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Head Greenkeeper

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INTERNATIONAL

February 2008

Regulars

4-8

News

9

GTC

10-11

Industry Update

12

Membership

13

Learning & Development

Sami Collins updates us on Learning and Development matters

14-15

Learning & Development Training

Managing Turf Disease Through Effective ITM
By Simon Elsworth



29

Hobbies

32

What's Your Number

33

In the Shed

Greenkeeper International's puzzle page

48-51

Harrogate New Products

59

Letters

52

News from the Chief Executive

58-65

Around the Green

70

As I See It...

National Chairman Kenny Mackay's monthly column



Features

17-19

Rotary Mowers: Evolution Improves the Breed

By James de Havilland

20-22

Meet the Chairman

Kenny MacKay is an ambitious, driven man and as Scott MacCallum found out he will be giving his year as Chairman his full attention

24-25

Irrigation: A Technological Leap

27-28

Student Life: Career Progression

Starting a student-based series of articles, Melissa Toombs gives a flavour of the courses currently available to Sports Turf students

30-31

Wind Turbines are Vital for the Future of our Planet

By Ian Watson and Robert Hall

34-37

Course Feature: Creeping South

Scott MacCallum meets up with Robert Hogarth who travelled from Scotland to meet the challenge of managing creeping bent greens at one of the finest new courses in the UK

38-47

Harrogate Week 2008: All of Harrogate's a Stage, And all the men and women mere players...

Scott MacCallum butchers Shakespeare just to get a heading for his Harrogate Week review



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

Welcome



Lucky Number 13

On Sunday, January 20, I drove into the car park of the Majestic Hotel, Harrogate, around 6 o'clock in the evening for the 13th year in succession. I witnessed the ribbon cutting which heralds the opening of the Show for the 13th time in a row and attended the BIGGA AGM, again for the 13th time. I let my hair down at the banquet again for the 13th time.

Now I'm not superstitious, but if I were I'd certainly rid my mind of any thought that 13 is an unlucky number.

Harrogate Week 2008 was what we hoped it would be. A celebration of all things fine turf, with sparkling new machinery on show; the latest developments in agronomic advances showcased and valuable educational opportunities being offered, and more importantly taken up, by turf professionals from all over the world.

The weather may have been a little unkind, particularly at the beginning of the week when everyone was setting up, and the GCSAA Show followed immediately on from our week for the first time in a number of years, but the Harrogate Week attendance figures reflected the fact that people genuinely feel they must be there. To not have been would leave them open to missing out on something. The final attendance figure for the three days was 8,641, almost 2,000 up on 2007 and 900 up on 2006.

At a time when the world economy is uncertain, and golf couldn't claim to be booming, it is a credit to the positive nature of greenkeepers, and their desire to keep on top of the job in any way they see fit, that they supported their show in such numbers.

We know that it's expensive to attend – hotel prices only head in one direction and I broke a personal record this year by paying over £10 for one drink! – but there is no avoiding that unfortunately. Harrogate is not out of step with other such venues while wherever there is a conference centre there are hotels which set their prices accordingly.

However, I do know that the price BIGGA charges for its education, whether it be workshops or seminars, is extremely inexpensive (I'd never use the word cheap) when compared with that on offer in other industries. And not just a little bit less expensive, considerably less so. BIGGA runs its education at a heavily subsidised level thanks to the continuing support of the BIGGA Golden and Silver Key programme, supported by the industry, and you'll not find the quality and broad range of BIGGA education matched anywhere.

For that reason I hope that golf clubs continue to find a way to send their staff, even if it is a day trip, so that they can take part, learn and develop.

Now, I'm going to make sure that the number 13 features large in whatever I'm going to be doing – lottery, roulette, bingo, the gee ges... But, as I said, I'm not superstitious!

RAISING THE PROFILE OF GOLF COURSE MANAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

The R&A has promoted Steve Isaac to the position of Director - Golf Course Management to reflect the importance placed by The R&A on environmental issues and sustainable course development and maintenance. The promotion also highlights the increasing reach and scale of The R&A Golf Course Committee's work.

Steve has been instrumental in delivering The R&A's golf course management policy, which reflects the organisation's belief that golf courses throughout the world should present themselves in the best possible condition and work to the highest ecological and environmental standards.

Since his appointment in 2003, his work has centred around developing management strategy guidance for sustainable golf courses, with particular focus on the use of water, fertilisers and chemicals, climate change, appropriate turfgrass selection and the planning of new courses.



Steve Isaac, 46, gained a BSc (Hons) in applied biology from Liverpool Polytechnic in 1983. Before joining The R&A, he worked as an agronomist for 17 years at the Sports Turf Research Institute (STRI).

SCOTTISH REGION CONFERENCE

The 2008 BIGGA Scottish Region Conference will take place at the Business Learning Centre, Carnegie College, (formerly Lauder College), Dunfermline on Tuesday 4 March, 2008.

This year's speakers include Gerry Byrne, Resort Superintendent, The K Club, Ireland, Jonathan Smith, Chief Executive, Golf Environment Europe and Archie Stewart, Landmaps Ltd. Other speakers include, from America Ron Alexander, Ron Alexander Associates, Allan Patterson, Head Greenkeeper, The Castle Course, St. Andrews Links Trust and, finally, Gordon Holms, CSC Amenity.

Tickets cost £34, which includes Tea/Coffee on arrival, coffee/pastry at the mid morning break and buffet lunch.

Full details and booking forms will be posted to all members in Scotland and further forms can be obtained by contacting Peter J.Boyd, Regional Administrator on Tel 0141 616 3440 or pj.boyd@btinternet.com

OBITUARY

Glenn Bray - 1944 to 2008

Glenn Bray, Chairman and Customer Services Director for Lloyds & Company Letchworth Ltd, died suddenly on Sunday 20th January 2008 from a heart attack while at home.

Glenn had worked for Lloyds for over 45 years. He started work with the company aged just 16. His first job in the company was that of office junior in the sales department which was followed by various roles within the company including warehouse manager before moving to the board and taking up the role of customer services director, a role he held for some 20 years until his untimely death.

In his youth outside of work Glenn was a keen amateur footballer from which he later went into refereeing, but his first passion was music. Having collected records since a teenager Glenn's heroes included Roy Orbison and Willie Nelson. His other passion was his dogs with which he enjoyed walking and holidaying in the West Country. Clive Nottingham, Managing Director of Lloyds, said "Glenn had worked at Lloyds for so many years that he was known by many not just as a colleague but as a friend as well, he will be sadly missed."

Clive Nottingham

NEW HEAD PRO

Simon Fowler has joined Merrist Wood Golf Club near Guildford as the new Head Golf Professional. The 36-year-old from Fleet, in Hampshire, spent eight years as Assistant Director of Golf at Merrist Wood's sister club, Pine Ridge Golf Club in Camberley, before joining the team. Having first taken up golf at the age of 10, Simon turned pro at 20 and his impressive CV includes four years at Pachesham Park Golf Course and four years at Camberley Heath Golf Club.

He said: "My move to Merrist Wood is an opportunity to continue to develop golfing talent, and as I get to know the members at the club I will be encouraging everyone to tell me all about their golfing goals.

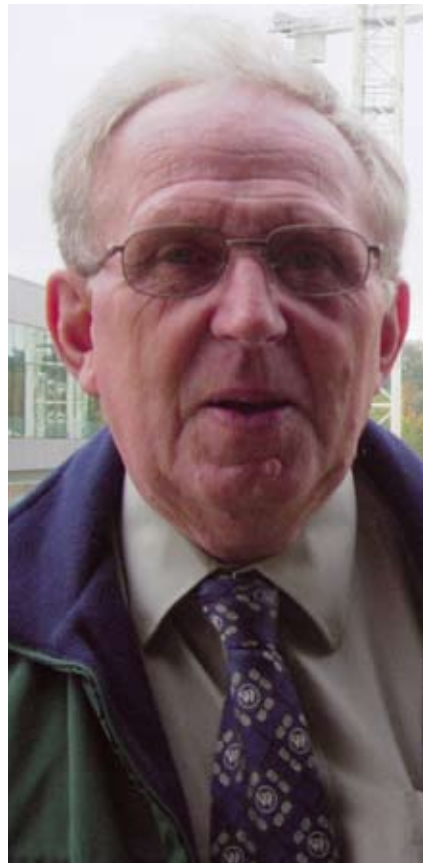
"Merrist Wood is a thriving club and I'm thrilled to be playing an active part in both the sporting and the social opportunities it provides."

WIMBLEDON'S EDDIE SEAWARD AWARDED MBE

Eddie Seaward, Head Groundsman at the All England Lawn Tennis & Croquet Club, Wimbledon, has been awarded an MBE for services to sport in the New Year Honours List.

After 48 years as a ground professional – the last 17 years as Head Groundsman at Wimbledon – Eddie oversees the preparation and maintenance of 41 grass and nine hard courts at the world renowned stadium, and in recent years has played a key role in the much-publicised multi-million pound redevelopment of its Centre Court.

"I am of course deeply honoured to be receiving an MBE – it's a very proud occasion for me and my family. But the award also effectively acknowledges the professionalism of the team that I have around me at Wimbledon and, in many ways, it is also public recognition of the role of groundsmanship in the widest sense," said Eddie.



BIGGA SCOTTISH REGION PATRON'S AWARD

Once again we hosted our Annual Patrons Award and Lunch at the Terraces Hotel, Stirling on Thursday 6 December, 2007.

Our Vice Chairman John Geddes was the Master of Ceremonies and ensured that everything ran smoothly. He introduced our speaker Leslie G. Peters, a regular on the after dinner/lunch circuit who was a most entertaining and lively speaker.



With the support of the Patrons of the Scottish Region, we are able to send 10 members of the Association to Harrogate for three days to enjoy the Show and to attend the Seminars that are on offer during the week. They also receive a book as part of their award.

The following members were the Patron Award winners; John Wilson, Irvine GC, George Morrison, Largs GC, George Pendrich, Student (Formerly Gleneagles Hotel), Alan Sharp, Scotsraig GC, Shaun Cunningham, Mortonhall GC, Gary White, Baberton GC, Niall Bruce, Montrose GC, William Craig, Kirriemuir GC, Michael Maxton, East Kilbride GC and finally Barry McCulloch, Whitecraigs GC.

The lunch also gives us a chance to thank our Patrons for their generous support of the Association in Scotland, not only for the Patrons Award trip, but for the many other events they support in Scotland. Their sponsorship is greatly appreciated.

Next year's lunch will be on Thursday, 4 December, 2008.

*Peter J. Boyd
Regional Administrator*

ARE YOU IN CONTROL OF STAFF TRAINING AND ASSESSMENT?

Vocational qualifications for employers and greenkeepers are now recognised internationally since the GTC introduced the programmes 13 years ago.

David Golding, the GTC's Education Director, is now advising Course Managers and Head Greenkeepers that their role as work based trainers and assessors is a 12-month position and not just seasonal.

David explains: "A system supposedly driven by industry for industry has not been without its difficulties and critics, however there is no doubt that the opportunities for employers to develop staff and for greenkeepers to take up formal qualifications for the job they carry out day by day has never been better."

National Standards developed by the industry are at three levels; craft, supervisory and management are now better known as National/Scottish Vocational Qualifications at Levels 2, 3 and 4 respectively.

David continues: "As these qualifications have national accreditation they are offered through Centres, often Further Education colleges in the land-based sector, and attract funding support through various schemes including a Sports Turf route apprenticeship framework.

"So if "we" as a specialist sector have a major input to the National Standards and we have approved centres offering qualifications, how can we improve a system that still seems to leave work-based training open to criticism?

"A major part of my job is to work with the awarding bodies like the Scottish Qualifications Authority and City & Guilds/NPTC and then the centres who offer N/SVQ's in Sports Turf."

The GTC continues to promote assessor training to Course Managers/Head Greenkeepers and in some cases Deputies as it is without doubt they who are best placed and qualified to train, motivate AND assess the trainees registered on a work-based qualification. The introduction of vocational qualifications to the sector was a massive change in policy from the pass/fail examinations, but it is important to ensure the system works in accordance with both the National Standards for Sports Turf AND Assessing.

The culture of on-the-job training is not new to greenkeeping, but the training and assessment planning between the centre, the learner and the assessor at the golf course still needs to be explained and agreed at induction. The training aspects are best delivered at the golf course, the knowledge can be through part-time release to a centre or again can be gained on-the-job by using the nationally agreed learning materials or even on-line, leaving just the assessment. If a person achieved the old D32/33 assessor award they don't have to gain the new A1 qualification. All the chosen centre would need to do through the Internal Verifier is to ensure the person is up-to-date with the assessor standards and centre documentation.

David adds: "I'm assured by centres that while they have their own assessors they rely heavily on Course Managers and Head Greenkeepers to actively be part of the assessment process, however, please play your part to improve the system and if you are not yet an assessor and you have staff registered on a N/SVQ, we can train you."

Golf club employers who have a qualified assessor on site have the added advantage of not needing to release trainee greenkeepers for days of assessment away from work.

"Course Managers and Head Greenkeepers train and assess every day of their working lives and staff development benefits everybody so let us continue to develop on-the-job assessment by making sure it's a naturally occurring activity all the year round." David concludes.

46 YEARS SERVICE

Walter Cole, Head Greenkeeper at Longcliffe Golf Club, near Loughborough, has recently retired after a remarkable 46 years with the club.



Walter Cole (far right)

Walter enjoyed his time at the club and witnessed the greenkeeper's job become ever more demanding bringing with it new challenges. The course has changed its characteristics over the time I've been here and lost its heathland," said Walter at the East Midland Section event held at the course to mark his retirement.

"I arrived at Longcliffe in September 1961 and it was a beautiful heathland course then with only a few patches of thorn here and there while the only trees were the silver birches near to the 6th green and in the woods.

"I know that beauty is in the eye of the beholder but I really did prefer the open, sunlit, dry course with its fine wiry grasses and lovely swathes of heather to the dark, damp (even on sunny days) and shaded course which we have now.

"However it is still a lovely course and I shall miss it," said Walter.

Among the staff he brought through and sent on their way to Course Manager jobs are three well known BIGGA characters, East Midland Chairman and Charnwood Forest Course Manager; Gavin Robson, National Board of Management Member and Burton GC Course Manager, and Past BIGGA Chairman, Richie Barker.

"They used to play some terrible practical jokes on me," laughed Walter, of whom Gavin revealed had never used a strimmer in his life.

"That's right. By the time they'd come in I was a Head Man and it wasn't my job. I do recall Gavin moaning about always having to do the fly mowing and I hear the same moans from his guys now!" he joked.



GCSAI PRESIDENT'S CUP

The sun shone brightly on the Southeast region as they lifted the inaugural GCSAI President's Cup sponsored by Scotts.

The event held at the PGA National Golf Course in Palmerstown Co Kildare was hotly contested with the Southeast beating the Southwest by the narrowest of margins. Colman Warde, Scotts' Sales Manager for Ireland and Nick Martin, UK Sales Manager, were both in attendance to see the action for themselves.

Colman commented: "We were delighted to be associated with this great event and see the competition played so competitively on such a wonderful course. We hope that it will become one of the top social greenkeeping events of the year."



The winning Southeast team

YOUR CHANCE FOR GLORY

JSM Limited, the Toro & Hayter dealer covering the south-east of England, is sponsoring a day five-a-side football tournament to be held on May 28, 2008.

Entry is open to all greenkeeping and grounds care staff working for organisations located in the Company's trading area of Kent, Sussex, Surrey, South London and East Berkshire. The tournament will take the form of 10 minute matches played in four pools, which will generate the four pool winners to move into the semi-finals and then the final where the winners will lift the JSM Cup.

Entries must be in by early April and places will be limited to keep to the four pool format and time frame. The first matches are envisaged to kick-off at around 1pm with the prize giving and barbecue rounding off proceedings at around 5.30pm. More details and entry forms are available from JSM Limited, 0845 026 0061.



Call to discuss your requirements: 01883 344244

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SPRING WORKSHOP

The Devon & Cornwall Section's Spring Workshop will be held at Fingle Glen Golf Club on Wednesday, March 5, 2008.

The aim of the day is to refresh the grey matter on subjects such as sustainability, water and nutrient management, grass breeding and selection.

Guest speakers will include: Andy Cole, STRI; Dr Neil Baldwin, Amega Sciences; Brian Robinson Director of Seed Research and Stephen Denton, Grass Seed Development Manager, both from Rigby Taylor; also Christ of Plant Breeder Top Green Europe.

The cost will be £16 for Section Members and £12 per additional member from same club.

Please invite non-members such as your Chairman, Captain and Secretary etc - the cost of the day for them will be £25.

Please make cheques payable to: BIGGA Devon & Cornwall and return to: Graeme Gallimore, 8 Shilson Terrace, Launceston, PL15 9AP.

Include how many will be attending and from which club. Should you need any further information please do not hesitate to contact me on: 07782247472 or email: graeme.gallimore@btinternet.com

HILTON TEMPLEPATRICK EVENING

Frank Ainsworth, of Hilton Templepatrick Hotel and Country Club, near Belfast hosted one of his greenkeeper evenings recently and it proved a huge success. Among those invited and talking at the evening were Walter Woods, Jack McMillan Ken Seims and Aiden O'Hara. Frank hosts such an event every couple of years and it gives greenkeepers an opportunity to mix with some of the top names in the industry and share experiences.



BASILDON GOLF COURSE LANDFILL PROTEST

Friends of Basildon Golf Course believe the intended importation of inert landfill threatens both the lungs and arteries of Basildon.

As part of the 'improvement' of Basildon Golf Course, Basildon District Council has approved plans drawn up by 'Jack Barker Golf' to import 120,000 cubic metres of 'inert material' (in phase 1 alone); a large tipper lorry can carry 15 cubic metres so this is the equivalent of 8,000 lorry loads. The landfill will be used to create a driving range and to start the process of creating mounds of earth up to 6 metres (20 feet high) between the fairways, and the Friends of Basildon Golf Course estimate that 167 semi-mature trees will be destroyed in the process. We believe that the total amount of landfill to be imported is 312,000 cubic metres (20,800 lorry loads).

On Monday, January 13, Tilbrook's, solicitors acting for 'Friends of Basildon Golf Course', residents living close to Basildon Golf Course in Essex, issued Judicial Review proceedings at the Royal Courts of Justice in the Strand, London.

Classified as green belt land and within a mile of the town centre, the former farmland was professionally designed as a golf course in 1967 and is well-regarded among golfers. The land forms part of the Thames Terrace Ridge stretching from Vange to Langdon Hills which is treasured by conservationists because of its natural beauty and diverse wildlife.



John Toplis, Secretary of Friends of Basildon Golf Course, said that he had researched the activities of the developer, Jack Barker Golf, in other parts of the Country and found that planning permission for 'improvements' at several other golf courses had been refused.

Lead campaigner and Chairman of the Friends of Basildon Golf Course, local resident Mick Toomer, said: 'This is nothing more than a landfill operation thinly disguised as golf course improvements. If it goes ahead the dust will pose a serious health risk to local residents many of whom are elderly and already have respiratory problems. Worst still those who voted to inflict this on such a vulnerable community are Basildon District Council Councillors, the very people who should be working to protect them.'

Detailed background information can be found at www.basildongolfcourseelp.com



ATTRACTING THE GOLFER

David Golding, GTC's Education Director encourages all Course Managers and Head Greenkeepers to "prepare their cases" for the new golfing season....

While we at the GTC work with our representative bodies to encourage golf club employers to appoint competent qualified staff to manage the golf course, we must also ensure training courses are available to provide the skills so vital in today's business world of attracting golfers to your course.

Short courses should be oversubscribed around the country when the training providers organise courses to cover all the important aspects of managing the golf course, but sadly I still hear that courses are being cancelled due to lack of support.

I find this a very worrying sign, especially as the majority of golf clubs are finding it increasingly difficult to recruit and/or retain members and to attract the important additional income from the visiting golfer.

I am sorry for repeating the fact that the GTC will continue to promote supervisory and management training but this has been a priority for the sector for many years and while the maintenance skills are almost a daily part of the routine of a Course Managers work, we must support the specialist training for them to prepare the case to the owner/committee, Chairmen/women for the resources required to maintain the course to the highest standard possible.

In my experience very few Committee Chairs actually purchase equipment and materials without direction from the Course Manager/Head Greenkeeper. It is usually the other way round and this is where a competent Course Manager is such an asset to the business - research products, machinery etc and make the case for all major purchases adding value to the golf course both in the short and long term.

The financing of such equipment will be a crucial factor and this is where the trade can assist with the presentation of the case for...

I know for many this is basic presentation skills however I do still hear and read where greenkeepers are so frustrated that their club won't provide new working facilities or equipment even when there are major health and safety issues both for the employers and employees.

There has to be a partnership approach between the club and the Course Manager and this is where the Home Unions through seminars and workshops will continue to promote best practice in maintaining and managing golf courses.

We know there are some excellent examples of the partnership approach and often these double-acts will be spot lighted to show just how progress can be made without the whole membership having to be involved in the decision of whether to engage an apprentice or to purchase a new piece of equipment.

Obviously major purchases or course alterations will require discussions

at the highest levels, but should all fall within the Course Policy Document.

The key to this is as a Course Manager is do you have the skills to manage?

The GTC has its Provider network of colleges and independent providers (Frank Newberry, Brin Bendon et al) and with BIGGA still support funding specialist courses to cover all the supervisory and management skills, be prepared to put your case forward.

From my own experience as a Course Manager it often appears "we" want the equipment for use on our own back garden and not to improve the golf course for the benefit of the golfer.

I think the trick is to prepare the case in a manner that the owner/committee views, as "we cannot afford not to agree to the Course Managers recommendations!"

This is where a good Chairman/Convenor or Secretary Manager can also be the key partner in the presentation "party".

I also appreciate that preparing cases very often involves early planning for the budget rounds within a club or business, but again with training this can become another vital skill in the armoury of the modern Course Managers arsenal.

The GTC, as previously mentioned, is also about ensuring education and training advice is available to both employers and greenkeepers and to work with those providers who understand the requirements of our specialist sector.



For more information on the work of the GTC please visit the GTC website: www.the-gtc.co.uk or direct on Tel: 01347 838640 or email golf@the-gtc.co.uk

GTC is supported by:





Industry Update

NEW HAND-ARM VIBRATION REPORT

Echo have released a new issue of their hand-arm vibration report, based on comprehensive tests of the full range of Echo power tools. The report shows the vibration levels measured on each tool with a low frequency weighting filter applied (as specified in the British Standards) which quantifies the relative importance of different frequencies and corresponds to the way vibration is imparted into the hands and causes damage.

The tests were conducted by the Industrial Noise and Vibration Centre Ltd under laboratory conditions, and were made in three orthogonal directions using an accelerometer attached directly to the handle of the products, as close as possible to the operator's hand.

The measured vibration for each tool in all three directions is presented in the report. The frequency weighted RMS vibration $a_{h,w}$ is representative of continuous ("finger on trigger") tool operation.

The daily usage limit presented in the report for single tool operation is based on not exceeding a vector sum action level of $2.5m/s^2 - 5m/s^2$ in an eight hour day, with no other exposure to high vibration.



Results of the tests have highlighted a number of Echo products which have particularly low vibration levels. These include the new HCR-161ES Hedgecutter with a vibration figure of just $2.6m/s^2$ and the new SRM-265ESU brushcutter with a vibration figure of just $1.9m/s^2$.

The Echo Hand-Arm Vibration Report is available on request, call 0870 4055574 or email sales@echo-tools.com for a copy.

GOING TO WORK AT OPEN CHAMPIONSHIP VENUE

A Tycrop MH-400 materials handler/top dresser has been added to the machinery fleet at Royal Birkdale Golf Club with the aim of bringing long-term benefits to the Lancashire links course. Its first major task is to assist course manager, Chris Whittle, in his preparations for the 2008 British Open Championship, taking place at Royal Birkdale from 17 to 20 July.

Supplied by Turfmech Machinery through local sales and service dealer, Turner Groundscare, the MH-400 was selected by Chris for its ability to apply top dressings quickly and evenly across large areas with minimal surface marking.

"We are aiming to further increase the firmness of all fairways ahead of the Open Championship and needed a suitable machine able to apply effectively the selected medium sand top dressings," explained Chris. "I knew that Paul Smith, head greenkeeper at Royal Lytham and St Annes Golf Club, had been using an MH-400 for a number of years so I phoned and asked for his opinion. He told me that the machine was not only an excellent top dresser, but its other capabilities had totally revolutionised the way that materials are moved and handled on the golf course."

Following Paul's recommendation, Chris Whittle arranged with Turfmech a demonstration of the MH-400. Carried out in October, it took less than 30 minutes to convince Chris that the machine was right for the job.

"First and foremost, it did the principal task that we wanted it for really well," he commented. "Spread pattern is very even and both the application rate and bout width can be altered easily. I also like the machine's walking-beam suspension which keeps all four wheels firmly on the ground across undulations and the fact that it can be used as a bulk re-loader of greens top dressers out on the course. Materials are offloaded quickly and cleanly from the MH-400 using a combination of moving belt floor and hydraulically-raised rear end."

Delivered to Royal Birkdale in early November, the MH-400 was in top-dressing action the same day, completing all 18 fairways in a little over two days. "The speed and accuracy of the machine have to be seen to be believed," said Chris. "All the signs show that the dressings are having the required effect and further applications are now planned in the spring ahead of the Open Championship. From my standpoint, the machine does everything that is claimed for it and you cannot ask for more than that."

EUROPEAN LAUNCH

John Deere has announced the expansion of John Deere Golf Irrigation into Europe for the first time. The company has been providing water management products and solutions in the USA since 2006.

From early 2008, a comprehensive line of state-of-the art John Deere golf irrigation heads, rotors, valves, internal replacement assemblies and accessories will be available through selected John Deere dealers across the EAME region (Europe, Africa and the Middle East). The new range will be featured on the John Deere stand at Harrogate Week.

"We are very pleased to offer this new product line to our golf and turf customers," says David Thorne, John Deere's EAME sales & marketing director. "Up to now, customers in this region of the world have been offered a limited range of competitive irrigation products and solutions."

"Coupled with John Deere's industry leading equipment and dealer parts and service support, this announcement gives us the ability to provide truly unique and comprehensive solutions for golf and turf industry professionals. As the official golf course equipment supplier to the PGA Tour and the Ladies European Tour, John Deere can be trusted to provide greenkeepers with the tournament level quality needed on today's golf courses."