window of false spring just never materialised, so let us hope more favourable conditions suitable to achieving fine surfaces are just around the corner.

The Spring outing was held at Dunbar Golf Club on Tuesday, April 25 (who got the date wrong? I hear you chorus). On behalf of the Section I would like to thank the Club Captain, Douglas Armstrong, for granting us courtesy of the course; Tom in catering for presenting an excellent meal, which included choices for both main courses and dessert; Bob, Susan and Alison for tending the bar and the pro shop for supplying the pre game pies. A big thank you must also go to Graeme Wood and his team for presenting the course in excellent condition.

The results are as follows: Best Scratch. Dean Muir 72; Category 1. 1. Stuart Greenwood 75; 2. 1. Steven Russell 75; 1. 2. Ryan McCulloch 75; Category 2. 2. David Coull 76; Veterans. Graeme Wood 80; Nearest the Pin. Mike Dennis; Trade. Ian Lauder 75; Best New Member. Cohn McArthur 75; Best Nett. Steven Lamb.

At the end of the day, we had a total of 40 in attendance, including four new members: Colin McArthur, Grant Moran, Graham Davidson and Steven Lamb - who enjoyed the golf, played in sunny but windy conditions.

A final thank you must go to the trade for providing raffle prizes, Stewart Crawford for selling the tickets, and last but by no means least Jimmy Neilson for checking all the returned scores.



A young man on the move this month is Sean McLean, a former apprentice greenkeeper at Craigmillar Park in Edinburgh. He has gained a work placement at Rochester, scene of the infamous Ryder Cup, through the Ohio State University Scheme.

Until next month.

Mike Dooner

## Northern

There are five new members to report this month: Matthew Smith, Apprentice Greenkeeper at Peterculter GC; Harry Rae, Greenkeeper at Gairloch GC; Ian White, Greenkeeper at Gairloch GC; Edward Ralph, Course Manager at Gairloch GC and Blair Middleton, Apprentice Greenkeeper at Fortrose GC.

The weather has improved in recent weeks, which will mean plenty of cutting and presentation tasks for all greenkeepers, to keep the members happy, for a short time at least.

The new practice facilities at Murcar GC are now completed and look very good. The greens and surrounds were turfed and have resulted in a quality facility for all their members. On a light hearted note, one of the greenkeepers at Murcar, Ryan Pederson, sent a text message to his girlfriend Debbie one day telling her that he loved her very much but sent it to the Club Captain, Derek Mortimer, instead. Derek returned the text telling him he liked Ryan but drew the line at any love between them ever developing.

Skibo will have hosted the Northern Open by the time you've read this. I am sure Gary Gruber and his team will have had the course in excellent order for this event. This is early for a Pro event in the North of Scotland but I'm sure Gary will have risen to the challenge and produce quality surfaces as always for this event.

I spoke to Bob Mackay, at Aviemore, and he was saying his opening of the course has been delayed from early May until late June. I'm sure Bob is quite happy about that, as it will give him more growing time on all areas of the course. From all accounts, this course is a beauty and will be well worth playing in the future, knowing Bob it will be in superb condition at all times.

The Spring Outing was held at Montrose Links on May 11. The course was in very good condition throughout and was enjoyed by all who played on the day. Thanks go to Richard Cutler and his team for all their hard work and also the catering and bar staff who looked after us in the clubhouse.

Results: Longest Drive. Class 1 Bradley Wood, Class 2 Ben Brooks, Class 3 Steven Simpson; Nearest the Pin. Raymond Warrender; Sweep. 1. David Duggan, 2. Jim McCormack, 3. Gary Tough, 4. Roy Donald; Guest Winner. Graeme Leslie. Trade Winner. Shaun Reilly; Committee Winner. Hugh Mclatchie; Veterans Trophy. 1. Hugh Mclatchie, 2. Roy Donald; Class 3 Nett. 1. David Duggan, 2. Hugh Mclatchie, 3. Andrew Nixon; Class 2 Nett. 1. Roy Donald, 2. Richard Cutler, 3. Richard Pirie; Class 1 Nett. 1. Jim McCormack, 2. Kevin Fowler, 3. Mark Maclean; Scratch Trophy. 1. Gary Tough, 2. George Paterson.

That's about it for this month folks, keep up the good work and if you have any news about the trade give me a shout on grassman351aol.com.

Cheers.

Robert Patterson

## NORTHERN REGION

### North East

April 27 was the day we had our annual Spring competition at Prudhoe GC. It's been a while since we have played there and what a pleasure it was, the golf course was in excellent nick, considering the slow cold spring we are having, as you will see by the leading scores.

Thanks to Head Greenkeeper, George Gainford and his small workforce for giving us an enjoyable day on his course, though it looks short on the card its still a good test, with a little local knowledge needed. The weather was tremendous but I'm not putting that down to George, I think that was down to me praying for a fine day.

Other thanks go to: the committee of Prudhoe for giving us the courtesy and also to the Steward, Jim Mulholland and his staff for giving us the best meals we have had for a long time. In fact, a lot of the players said it was the best meal we have ever had.

Donations were provided by the following companies: Shorts of Whitburn; Aitkens Turf Care; Border Sports Turf and Greenlay, who have given the Section a considerable donation to help towards prizes and anything else we may need this year. Before I forget, thanks to Terry Charlton for providing us with his postal service.

New members in Section are as follows: C. Lumley, Roseberry Grange GC and A. Smith, Prudhoe GC.

Best Nett B Wilson, Stocksfield GC, 77-9-66; Gross A Ingles, Newcastle Utd GC, 71; Nett M Harvey, Wearside GC, 91-24-67; J Storey, Alnmouth GC, 75-6-69; R Black, Westerhope GC, 76-7-69; G Morgan, Crook GC, 76-6-70.

On October 25 we will be having a 18 hole competition at Tyneside GC, to be followed by our Annual General Meeting 2006. Members will be notified and by the way we do have a lot of vacancies for the committee.

Jimmy Richardson

### Northern

I have been told this month to start with a word of warning for all of you taking part in President's Day at Northcliffe GC on June 14. The warning is that President Dennis Cockburn is back from injury! After a few weeks off, with a twisted nerve in his shoulder, Dennis is back playing and the rumours are that he has splashed out a whole £5 on a new Slammer driver and is feeling very confident of a victory at Northcliffe.

Other news this month, the date has finally been set for the Invitation Day Tournament at Scarcroft GC - Wednesday, August 23. Anybody wanting to put their name down for this tournament please get in touch as soon as possible and don't forget to invite an official of your club as a guest.

If anybody has any news or gossip regarding the section then please get in touch and we can maybe fill a few more lines up in this report next month.

Adam Speight



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Charterhouse

## North West

The spring tournament was held at West Lancs GC on April 20. The winners were as follows: Best Nett. J. Ellisson; Best Gross. P. McFerron; Vet's prize. D McEvoy; Guest prize. Gary Potter; Nearest the Pin. P. McFerron; Longest Drive. P. McFerron.

Many thanks to Nick Gray and Bathgates, for sponsoring of the Nearest the Pin and Longest Drive.

The North West Section Committee would also like to thank: West Lancs for their kind hospitality; the catering staff for the lovely meal and also John and his staff for the wonderful condition of the course. It was a pleasure to play on. Although the weather was very kind to us, a member of the club was heard to say, "it was playing like a pussycat".

Next up is the summer tournament, to be held at Morecambe GC on June 15. This is another great golf course and well worth playing. To play in it you must send a cheque for £20, payable to BIGGA North West Section. The address to send your cheque to is: Bill Merritt, The Lodge, Beacon Park GC, Beacon Lane, Dalton, Wigan, WN8 7RU.

As always if anyone has any news or just needs a little bit of advice, please contact the Secretary, Bert Cross, on 0151 724 5412 or myself on 0151 289 4625. If you are on the worldwide web my e-mail address is [jsheehan@blueyonder.co.uk](mailto:jsheehan@blueyonder.co.uk).

Chris Sheehan

## Sheffield

Firstly, I would just like to apologise for the lack of notes in the last few months.

On March 23, we had a very special day in the Sheffield Section, which was a talk given by none other than Peter Alliss (the voice of golf). The day consisted of lunch and then Peter's talk. Our thanks go to Bernhard and Co, for sponsoring the event and their staff: Steve Nixon, Richard Kerrigan and Gina Putnam.

Peter had his ankle in plaster and was on crutches due to an accident he had in Scotland the month before. His daughter Sara chauffeured him to the event, which was much appreciated.

After we had all enjoyed our lunch, for which I would like to thank the catering staff at Rotherham GC, Peter began his talk. Peter spoke about his involvement within the game of golf, throughout the world. It was in the usual Peter Alliss style of humour, very dry and funny and he had us all in stitches most of the time! (even at one stage putting Paul Docherty in his place). Nice try Paul, better luck next time! Peter talked about golf courses all over the world and his life as a professional. He then answered questions from the floor and was very interesting and funny as usual.

I would like, on behalf of the Sheffield Section and everyone present, to thank Peter Alliss for giving up his time and with his injury, still making the effort to come and talk, it was very much appreciated by everyone.

I would also like to thank Rotherham Golf Club for letting us use their facilities once again. Finally, while on the thank you's, I would just like to thank Gordon Brammah for all his hard work in arranging this event.

It was very well supported by our membership with over 80 people in attendance, so hopefully this will continue at future events.

Just to remind you of up coming golf events: Sheffield Section vs Northern Section, July 5, Bradley Hall GC; Annual competition - July 10, Serlby Park GC, 1pm tee off time.

Any news please contact me on 07793111845 or [jv.lax@tesco.net](mailto:jv.lax@tesco.net).

John Lax

## MIDLAND REGION

## BB&O

"Summertime and the living is easy, fish are jumping and the cotton is high." And so the song goes!

I can hear you all singing away, strimming and cutting around bunkers, over the hills, near and far, as the summer growth kicks in. I apologise for not providing a report last month. As usual, I push the deadline button with Scott the Editor to the limit every month in the hope that my journalistic talents will scoop the biggest story in the history of the BB&O but, this time I got caught short over the Easter

period.

If anyone has any Section news or would like to put their views across to the masses, you only have to phone or e-mail to get your point across and I will be happy to put it in the magazine.

The annual Rigby Taylor Matchplay knockout will now be underway and your host, Gareth Acteson, is on hand to organise results of the first round, which will be published in next month's edition.

Last year's champions, the Goring gang from the Streatley area, will be defending their title and in true Mexican style, their sombrero hats just might need a trim this year.

Bob the Builder, are you out there? Have you built the house yet? Wishing you the best from the Section.

The village of Flackwell Heath in Buckinghamshire, situated high on a ridge between High Wycombe and Maidenhead was famous, decades ago, for its cherry orchards, but now they have all gone. Today there is a busy shopping centre, several pubs and restaurants and not forgetting the guitar shop and of course the venue for the Spring Tournament Flackwell Heath GC.

Established in 1904 this challenging course was a true test asking for a combination of accuracy and power as you wind your way to the bottom end of the heath, through beautiful established beech woodlands, a whole load of hills to climb and an abundance of interesting drives, to negotiate the well kept fairways. Local knowledge proved the key to winning, as our host, Dean Jones, showed by managing a 71 best nett.

1. Dean Jones; 2. Jim Howard; 3. Colin Wilson; 4. Carl Small; 5. Matt Smith. Overall winner of the Tacit Claret Jug was Rob Surgey, Wycombe Height GC, with a best gross 73 and nett 71 after beating Dean on countback.

Longest drive went to Casanova Wilson and Nearest the Pin to Matt Smith with R. Landells, managing the longest walk. Gareth Acteson won the trade and guest prize.

An EGM was held and Frank Booth was elected as the new treasurer for the Section.

A fantastic day was had by all, many thanks to Flackwell Heath G.C for their courtesy and to General Manager, Ian Hulley and Steward, Richard Chalmers who ensured our first event for 2006 was a success. Thanks also to Dean Jones and his staff for preparing the course to a first class standard, appreciated by all who played this blindingly good and interesting course.

Thank you to our sponsors: Tim Webb, from Tacit, and all the other trade who provided for the raffle table, which included: Gem, Rigby Taylor, Sherrif, John Deere and Scotts.

The next event is almost upon us and will be the Gem Rose Bowl to be held at Burnham Beeches GC, on July 5. Have a great summer.

Mark Day

[mark@day.fm](mailto:mark@day.fm)

## East of England

The season is well under way now and we started with a bang. The first competition of the year was held at Sandilands GC. Our sincere thanks go to Mike Ladd and his staff, the course was in excellent condition, made even better by the large turnout. Well done everybody for making the effort. Our thanks also go to Rigby Taylor for sponsoring the day. The prize table was fantastic - TV & DVD player for first prize. Not bad, eh boys?

The results are as follows: 1. Nigel Broadwith, Nett 71; 2. Vince Gilroy, Nett 72; 3. Les Howkins, Nett 73; 4. Adi Kitchenon, Nett 73; 5. Rob Welford, Nett 74; Nearest the Pin. Steve Beverley; Trade Prize. Ian Collett

By the time this goes to print we will have played the world famous (infamous) PMGC. Results will follow next month.

Allan Walker

## Midland

You'll be pleased that this month's notes shall be purely factual, as I am with the Grim Reaper while compiling.

On Friday, March 28, we held our spring tournament at Bridgenorth GC. The course was fantastically presented by Mr M. Jones and his very fine team. I bet that the wonderful sunshine on the day cost a packet Martin! Our greatest of thanks to you all, superbly done. The results of the day: Best gross. A. Jones; Nett; 1. E. Stant; 2. S. Mucklow (both of whom qualify for free entry to the National Championship);