

playing junior football (the equivalent of lower non-league in England) and being a 2 handicapper at Torrance House Golf Course.

My ambition really was to be a golf pro and with 2 being a decent handicap at the time I could probably have done it. I did speak with John Dunlop, the pro at Torrance House, but there was no real money in it and I just couldn't have afforded to be a pro," said Kenny, whose love of Glasgow Rangers is well known among the greenkeeping fraternity.

With that, he initially became an apprentice welder at Browns, of Cambuslang, but that wasn't to be a long term career as he didn't enjoyed it and left after six months. He then did a variety of jobs and travelled around Europe until he reached his mid 20s when he decided he needed to buckle down.

While doing work for some friends in Bournemouth he found himself working at Queens Park Golf Club, working in the bar and helping out the Head Greenkeeper, Bob Walker, also playing for the scratch golf team.

Greenkeeping appealed to him and, having decided that he'd enjoyed life for long enough and that a career was required, he looked into Elmwood College and signed up for a full time National Certificate.

The six week work placement which accompanied the course was carried out at St Andrews under Eddie Adams and when he finished his course he was fortunate enough to get a job working on the construction and grow-in of The London Club courses – incidentally with his new Vice Chairman and current London Club Courses Manager, Peter Todd.

"I went from Assistant to First Assistant within the space of six months at The London Club and worked there for about four years, during which time I studied for a HNC and HND at Elmwood via distance learning, before I got a great break when I went to Hanbury Manor as Assistant Course Manager. I spent 14 months working under Sylvain Duval before he left and I became Course Manager."

Quite a steep learning curve and all more so when you consider that not long after he took over the English Open came to Hanbury and Kenny had the added responsibility of preparing for a European Tour event.

"Things were certainly happening very quickly – boom, boom, boom, boom – but I really enjoyed the buzz of Tour events."

He did three English Opens at Hanbury and when the tournament moved to the midlands and Forest of Arden, under Marriott, the hotel group which had recently bought Hanbury Manor, Kenny was asked to move to the Forest - in effect, moving with the tournament.

"Once I'd established myself at Forest of Arden I became Group Golf Courses Manager where I oversaw course management at all Marriott courses and assisted the Course Managers in raising standards."

Using a system of agronomic bench marking covering areas grass species, thatch levels etc, developed with agronomist Robert Laycock, Kenny was able to identify areas where improvement at certain courses was not at the expect levels and often the reasons for it and put actions in place to address the issue.

"For example, sometimes you'd see that a thatch level had increased since the previous test and establish that, for instance, the Course Manager had been put under pressure by a Director of Golf or Hotel Manager and aeration had suffered. By presenting the figures we had I could go in and demonstrate that a more intensive aeration programme was needed."

Kenny remained at Forest of Arden and Marriott for another three to four years before he was approached by the new owners of The Belfry,



the Quinn Group, about taking over at the four time Ryder Cup, and multiple Tour event, venue.

It's a huge job. With three 18 hole courses and a desire of both the owners and Kenny himself to take them to a new level of condition presentation and condition there is not a moment to rest. With the Quinn Direct British Masters in September, and live on BBC, those Belfry standards are very much under the microscope.

"One of my strengths is solving issues and putting things in place which are ideal skills for preparing for Tour events and we've done a lot of work since I got here, thanks to the fantastic investment we've had from The Quinn Group,

"Drainage was a big issue on the Brabazon Course, particularly on the front nine and we've worked hard to get the drainage flowing through the site as well as improving the irrigation."

While the Brabazon Course itself has come on leaps and bounds as a golf course, since the Ryder Cup was first played over it in 1985, further improves have recently been made with improved bunkering and a radical change to the 6th hole on which the fairway has been levelled and the green moved behind the lake making it a much more interesting challenge for both pros and the many many visitors and corporate guests who flock to The Belfry.

"We have also changed the strategy for the PGA Course to make it much more of an inland links to The Brabazon's manicured parkland. This means that visitors to the hotel can enjoy a completely different golfing experience if they are playing both courses during their stay."

Kenny and his team are very strong on environmental issues on the golf course and did well in the BIGGA Golf Environment Competition, sponsored by Scotts, Syngenta and Ransomes Jacobsen last year.

"We do a lot of mulching and saved 50% of our irrigation water reduced our fertiliser inputs while we've take out a large number of trees in the last two years and also planted and moved some specimen trees in strategic areas as part of our woodland management programme - the new hotel which is planned for The Belfry will be the most environmentally

friendly hotel ever built. However I make no bones about the fact that this is a highly manicured golf resort. That's what it is marketed as and that's what it is."

For all that Kenny has risen through the greenkeeping ranks he has not experienced working at a conventional members' golf club.

"Some guys are much better and more experienced in working for committee type clubs. I could be like a fish out of water in that situation whereas I'm suited to more commercial resort venues and I'm aware that people might say that it's alright for me with a staff of 40 while he's only got five. It would be easy to shoot me down and if I were in their shoes I might be saying the same thing. I do believe it's a case of sharing rather than preaching and we can all learn from each other," said Kenny, who puts the passion he has for attention to detail down to his time at The London Club where it was drummed into every member of staff.

As Chairman Kenny has an ambition to increase the membership levels to new heights.

"We have around 6500 members now and I estimate there are around 14-15000 greenkeepers in the country, so I'd love us to have a membership of 10,000 plus. It might take us another five years but I think it can be done and with initiatives of new group memberships and new categories for mechanics, and potentially groundsman in the near future, I'd love to see it," he said, adding that he was also keen to work on the perception among sections of the membership is that the Association is not as open as it could be and also would be very happy to talk to any individual about issues that they have with the Association.

Whatever time he does have outside of his job and, for the next 12 months, BIGGA Kenny enjoys with his family. Maria and he have three children Iain (12), Ruth (10) and Cameron (2) and where he did spend time on his own golf he now follows Iain, who is a good young player, playing on the British Junior Tour and competing at national and hopefully international level.

Kenny is an ambitious guy, whether it be for his career, his Association or his family and you can be sure that within the next 12 months he will work hard to make ambitions become reality.



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IRRIGATION: A TECHNOLOGICAL LEAP

Golf is becoming more sophisticated in every respect. Professional golfers now have their own coaches, personal trainers, sports psychologists, dieticians; golf club manufacturers use technology which is one step up from that employed by NASA on the Space Shuttle while the materials used on golf courses themselves - grass swards, sands, rootzones, chemicals, organic and otherwise, is simply mind boggling if compared to when the game of golf was born and even just a few short decades ago.

So it's no surprise that the field of irrigation has taken such a technological leap in the recent past and is likely to maintain its advance.

Put simply irrigation is the act of watering a plant and in the early days a watering can or hose pipe was the only way of ensuring the turf didn't curl up at the edges.

Things moved on to basic systems which then became automatic with larger clubs employing dedicated irrigation technicians, with other clubs giving a member of staff the added responsibility of being the irrigation man on the team.

Things have now taken a further jump forward with evapotranspiration meters ensuring the correct amount of moisture is returned to the leaf and the ability to operate an irrigation system via internet access from anywhere in the world!

These developments are exciting John Deere who announced their arrival as an irrigation company servicing the UK and Europe, at a press conference in Manheim, Germany, last autumn, having launched in the States in 2006.

"The big issue at the moment is water which has become a very scarce resource and as a result is becoming more and more expensive," said Graham Williams, John Deere's Director of National Accounts and Dealer Development.

"That means that the control of the irrigation system is becoming more and more important while sensing is also uppermost in the minds of greenkeepers."

To highlight the point Graham explained that in Spain currently, water is in such short supply that if a golf club were to run even a basic tees and greens system it would cost the equivalent of £200 a night to irrigate the course.

"So you can see how the costs can mount up."

To counter the cost issues irrigations systems are becoming much more accurate and can now be set to run by the second rather than a minute, as was the case with previous systems.



“Greenkeepers now want to ensure that all they are doing is replacing the moisture which has been burnt off during the course of a day in evapotranspiration, so much more accurate systems are required and it also means that irrigation water is not wasted.”

The other innovation, which will have a major impact on golf course maintenance, is the ability to operate a system via the internet.

A wall mounted control panel as part of a central control system will include a modem which uses similar technology to a mobile phone but just carries data rather than voice and data.



“It means that from any internet link, anywhere in the world, you can log in and operate or set your irrigation system and it is much quicker and less expensive than current remote systems,” explained Graham.

“We recently priced a system in Ireland and discovered that the cost of the GSM card required to operate the modem is around €6 (euro) and with this system you don’t need to buy a pc and a whole bundle of software to make it work. So it’s quite competitive when you think about it.

“And it means that you can be anywhere in the world and if you can get a pc connection to the internet you can take a look at your irrigation system. And not only that if you have a problem, with a password, our dealer or supplier can go in as well,” said Graham, who added that with services centres in Paris, New York and California there is service support for 20 hours of the day.

Couple that ability with sensing systems like a rain gauge or an evapotranspiration meter and the system can be overridden if you’ve set it to go off and there has been an unexpected downpour all day.



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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

Now, opting to further your education and widen your horizons can be viewed in two ways - All night parties, copious amounts of alcohol, long lie-ins and a piece of paper at the end of it all telling you you're qualified - OR - A serious lack of funds, having to work part-time, debts, copious amounts of stress and late night study sessions to meet assignment deadlines.

Obviously I'm demonstrating two extremes here, but what with inflation rising quite significantly over the past year and house prices on the increase previous, money can prove to be a huge worry – Even for the laid back potential student.

More and more people are opting to further their education through day-release study, apprenticeships and work-based learning because in these scenarios, with a little bit of hard work, you can actually have your cake and eat it.

WORK-BASED LEARNING

Work Based Learning at Writtle College currently has around 100 young people who are enrolled on apprenticeship schemes with employers throughout the Eastern Counties.

The College can help you find a suitable workplace and arrange your day release training. They will also arrange for a specialist member of staff to visit your workplace to offer guidance and support, as you work your way through your portfolio of evidence.

APPRENTICESHIP

Apprenticeship schemes are designed for school leavers but in some cases it is possible to start at the age of 19. The aim of the apprenticeship is to successfully complete NVQ Level 2, plus Key Skills qualifications, gain work experience and earn a wage.

There are no formal entry requirements but upon application you will need to take a basic skills test. You must be employed and work for a minimum of 30 hours per week. Attendance is usually on a day release basis but because the scheme is based on work circumstances and the

requirements of employers, attendance at College may be as little as one day a month. Every eight to 10 weeks a member of staff will visit you to assess and review your progress. (The successful completion of an Apprenticeship is equivalent to three GCSEs at Grade C.)

You may then choose to return to full-time education and start a National Certificate or National Diploma or continue on to the NVQ Level 3 should your work circumstances allow.

ADVANCED APPRENTICESHIP

The Advanced Apprenticeship is designed for you if you are working towards supervisory or management level at your workplace. The aim of the scheme is to complete an NVQ Level 3, Key Skills and technical certificate. As with the Level 2 apprenticeship certain industries require candidates to complete work-related short courses. Although there are no formal entry qualifications, an NVQ Level 2 or equivalent qualification is recommended. You must also be in full time employment.

College attendance and work place reviews will be the same as a standard apprenticeship.

By successfully completing an Advanced Apprenticeship you will have achieved a standard of training equivalent to three A levels at Grade C or above. This can open the door to Higher Education qualifications such as a Foundation Degree or Degree.

THE INDUSTRY

The Sports Turf industry is a far reaching area for study; much work has already been undertaken by the industry bodies to support students in their studies.

Sports Turf study begins at level 2 for those who wish to develop their skills and knowledge at craft level. Students can choose either the NVQ Level 2 which is for those with at least one years industry experience or the National Certificate. The NVQ is a part time one year course while the National Certificate is two year part time.

CONTENT

Areas of study include: preparation, maintenance and repair; identification of weeds, pests and diseases; machinery/tractor operation and maintenance; improving work practices and relationships; health and safety and the establishment of new turf surfaces and plantings. The National Certificate includes the study of plant and soil science.

SPECIAL FEATURES

All practical tasks are based on current industry practice and techniques. NVQ assessment will be through observation in the work place and the compilation of a portfolio of evidence. National Certificate is college based modular assessment culminating with an on-line (GOLA) test at the end of the course.



WHAT NEXT?

Upon successful completion of this course, you will be well placed to take the next step in your career progression in moving onto the NVQ Level 3 Sports Turf Maintenance.

NVQ LEVEL 3

This course is at supervisory level and is best suited to those students employed as 1st Assistant Head Greenkeeper/Groundsmen or working towards this position.

CONTENT

The course deals with: resource acquisition; planning projects; developing and using information systems; developing skills and understanding of staff management; IPM (Integrated Pest Management) systems; creating grassed and planted areas; management and design of irrigation and drainage systems; managing maintenance programmes of turf and planted areas and managing health and safety of staff and clients.



SPECIAL FEATURES

Students enrolled on this course at Writtle College have, in recent years, been involved with large construction projects undertaking the building of three golf greens and surrounding plantings to enhance the area. Development and use of presentation skills to improve speaking abilities is a topic enjoyed by students allowing them to develop their public speaking skills in a safe environment. Discussion on new innovations in the industry is also fundamental to the structure of the course.



WHAT NEXT?

After completion of the Level 3 students are adequately prepared for under-graduate study in the HE sector. Here the student can broaden their understanding and developing their opportunities in the turf industry, getting to grips with the deeper issues of turf culture. The courses available at present are the Foundation Degree in Sports Turf Management, leading to the BSc in Sports Turf Science and Management or a BSc Green Space Management.

INFORMATION FOR EMPLOYERS

If you would like to employ an apprentice, please read the following checklist.

- 1 Can you provide a full range of work experience in your occupational area including some formal 'on the job' training?
- 2 Do you need to train a young person to fill a gap in your workforce or for future expansion of your organisation?
- 3 Does your workplace comply with all current Health and Safety regulations? (Advice can be offered in this area.)
- 4 Do you have current Employers Liability Insurance in place?
- 5 Would you be prepared to let your apprentice attend college and support them in their gathering of evidence?

For further information or to apply for an apprenticeship scheme contact Work Based Learning at Writtle College on 01245 421612.

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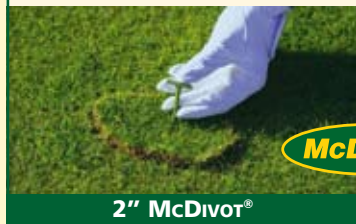
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HOBBIES



Hobbies

Here's something you didn't know about me...



Name: David Allen

Hobby: Volcano Climbing

Club: Singing Hills Golf Course, Southwick

Position: Assistant Greenkeeper

How and when did you get into volcano climbing?

"I've been interested in volcanos since I was young and I've always enjoyed climbing. When I was 14 I went to Wales with my school and was introduced to rock climbing and mountaineering – I loved it.

"I'd always wanted to travel and Peru had always appealed to me – desert, mountains, volcanos and a beautiful coastline. After being made redundant in 1995 I decided to go travelling for six months around Peru and Equador and it wasn't until I was confronted with a volcano that I thought, this would be different."

What is it about volcano climbing that appeals to you?

"It really wasn't something I had thought about until I did it. To climb right to the edge of a live volcano, look down and see the lava bubbling, is really exciting."

What's the most exciting volcano you have climbed?

"My partner and I went to Java, Indonesia, about a month after Mount Merapi had blown its top. We had hoped to climb it, however we did get quite close to the lava flow but the exclusion zone prevented us from getting as close as we'd have liked.



"As Java has hundreds of volcanos, with 10% of them active at any one time, we ended up climbing Mount Bromo. We managed to get right to the edge and see the lava bubbling. I really enjoyed that."



WIND TURBINES ARE VITAL FOR THE FUTURE OF OUR PLANET

By Ian Watson and Robert Hall

Most scientists predict dire consequences if we do not reduce carbon dioxide emissions. The resulting global warming will upset the delicate climate equilibrium and cause havoc during this century. Oil and gas supplies have a finite life. Our previous Governments made a drastic mistake in not investing the profits from our oil and gas wells in developing renewable sources of energy. We will now be faced with having to buy oil and gas when supplies diminish and prices rise.

The Governments of China, India and other developing countries have decided to compete in the global market to bring prosperity to billions of people. They need huge supplies of oil, and gas and coal which is a double whammy rocketing prices and more pollution. Soon the supply of these fossil fuels may not be able to meet the demand.

Golf Clubs, farmers and other land owners could make a real contribution

to reducing our carbon footprint by harnessing the power of the wind. This clean and plentiful source of energy could be our salvation. Scotland is very fortunate in having the highest average wind speed in Europe. Wind turbines are the most reliable and certain ways of reducing carbon dioxide emissions. When the wind blows above 4 m/s the wind turbines start generating electricity. That allows fossil fuel power stations to reduce their output and hence the amount of carbon dioxide emitted to the atmosphere is reduced. If 50 percent of relatively small land owners (golf clubs, farmers, quarries, landfill sites, estates, crofts, etc) installed two 800kW wind turbines in Scotland we would be well on the way to meeting our targets of 10 % of generated energy from renewable sources within the next three years and 20% by 2020. With on shore and off shore wind farms, hydro power, solar energy, wave and tidal power we could integrate with other European countries to form a grid. According to Airtricity Director Chris Veal "If the wind's blowing