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The official monthly magazine of the British
& International Golf Greenkeepers Association

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Opinions expressed are not necessarily those of the Association,
and no responsibility is accepted for such content, advertising or
product information that may appear.

Circulation is by subscription. Subscription rate: UK £47 per year,
Europe and Eire £60. The magazine is also distributed to BIGGA
members, golf clubs, local authorities, the turf industry, libraries
and central government.

ISSN: 0961- 6977

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INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Cover picture: Caldy Golf Club by Alan Birch

Welcome



Golf Gets It In The Neck Again

The world has seen a real change since I last penned an editorial. Mr Obama is reprogramming his Sat Nav so "Home" will take him to Pennsylvania Avenue, Washington and Labour won a by-election.

One thing has stubbornly stayed the same, however – the absolute pelting that golf has been taking in the media. I had a go at Miranda Richardson

a couple of months ago, and I have it on good authority that she's barely left her darkened room since, but Terence Blacker, who writes a column in The Independent, and Jeremy Clarkson, who, well, you know who he is, have now taken up the Richardson cause.

Both have climbed aboard their respective high horses in response to the Scottish Government's decision to grant Donald Trump outline planning approval for his billion pound development in Aberdeenshire.

"The majority of people do not visit the country (Scotland) in order to see a string of dreary, identical, environmentally dead golf courses, but to enjoy one of the most interesting and beautiful landscapes in Europe," spouted Terence, while Jeremy inserted his tu'pence worth in his Sunday Times column.

"As far as I'm concerned, a golf course with its random splashes of unnatural emerald green and its Rupert Bear trimmings is more of a blot on the landscape than a pig farm or a power station," said the well known eco-warrior.

While admitting that he hated to be grouped with environmentalists he did pin his colours firmly to the mast.

"... get off our bottoms and fight the good fight - not because of a butterfly or a polar bear or because we stand to make billions, but because golf courses are awful and anything Donald Trump does sits like a golden bogey on the unsullied face of a newborn child."

Savour the magnificent prose, delivered by a man who spends much of his professional life smelling petrol fumes and burning rubber on a motor racing track outside his converted aircraft hanger of a television studio.

Now, I do have some sympathy for those who believe Donald, with his army of high powered lawyers, achieved something that might be beyond the reach of lesser mortals, but I do believe that the game of golf, once again, has been left to take the rap.

As far as I'm aware much of the concern is not the golf courses but the housing and hotel development which will accompany them. However, it's not the bricks and mortar that commentators are striking out at but the much easier target of golf.

I would defy anyone not to visit Loch Lomond or Kingsbarns, or the Castle Course, or Castle Stuart, near Inverness, and not be overwhelmed by the sheer beauty of what they see. All are new, or relatively new, to the Scottish landscape and all have added so much to Scotland in so many ways. They are certainly not "dreary, identical or environmentally dead".

I would be pretty sure that whatever the concerns regarding Donald Trump's new Scottish venture, the golf courses will be one area where every possible care is taken to ensure that the natural surroundings are considered and protected and that in time the course will become an established, and much loved feature on the north east coast of the country.

Scott MacCallum
Editor

SUCCESSFUL CLUB MANAGERS AWARDED IMPORTANT NEW QUALIFICATION

Eight leading club managers have been awarded a new internationally recognised professional qualification, the Club Managers Association of Europe (CMAE) has announced.

The new European version of the Certified Club Manager (CCM) qualification, for more than 40 years the most important benchmark for senior club managers in North America, was awarded to senior managers from England, Scotland, Ireland and Sweden, following two days of rigorous examinations at The Lansdowne Club in London in October.

The successful candidates – John McCormack, Castle Golf Club, Dublin, Ireland; Patrick Bradshaw, Blainroe Golf Club, Wicklow, Ireland; Donal Flinn, Druids Glen Golf Resort, Wicklow, Ireland; Kevin Fish, Edinburgh Leisure, Edinburgh, Scotland; David Balden, Caledonian Club, London; Alasdair Curbbun, Brooks's Club, London; Jerry Kilby, CEO, Club Managers Association of Europe, and Jimmy Grön, Kalmar Golf Club, Kalmar, Sweden – are the first in Europe to benefit from the CCM qualification, designed to recognise the highest levels of professional competency, enabling managers to develop their careers at home and abroad. Three further candidates failed the exam, but will have the opportunity to re-sit the 200-question multiple choice and case study papers in March 2009.

"This is a tough examination," said Nigel Cartwright, CMAE Education Policy Board Chairman.

"Club Managers who gain CCM status set themselves apart as the best in the business so we congratulate these eight individuals on their outstanding achievement."

CCM examinations will take place twice a year, with March 30 and October 15 already announced as the two exam dates for 2009. CCM is open to all experienced managers with specified levels of professional experience. Candidates undertake a two-day review and examination that focuses on ten key club management disciplines, including financial, leadership, facility, and food and beverage management.

For more information about CCM and to download the registration form, visit: www.cmaeurope.org

L to R: Nigel Cartwright, CMAE Education Policy Board Chairman, with successful candidates, Donal Flinn, John McCormack, Alasdair Curbbun, Jimmy Grön, David Balden and Jerry Kilby.



TEST DRIVE

BIGGA Regional Administrator, Peter Boyd, tried out the new Segway at the recent Scotsturf exhibition.

Adapted for greenkeepers it can rake, switch and hole cut, which means greenkeepers can get round 18 holes, rake the bunkers, switch the greens and change the holes for less than 4p – the price it costs to charge the Lithium battery, which runs for an amazing 24 miles.



THE RIDE'S FREE – IF THE KEY FITS!

John Deere's new, award winning XUV Gator utility vehicle is available free for a year – if you have the right key.

Over 22,000 boxes containing a golden key are being sent out to potential Gator customers in November. Recipients are invited to visit their local John Deere dealer for a test drive and try the key in either an XUV or HPX 4x4 Gator – and if the key fits, then the Gator is theirs to drive for one year, free of charge (not including fuel, servicing or insurance).

The offer is open to anyone in the UK and Ireland, aged 18 and over. If you haven't received a golden key in the post, a key can be requested online at www.JohnDeere.com/xuv. This special promotion runs until 19 December 2008.



TURF & AMENITY TEAM STRENGTHENED

Following on from its record financial results, Countrywide have announced two latest recruits to its Turf & Amenity team.

Over the last five years, Martin Townsend, Head of Turf & Amenity at Countrywide has built up the business from scratch, successfully growing it into an area which now covers London and the Home Counties, the Midlands and mid-Wales.

In addition to the five Regional Sales Managers, Martin has now strengthened his team with the addition of two new Sales Managers, Mike Foran and Sandy Pentecost.

Mike Foran has worked in the turf and amenity sector for the last 15 years. During that time he has worked for a Japanese owned multinational chemical manufacturer supplying herbicides and fungicides to the major UK amenity distributors and one of the largest UK amenity distributors supplying chemicals, grass seed and fertiliser to golf and sports clubs throughout the Midlands.

Sandy Pentecost has been greenkeeping since he left school in 1989, working for golf clubs in the Home Counties and then setting up his own business in 2002. He joins Countrywide as Sales Manager covering the Home Counties.

Mike Foran



NORTHERN REGION INTER SECTION GOLF TOURNAMENT

Following the success of the inaugural Midland Region Inter Section Golf Tournament sponsored by Whitemoss Eco Supplies Ltd in 2007, the Northern Region held its own inaugural event at Rotherham Golf Club. Five of the six Sections in the Northern Region competed for the Whitemoss Trophy on a fine Autumn day on a course superbly prepared by Course Manager David Chappell and his staff. The format was a three man team from each section playing aggregate handicap medal, all three team members to count.

The event was very closely contested with the Sheffield Section claiming victory by one shot from the Northern Section, on a countback over the combined net score on the last six holes. The victory was assisted by the course knowledge of local greenkeeper Andy Unwin (5) playing with Darren Coup (Scr) and Matt Keigher (17) with a combined net score of 212. The Northern Section was 2nd also on 212; the North West Section was 3rd on 220; 4th North Wales on 222 and 5th North East on 230. Our thanks are extended to Rotherham Golf Club where everyone was made to feel very welcome by the Captain, Chairman of Green the staff and other members at the Golf Club.

Congratulations to all players who made the effort to attend the day. Particular thanks are extended to Andy Law of Whitemoss Eco Supplies Ltd for the much appreciated sponsorship.

The picture shows Andy Law of Whitemoss Eco Supplies Ltd on the right with the victorious Sheffield Section Team.



LISTEN UP MEMBERS!

The BIGGA Annual General Meeting will be taking place during Harrogate Week, Europe's largest indoor turf event that combines both elements of turf and clubhouse management, in the Queen's Suite on Wednesday, January 21 at 5.15pm.

The importance of your attendance cannot be voiced enough. As you will have read in the November issue of GI, BIGGA is to propose the inclusion of groundsman within its membership. As a full BIGGA member your vote at the AGM can make or break this proposal.

RIGBY TAYLOR CLASSIC

A golf invitational event, 'The Rigby Taylor Classic' was held at the Trentham Golf Club at the end of August. The winner with 42 points was Sandy Casofsky, Greens Chairman at Whitefield GC, nr. Manchester. Phil Dewhurst and his North West sales team organised the event and would like to thank everyone for attending. Next year's event will be held at Childwall Golf Club, nr. Liverpool.

The winner holding the prestigious RT Classic trophy.



UP ON THE ROOF

Golfers teed off the North West's – possibly the country's – first incredible grass-roofed restaurant recently.

Nineteen Duxbury Park in Chorley Lancashire, has been carefully designed to compliment an adjoining group of listed nineteenth century buildings while featuring the latest eco-friendly construction solutions.

The sedum, or living, roof will actually grow on top of the restaurant giving the building favourable thermal properties while being aesthetically pleasing. The new restaurant also includes European Larch cladding, which is completely renewable making it kinder to the environment.

www.nineteenduxburypark.co.uk



CHARTERHOUSE APPOINTMENT

Charterhouse Turf Machinery has further strengthened its commitment to synthetic turf maintenance with the appointment of leading specialist, David Rhodes, as its advisor on maintenance equipment.

Synthetic surfaces are often thought of as 'maintenance free' but as the enthusiastic response from Charterhouse's customers has already shown, using the right machinery to care for the carpet and its infill can prolong the life of the facility and offer the highest standards of play.

As a progressive, customer focused company, Charterhouse is keen to continue to develop new technologies to enable sports ground managers to get the best from the latest synthetic surfaces, and the input of David Rhodes will assist to this end.

L to R: Nick Darking, David Rhodes and Herman De Bree.



BMW PGA CHAMPIONSHIP THE WENTWORTH CLUB, MAY 28-31

BIGGA are to provide a Greenkeeping Support Team for the BMW PGA Championship at The Wentworth Club, May 28-31.

As a team member you will be involved in walking with a match and raking any bunkers found by the players, as well as aiding Chris Kennedy and his staff, should adverse weather occur.

You will be responsible for your own transport arrangements to the course, while there is no overnight accommodation provided.

Being a member of this team will not be detrimental to your chances of making The Open Championship team.

Applications should be sent to:

Clive Osgood, South East Regional Administrator, 34 Howard Close, Walton-on-the-Hill, Tadworth, Surrey, KT20 7QF.

SUPPORT FOR LOCAL ATHLETES AND ASPIRING OLYMPIANS

Ransomes Jacobsen recently became the latest Suffolk business positively to encourage Suffolk's sporting stars of the future, by becoming the most recent Gold supporter of the Suffolk SportsAid Foundation.

The sole purpose of the Suffolk SportsAid Foundation, which was launched just 10 months ago, is to raise resources to support Suffolk's up and coming sportsmen and women with the costs associated with competing and training at the highest level. Conservative estimates suggest that it costs around £5,000 a year for an up and coming athlete to compete at national level.

The Foundation has quickly become established as an important source of funding and has already managed to support 25 of Suffolk's brightest prospects. The latest athlete to receive support is 14 year old golfer, Heidi Baek, who plays off a handicap of 1. Heidi is the current National under 15 Girls' champion and was in the England Girls' under 18 team that recently beat Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland in the home internationals, played at Panmure near Carnoustie in Scotland.

Adam Baker (left) of Suffolk Sports Aid presents David Withers with a Gold Supporters Certificate.



IRRIGATION AT ST MELLION

Early Autumn 2008 Irritech Limited hosted a working demonstration of irrigation system installation at St Mellion Golf and Country Club, Saltash, Cornwall. Over 20 representatives from various Golf Clubs across the West Country joined Roger Davey, of Irritech, and Mike Bush, Course Manager of St Mellion, to view the design and observe installation and product demonstrations including control system operation.

UPMINSTER GC DOES 'BLOOMING' WELL

Upminster Golf Clubs greenkeepers, led by Dougie Fernie have triumphed in the London Borough of Havering's 'In Bloom' competition this year by winning the category of Best Commercial Area.

The club were encouraged to enter by Dennis Smith, who recently retired from Rigby Taylor, who, when playing at a BIGGA Golf Day, saw what he considered an outstanding feature constructed on what had become an 'eyesore' from tipping loose bulk materials behind the 17th which is well in view of the general public as they pass by some 30 yards away along Upminster Lane, an area of high cost housing. It met lots of the criteria needed to enter such as, being a good neighbour coupled with sustainability using reclaimed railway sleepers, soil gained from other jobs on the course, stone mulch, and with the benefit of the passing public being able to enjoy.

The feature was the result of an original suggestion by Pat Ridgewell with input from various club members and the committee.

Pictured below is Dougie with the Secretary, Russell Winmill, and John Handyman receiving the award from Councillor John Clark, Mayor of Havering, at a glittering ceremony at Havering Town Hall.

As a result of the success in the Havering competition the entry went forward into the London in Bloom competition, where unfortunately it came up against entries from BAA Heathrow, The Inner Temple in The City of London and Columbia Road Flower Market in Tower Hamlets which took first, second and third respectively.

Dennis Smith
Retired Rigby Taylor Rep.

L to R: Secretary, Russell Winmill, Councillor John Clark, Mayor of Havering, John Handyman and Dougie Fernie, Head Greenkeeper Upminster Golf Club.

Photography. Arnold Phipps-Jones



APOLOGY

In our September issue of GI, we wrongly printed in our tree supplement that Adam Speight was Head Greenkeeper at Woodsome Hall Golf Club. This is not the case. To clear the matter up, Adam Speight is actually First Assistant at Otley Golf Club and Jeremy Eastwood is Head Greenkeeper at Woodsome Hall Golf Club.

Our apologies to Jeremy and Adam for this error.

An advertisement for EAGLE golf club collateral. At the top, there is a logo of an eagle with a lightning bolt, followed by the word "EAGLE" in large blue letters. Below that, the text reads "Eagle designs and delivers quality golf club collateral". Contact information is provided: "+44 (0)1883 344244", "info@eagle.uk.com", and "www.eagle.uk.com". The main image shows a tall, wooden signpost for the 7th hole at Lutten Golf Course. The sign displays the hole number "7", "PAR 4", and four distance markers: 455m (white square), 439m (yellow square), 387m (blue square), and 354m (red square). The sign also features the "Lutten GOLF COURSE" logo at the top and bottom.

SAD NEWS

Kevin Hawthorn BSc (at just 47 years old), Director of 2iC Consultants Ltd and son of Bill and Eileen Hawthorn, sadly died of Cancer in Hereford Hospital at the end of October.

Even as a child he was interested in Golf Course Irrigation - he took his first telephone enquiry when just 10 years old! - and after gaining an honours degree at Southampton University in 1981 he joined Watermation, the company founded by Bill, where he rose to become the Export Sales Director.

He had a great talent for languages being fluent in French and Portuguese and competent in Spanish, Italian and Malay. At the European Greenkeepers Convention in Bled, Slovenia he surprised everyone by giving the thank you speech to the Host Country in Slovenian. He always had a worldwide perspective and specialised in challenging convention being a good public speaker and writer of many technical articles. He could best be described as an original thinker.

After Bill sold Watermation in 1995, Kevin established his own company in Malaysia then later moved to Portugal. In 2003 he returned to the UK and joined 2iC to continue to offer his many talents to the Golf Irrigation industry. His recent jobs included the survey and design works for the new and upgraded irrigation systems at Rosslare Golf Club and Laytown & Bettystown Golf Club, the new course at Vidago in Portugal and Rogerstone GC Newport, as well as in France LeTouquet and Haredlot Courses.

He was friendly, helpful and fun to be with and will be sadly missed by his wife Alison, children Simon, Rebecca and Jamie and his Mum & Dad and two sisters and many in the Golf Maintenance Industry throughout the world.

His funeral took place at St Paul's Church Tupsley, Hereford attended by many members of the Golf Irrigation Industry as well as friends and relatives.



MIDLAND REGION INTER SECTION GOLF TOURNAMENT

The second Midland Region Inter Section Golf Tournament, sponsored by Whitemoss Eco Supplies Ltd, was held this year at Northants County Golf Club. All five Sections in the Midland Region competed for the Whitemoss Trophy, and were blessed with a still and dry autumn day on a challenging course superbly prepared by Course Manager, David Low and his staff.

The format was once again a three man team from each Section playing aggregate handicap medal, all three team members to count. The event was closely fought with the East Midland Section, represented by Nick Miles, Andy de Wet and Asa English running out winners of the trophy with a net 218, 2. Mid Anglia on 222, 3. Midland on 226, 4. BB&O on 227 and 5. East of England on 228.

The Region's thanks are extended to Northants County Golf Club where everyone was made to feel very welcome by staff and members, and to Andy Law and Mike Whitehouse of Whitemoss Eco Supplies Ltd for the continued sponsorship.

L to R: Asa English; Nick Miles, Andy de Wet and Mike Whitehouse



ENGLISH GOLF UNION BACKS UNSUNG HEROES

The English Golf Union has got behind Terrain Aeration's Unsung Hero Awards by stepping in to sponsor the Greenkeeping category.

Club Services Manager Paul Keeling commented on the EGU's support, "our members appreciate the dedication and effort needed to maintain a golf course and any awards that set out to recognise this have our full support."

The Unsung Hero Awards, now in their sixth year, and backed by long term sponsors Pitchcare in the groundsmanship category, are open to all greenkeepers and groundsmen active in the U.K. and nominated by anyone (excluding immediate family), connected with the industry.

Judged by representatives of BIGGA the IOG and the STRI, the winners, one greenkeeper and one groundsman will be announced during Harrogate Week and presented with framed certificates, holiday vouchers and cash prizes.

Anyone who knows a worthy Unsung Hero should download a nomination form from the Pitchcare website www.pitchcare.com or contact Lynda Green at Terrain Aeration Tel: 01449 673783 Email: terrainaeration@aol.com

L to R: STRI judge Steve Gingell, David Green (Terrain Aeration) and Pitchcare's Laurence Gale open nominations at Saltex.



NEW GROUNDCARE DEALER GETS STRAIGHT DOWN TO BUSINESS

Bristol-based family firm, H Curtis and Sons, has marked its appointment as a Massey Ferguson groundcare dealer by securing its first professional compact tractor sale at one of the area's best-known and longest-established golf clubs.

Supplied to Long Ashton Golf Club, the 46hp MF 1547 tractor specified by Course Manager, James Braithwaite, is equipped with quick-attach front loader, air-conditioned 'Q' cab and DynaQPS transmission, the latter incorporating power shuttle and power shift functions within a 12 x 12 creep speed gearbox.

"We wanted a modern, reliable, light-treading tractor capable of operating comfortably a 1.6m deep-tine aerator on tees, greens and surrounds throughout the year," explained James.

"Although turf aeration is the tractor's primary role, it will be used extensively also for trailer work and front-end loading."

A SEASONAL MESSAGE

In this month's GTC feature, David Golding attempts to cheer us all up with a seasonal message that is steeped in history and looks positively to the future during difficult times, including the future for the organisation he has headed since 1993.

I hesitate to go back into the history of greenkeeper education and training, preferring to concentrate on the future, but I feel it is timely to address a question that always seems to crop up, why do we need BIGGA and the GTC?

A fair question and one I will try to answer in as few words as possible so we can move to the future developments for our sector.

BIGGA is the professional body that represents the best interests of greenkeepers employed on golf courses.

The Association is at the very heart of everything the GTC does and there is a very close working relationship between the two organisations that now operate from the same offices at Aldwark Manor near York.

The GTC is an independent body which represents golf club employers in Britain through the Home Unions EGU/SGU/GUW, who represent all golf clubs with a membership, these in turn pay an agreed levy to the National Union on behalf of the male golfers only. From this annual levy the GTC currently receives 11.5p per male club member. The PGA European Tour has also been a great supporter of the GTC making an annual grant while not seeking a seat on the Board.

Having the employer and employee representative bodies around the same table has allowed the GTC access through all the various Government bodies to "control" greenkeeping qualifications.

It is these Government recognised qualifications that attract support funding for training and while there are still some critics of certain qualifications overall the content of both the vocational and academic awards are appropriate. This is all down to the ongoing participation of the GTC at review meetings.

From the 60's we have seen specific qualifications for greenkeeping and sports turf become recognised by the Government and this role and responsibility must be maintained.

The GTC has developed a training manual, learning materials, Health & Safety Guidance notes which are the envy of not only other sectors within the land-base industries in Britain but also throughout Europe and beyond.

So where is this leading?

The per-capita levy introduced back in 1987 commenced at 2p and twenty years on it has risen to 11.5p and while for many years the R&A match funded the levy collected by the Unions, the GTC

Board is now being told that this level of funding "is not sustainable".

Those older readers who like me battled for the golfers contribution, will well remember the R&A discussion document 'The Way Forward' which was circulated to all golf clubs in 1989, stating in the section on the GTC roles and responsibilities that "It goes without saying that the 2p levy, while a start, is a totally inadequate contribution from the golf clubs in terms of a really meaningful impact being made on greenkeeper education. There must be a continuous effort to raise this levy to a realistic figure with perhaps 50p a first target, increasing to £1".

If only Father Christmas was a golfer!

The GTC Board is facing a funding crisis as the R&A has now stopped its annual support to the core funding of the GTC, preferring to consider special projects and thereby leaving the British Home Unions and BIGGA to consider the future of the GTC.

Just like at many golf clubs the financial climate is biting for the organisations that fund GTC, but hopefully the Boards of both BIGGA and the GTC will find a solution to ensure the position I have battled hard for over many years will be maintained.

So where do we go from here?

I have watched BIGGA as an Association develop from day one and hopefully I have played some small part in the position it is in today. I will continue to support John Pemberton, the BIGGA Board and its Membership in their efforts to develop the Association further.

By stating the roles and responsibilities of the GTC it seems that the next stage is to consolidate the position of both organisations by considering the establishment of a National Centre for Sports Turf.

John and I will be discussing this opportunity further with our Boards during December and January and I trust everybody who once saw BIGGA and BIGGA House as a dream will also now agree we are capable of taking the sector to the next level.

GTC is supported by:



We intend to consult with the sector as we look at all the implications of a National Centre but below I list what is already in place.

- **Skill Sets – National Occupational Standards for: Greenkeeper – Golf Course Supervisor – Golf Course Manager.**

Representation at Lantra Sector Skills Council (SSC) meetings to review the above to ensure employers and learners needs are met with Government body. *Note: Funding support only allocated to industry SSC accredited qualifications.*

- **Awarding Bodies partnership – City & Guilds/NPTC & SQA**

Development of qualifications to suit the sector from the National Occupational Standards, e.g. apprenticeship framework, vocational and academic qualifications.

- **Approved Centres and Training Providers**

Maintain a network of approved Centres and private training providers who meet approved criteria.

The criteria are based on quality standards and an Industry – Centre/Provider partnership.

There is much more work ongoing to support the above statements and it is our intention to keep you informed via the GTC website www.the-gtc.co.uk

Q Hotels, owners of Aldwark Manor, are seeking further discussions on the prospect of the Manor developing as a National Centre for Sports Turf and anyone that has visited BIGGA-GTC headquarters will appreciate the facilities both on the golf course and in the hotel do lend themselves for a great partnership.

Complimenting the local BIGGA section and regional events, Aldwark Manor could host courses from design, all aspects of maintenance and management skills.

In summary I believe there are exciting times ahead IF there is widespread support for this development and the GTC continues to receive funding to continue its role on behalf of all golf clubs and greenkeepers.

On behalf of Fiona and I, the GTC Chairman and the Board wish you and your families a very peaceful festive season.

**Please contact us with your views,
David F Golding, GTC Education Director:
david@the-gtc.co.uk
Tel: 01347 838640.**



Industry Update

ASTON VILLA STAYS SHARP

Jonathan Calderwood, Grounds Manager of Aston Villa Football Club, needed a fast solution to keeping the pitch edges sharp when the new stadium surface was built two years ago.

"After the new pitch was laid the edges became flush with the rubber track surround," said Jonathan, a former IOG Groundsman of the Year, who was at the old Wembley Stadium and Wolverhampton Wanderers before joining Aston Villa five years ago.

"Using traditional edging tools up to the concrete divide would take us an hour. Then we discovered the Atom Professional Edger from DJ Turfcare - and the job now takes just five minutes."

He was so impressed that he has bought two more for the Aston Villa training ground at Bodmooor Heath.

The new training ground has three full size pitches, three goal kicking areas and a warm-up pitch. Alongside this are five full-size pitches in the old training ground, which is to become the Football Academy.

Aston Villa's Paul Mytton, Deputy Head Groundsman, with the Atom Professional Edger at the training ground.



NEW UK DISTRIBUTOR

Rochford Garden Machinery, founded in 1982 - and operating from one of the largest purpose-built showrooms in the country - has agreed to be the UK distributor to the specialist trade for DJ Turfcare's unique range of turf and grounds management products.

Managing Director Peter Rochford, and DJ Turfcare Managing Director, David Jenkins, said the relationship will be an exciting development for marketing the range of "niche market" products.

DJ Turfcare Managing Director, David Jenkins (right)



LELY LEADS THE WAY

With the turf maintenance machinery industry under increasing pressure to implement a nationally recognised operator's qualification, Lely UK is leading the way by introducing an in-company training initiative.

Pre-empting the possible future introduction of a forklift truck-style operator's licence, Lely UK personnel now need a City & Guilds NPTC Level 2 Certificate of Competence in the Safe Use of Mowers in order to operate Toro mowers.

Lely's Toro Training Manager, Ian Sumpter, is a qualified assessor in the certificate and is leading the initiative alongside senior product specialist for the UK, Clive Pinnock. After a full day's training with Clive, operators complete a two-hour assessment with Ian.

"We felt that, as a company, we could lead the way by going over and above the minimum requirements for mower operatives," Ian explains. "At the moment, our workshop staff operate mowers every now and then, loading or demonstrating machines. Though they've had informal training, we want to maximise health and safety with the introduction of this formal training."

Having completed the first phase of training, 37 members of staff are now qualified. Ian hopes to have a total of 60 mower operatives trained by the end of 2008. Those without the certificate will no longer be able to operate Toro mowers.

IRRIGATION SYSTEM SAVES THE DAY

Ireland's Ballyliffin Golf Club said that its new Toro Irrigation Golf Decoder Controller (GDC) system "saved the day" when a prolonged dry spell almost prevented the 2008 Irish Seniors Open from taking place.

Having been installed 15 years ago, the County Donegal club's existing system had reached the end of its useful life - in particular, crumbling pipework left the course inadequately irrigated and led to water wastage. And so General Manager, John Farren, selected Toro's state-of-the-art GDC system as a solution.

The system soon proved its worth when an unseasonable spring drought set in after installation. "We went seven weeks without rain in May," said John, "and without the new irrigation system we wouldn't have been prepared for the Irish Seniors Open in June. It saved the day and enabled us to prepare and manicure the course to the high standards required."