

## STEPPED DOWN

Charterhouse Turf Machinery Managing Director Philip Threadgold stepped down from the day to day management of Charterhouse Turf Machinery at the end of March.



Philip, a founder of Charterhouse Turf Machinery some 26 years ago, has been Managing Director since 2002.

Philip plans to remain in the industry and will retain an important role as an ongoing advisor to Charterhouse Turf Machinery, with a special focus on the development of Soil Harmony.

Overall management and control of Charterhouse Turf Machinery will be passed to Geoffrey Burgess, Director, representing the main board of Redexim, which owns the company. Nick Darking remains in charge of sales working in the south of the UK and Wales while Richard Heywood looks after the North of England and Scotland with full parts and service back up from the Charterhouse team in Haslemere.

## TORO AND MARRIOTT SIGN PARTNERSHIP DEAL

Toro and Marriott International have signed a worldwide partnership agreement that will see Toro machinery and irrigation products supplied to all Marriott golf properties outside the United States and Canada until at least 2012.

The new deal will benefit the Marriott hotel and resort group's existing 28 golf properties outside the US and Canada, plus all its new developments across the globe.



## FOURTH GENERATION JOINS BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Frank Barenbrug has been appointed to the Royal Barenbrug Group's board of directors.



The fourth generation of Barenbrug to join the board of this Netherlands-based family business, Frank will assume responsibility for the group's global business development, marketing, sales and production strategies, working from head office in Oosterhout Nijmegen in the Netherlands.

Frank, 34, has been with Barenbrug for over a decade. Having studied International Trade at the Agricultural University of Wageningen in his home country, Frank began his career as export manager for an international packaging producer and went on to join Barenbrug as a member of New Zealand Agriseeds' marketing team in 1997. Key positions with Barenbrug's South African, Argentinean and European operations followed, before he most recently became managing director of Barenbrug Palaversich in Argentina in 2005.

## PRESTIGIOUS GOLF RESORT CHOOSES RANSOMES JACOBSEN

The Kaya Eagles Golf Resort in Belek, Turkey, which opened in November last year, has selected Ransomes Jacobsen as their preferred supplier for course maintenance machinery and E-Z-GO for golf cars.

The 18-hole course was designed by Irish golf course designer and Master PGA Professional David Jones on a compact site, which although relatively short at 5,900 metres provides a test for golfers of all abilities.

The course is close to the Kaya resort and includes many water features including six lakes, all faced with rock and extensively landscaped. Facilities include a state-of-the-art clubhouse, a 280 metre long driving range, 700 square metre practice putting green and a soon-to-be-completed golf hotel in the middle of the complex.

UEFA President and former captain of the West German football team, Franz Beckenbauer, was the guest of honour at the official opening.



# Membership



## MEMBERSHIP SERVICES OFFICER, JUSTINE DE TAURE PROVIDES AN UPDATE ON MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

Here in membership we have been working hard on making our systems more workable so that memberships can be renewed more easily and efficiently! We also have a new system in place for mass emailing. This will mean that renewals can be done by email, saving time, delays with post and the trees! Obviously this system will only be as good as the information we have on record, so please if you have an email address can you check that we have up to date information. Any members without email address will be contacted by post as usual.

This month we would like to remind you of the Legal Helpline and what it can offer our members.

Legal Helpline Freephone 0800 177 7891

### What is covered

#### Section 1 Personal injury

We will pay the costs we have agreed to of you taking any legal action as a result of a sudden and specific accident which causes your death or bodily injury. We will provide this cover as long as:

- The accident happens within the period of insurance and the territorial limit;
- The legal action is brought within the territorial limit;
- You have a reasonable chance of successfully recovering damages at all times.

The most we will pay for all claims arising out of one event is £60,000 (including a maximum of £5000 in respect of medical costs and expenses). We will not provide cover for the following:

Any claim arising out of any legal action against you. any claim arising out of an allegation of clinical negligence.

#### Section 2 Contract cover

We will pay the costs we have agreed to of you taking or defending any legal action following a breach of contract you have for:

- Buying, selling or renting goods or services. buying or selling your permanent home.
- Buying, selling, renting or insuring a motor vehicle or its spare parts or accessories; or servicing, repairing or testing a motor vehicle.

We will provide this cover as long as

- The dispute started within the period of insurance;
- Any legal action is brought within the territorial limit; and
- You have a reasonable chance of successfully recovering damages, defending the legal action or settling the dispute in another way, at all times.

The most we will pay for all claims arising out of one event is £60,000, We will not provide cover for the following: Disputes for amounts less than:

- £1000 if it is to do with buying or selling a motor vehicle; or
- £100 if it is about something else.

#### Section 3

Employment contract We will pay the costs we have agreed to of you taking any legal action against your employer following a breach of your contract for your full time employment or permanent part time employment including drafting a Compromise Agreement and providing representation at Mediation.

We will provide this cover as long as:

- you entered into the contract within the territorial limit
- the dispute starts within the period of insurance;
- any legal action is brought within the territorial limit and
- you have a reasonable chance of successfully recovering damages or settling the dispute in another way. The most we will pay for all claims arising out of one event is £60,000.

#### Section 4 Disciplinary hearings

We will pay the costs of representing you at an internal disciplinary hearing before your employer. We will provide this cover as long as the incident which leads to you being subject to a disciplinary hearing happened within the period of insurance and within the territorial limit. The most we will pay for all claims arising out of one event is £60,000.

#### Costs

We will pay the following:

- The professional fees and expenses reasonably and properly charged by the Legal representative, up to the standard rates set by the courts, which cannot be recovered from your opponent.
- Your opponent's costs which you are ordered to pay by a civil court or tribunal.
- Your medical costs and expenses that are deemed by us to be recoverable from the person responsible for your injury resulting in a claim under Section 1 of this policy. The most we will pay for medical costs and expenses will be £5,000.

We will only pay costs which are necessary and in proportion to the value of your claim.

To get a full details please call the Legal Helpline 0800 177 7891 or speak to us at BIGGA Tel; 01347 833818 option 1.

The new members list can now be found in the members section at [www.bigga.org.uk](http://www.bigga.org.uk)

# Learning & Development

## Key Sponsorship:

### UNLOCK THE POTENTIAL OF GREENKEEPERS

The funding provided by Gold and Silver Key Sponsors is used to produce training and career aids, DVDs, CD Roms, field guides and provide refunds for training fees and subsidised learning and development courses. The funding also helps support seminars, workshops, courses, the lending library, careers advice, posters and manuals.

Many young greenkeepers owe their career progression to the assistance they've had from the Learning and Development Fund. An equal number of established greenkeepers have also been able to access the fund to continue their professional development thanks to the donations of the Gold and Silver Key Sponsors.

### THANK YOU TO THE FOLLOWING KEY SPONSORS



#### GOLDEN KEY



#### Golden Key Individual Members

JH Greasley; WJ Rogers; Andy Campbell MG, CGCS; Iain A Macleod; Tom Smith; Frank Newberry; Christopher Lomas MG, Lee Strutt MG.



#### SILVER KEY



#### Silver Key Individual Members

Ade Archer; Steven Tierney; Paul Jenkins; Iain Barr; Richard McGlynn; Steve Dixon; Sam Langrick.

### SAMI COLLINS, HEAD OF LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT PROVIDES AN UPDATE



The clocks have finally changed and it feels like summer might be on its way. The light nights always raise the spirits for those of us that are office bound and provide the opportunity to get out into the fresh air in the evening. You are lucky being out there on the golf course on the lovely spring days we're experiencing!

#### Toro Student of the Year Award 2008



The Toro Student of the Year Award 2008 was launched in late February when application forms were sent to all training providers in the United Kingdom.

To enter the Award, and be in with the chance of winning the eight week Toro Scholarship in the USA, students must be studying for N/SVQ Level 2 or a National Certificate or Diploma course and must be nominated by their college tutor.

Students who are nominated will attend a regional interview in early July and if successful, will attend the National Final at BIGGA HOUSE in September.

It's not only the winning student that receives a prize, the college tutor that has nominated them also wins a trip to attend the Golf Industry Show in New Orleans and the two runners-up both win a trip to Harrogate Week 2009.

The closing date has been extended to Friday 9 May 2008.

For further details on the Award visit the Education page of the BIGGA website [www.bigga.org.uk/education](http://www.bigga.org.uk/education).

Congratulations must go to Lewis Birch, who, following the Student of the Year Award 2007, successfully applied for the Ohio State Internship programme and is now working at Scioto Country Club, Ohio until October 2008. Good Luck Lewis, enjoy the States!

#### Learning & Development Updates and Reminders

BIGGA Higher Education Scholarships

Supported by: RANSOMES JACOBSEN  
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Higher Education Scholarships have been awarded to: Steven Halliwell – Online Foundation Degree Sports Turf

#### The BIGGA Library

One new book has been added to the library in the last month: Golf Greens and Green-Keeping – Horace Hutchinson

This is the first book to be published in a new series, The Classics of Golf Course Maintenance and Construction. This book is an exact reprint of the original 1906 classic. It's a celebration of the modern-day golf course Superintendent and takes you back to the roots of the profession, providing the cornerstone on which current maintenance and construction practices were built. With vintage photographs of St. Andrews, Hoylake, Royal St. Georges, North Berwick, Prestwick, Walton Heath, and more show the mastery of their original designs.

#### BIGGA Golf Environment Competition 2008



The closing date for the BIGGA Golf Environment Competition 2008 is Friday 20 June. Further information can be found on the BIGGA Website [www.bigga.org.uk/education](http://www.bigga.org.uk/education).

#### Continuing Professional Development

The current CPD year ends on 30 June 2008. To receive your 2008 Certificate of Continuing Professional Development you need to have a minimum of 10 CPD credits since 1 July 2007. Send your completed CPD credit claim forms to Rachael Duffy, Learning & Development Administrator.

#### FREE Courses in England

A new Government initiative in England is offering free Maths and English courses to adult learners. Full details are available from [www.direct.gov.uk/geton](http://www.direct.gov.uk/geton) or on 0800 66 0800.

# Learning & Development

## GEOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION SYSTEMS CAN BE GREAT AID TO GOLF COURSE MANAGEMENT

By Mary Purcell

The use of Geographical Information Systems (GIS) on the golf course is not entirely new, but it is the larger, more-affluent courses that appear to be benefiting from it more than their smaller counterparts – simply due to finances.

GIS technology is built upon a broad range of sciences and disciplines, ranging from planning and ecology to image-processing and computer technology.

Satellites, Global Position Systems (GPS), aerial photos and computer imaging are increasingly being used to construct layered maps of landscapes to take into account the whole system – from soils to interlinking habitats and ecosystems to unique areas such as wetlands and buffer zones – to aid course managers and greenkeepers to come up with unique and optimum management systems designed specifically for their own course.

When used to evaluate the importance of all types of habitats and wildlife populations, GIS allows the course to be managed as an overall, interacting unit rather than as isolated patches.

For the technically-minded, GIS is a computer system capable of capturing, storing, analysing, manipulating and displaying geographically-referenced or spatial data. This data can be captured (and displayed) as points, lines (series of co-ordinates) and polygons (area shapes). GIS can display 2D and 3D characteristics.

Integrated GIS/GPS gives the opportunity to collect data in the field and is gaining a lot of interest. Portable GPS and GIS allow for the speedy capture and analysis of data in the field. Capturing data using GPS (hand-held for field work), hand-tracing or manually digitising points, and scanners are other means of data input into a system.

### GIS use

The use of GIS is endless. It can investigate:

- Irrigation
- Topography
- Lake volumes
- Slope analysis
- Feasibility studies
- Soil classification mapping
- Design natural or wildlife areas

Some common uses may include the following:

#### 1. Nutrient planning

Remote-sensing techniques can be used to assess turf nitrogen status, allowing nitrogen to be spoon-fed to the turf to provide sufficient quantities without overloading the soil with nitrates.

Historically, agronomic practices such as fertiliser/pesticide application have been made at field level without taking into account spatial variability of soil or turf properties. The adoption of precision management, whereby turf variability is actively managed, optimises chemical applications and reduces environmental contamination.

#### 2. Drainage construction

Drainage can play an important part in maintaining and improving the turfgrass sward. Turfgrass drainage can be a difficult and complex task, relying on many factors including engineering and environmental parameters, drainage theories and knowledge of the turfgrass industry.

GIS can create simulation models of drainage flows, calculating ideal drainage positions. Storm or flood modelling can also be carried out, aiding drainage decisions.

#### 3. Environmental variables can be combined to understand:

- Species distribution
- Climate
- Habitat factors
- Soils

Spatial variations in soil properties, habitat existence, wetland areas and overall geology of a site affects construction of a new course and alteration tasks on existing ones.

4. Water use can vary widely depending on climate, course design and management practices among others.

5. Modelling weed emergence, using historical weather and biological data to create maps for their prediction. GIS models can be created to predict future happenings to help plan management decisions.

#### 6. Habitat selection

Environmental patterns can be studied and correlations between, for example, vegetation and communities, can be described and delineated to capture the requirements of particular species habitats.

#### 7. Wetland and corridor creation

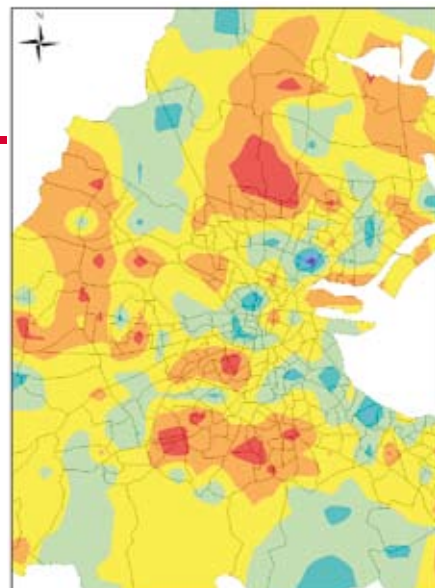
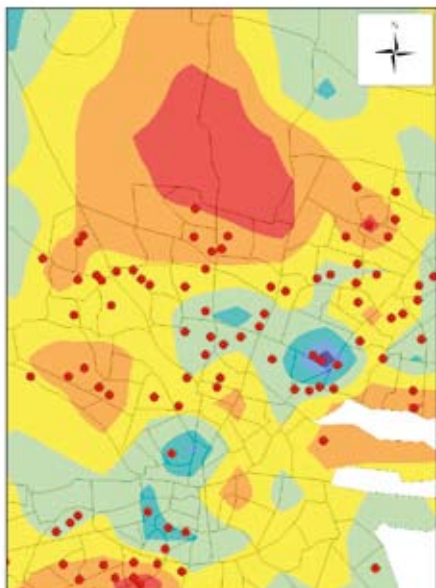
GIS is useful for potential landscape visualisations – testing to see if a potential plan will look natural in the surrounding landscape.

#### 8. Landscape assessment

- Map planning issues – development analysis.
- Aid site selection – water body, woodland areas, etc.

#### 9. Monitoring rainfall and temperatures

Monitoring and documenting climate and micro-climate characteristics can aid course managers and greenkeepers to enhance or alter their management practices and decision-making on a course.



GIS has infinite benefits including:

- Increased efficiency
- Organise day-to-day functioning of course tasks
- Plan new features
- Evaluate the course
- Aid in more precise management over chemicals and irrigation, leading to efficient maintenance costs and environmental benefits.

GIS can be used for producing high-quality maps of vegetation/landcover, habitats, soil types, drainage patterns and so on. These maps can then be used to provide information for course assessment, management and conservation tasks.

GIS software is becoming more user-friendly with the technology becoming quick and effective, allowing for virtual reality models and interactive tools to be created.

### Precision management

GIS technologies can offer the potential to reduce costs, optimise resources and outputs on the course. Precision work means there will be minimal waste or excess product applications to unwanted areas.

Precision turf management observes, documents, maps and manages golf courses on the smallest reasonable scale to provide optimum performance for the entire golf course environment with the minimum input resources. Characterising and documenting the site in terms of soil type, plants, slopes, out-of-play areas, waterbodies, paths and such like is a major first and useful step in precision management.

Many courses are now using sophisticated geographic information systems to track maintenance resources and bring more precision to their use of resources. Even sensors on mowers can be used for mapping, data collection and diagnostics.

GIS technologies for precision management include:

- Adjustable sprinkler trajectories
- Subsurface irrigation drips
- Tailoring water distribution technologies to suit different microclimates
- Soil moisture measurement tools.

### Analysing with GIS

The accuracy of an output to be analysed from a GIS depends on the accuracy or quality of the input data. The 'tools' and 'help' functions available on most GIS systems provide self-help problem-solving and how to go about optimising use of the system.

GPS recording is very useful – it gives an overall summary of the site that can be processed into visual, easy-to-interpret maps and statistical analysis. The results can be visually displayed and analysed, allowing increased interpretation of data.

### Progress with GIS

GIS has historically been associated with high-cost software and hardware products, along with difficult usability. But this is changing rapidly. Cheaper, more readily-available products are being introduced quite regularly. Also many clubs are seeing the benefits of this management device and are more willing to spend the money.

### Using GIS

Appropriate systems depend on:

- Who is using the technology
- Level of expertise
- Level of experience
- Level of knowledge
- How sophisticated a system is needed
- Finance

It is probably wise to phase-in the use of GIS to a course and start with a simple base map or palette to work from. Having a digital map of the course can prove to be very useful for its optimal management and therefore aid better decision-making. The use of GIS will likely increase in the future in turfgrass management, as a means of having a deeper understanding of the entire course.

And as pressure mounts on turf managers to reduce nutrient inputs, GIS will likely be a huge aid in managing all inputs while maintaining, if not also increasing, the quality of the course. In the future GIS will likely be used to scrutinise every aspect of the course as a means of enhancing its play and feel.

### About the author

Mary Purcell is currently carrying out research for a doctorate degree, specialising in Geographical Information Systems (GIS) and Environmental Science, at University College Dublin, in the School of Architecture, Landscape and Civil Engineering. Contact Mary at [mary.purcell@ucd.ie](mailto:mary.purcell@ucd.ie)

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# FRIENDLY NEIGHBOURS

*Scott MacCallum speaks with Archie Dunn who has the task of maintaining a golf course next door to some very illustrious neighbours*

**When I mentioned that I was going up to Auchterarder it was immediately assumed that I'd be visiting Gleneagles and not the excellent members' club which is the wonderful resort's direct neighbour.**

"That's the 15th hole of the PGA Course," said Auchterarder's Course Manager, Archie Dunn, as we stood on the corner of his course looking over a very small fence at a greenkeeper cutting the green just a few yards away.

With the PGA Course the venue for the 2014 Ryder Cup Archie is looking forward to having a much sought after view of proceedings without having to leave his own workplace.

"The Ryder Cup is a major opportunity for the area, not just for Gleneagles, and if Auchterarder Golf Club can't make progress that year there would be something far wrong," said that man who started his greenkeeping career as a 16 year-old at Gleneagles and rose to be the Head man on the wonderful King's Course.

Archie has a close relationship with Scott Fenwick, Gleneagles' Courses Manager, having worked alongside him for many years, but that relationship is sometimes stretched when staff move from Auchterarder to its illustrious neighbour.

"He's taken a lot of my staff in recent years. He does apologise occasionally..."



but not very often," laughed Archie. "There is not a lot we can do about it as it's progress for the young guys and everyone who has gone to Gleneagles from here has done very well so I feel that it's a credit to the way I've trained them. They get the opportunity to learn the basics here, so they have an all round knowledge when they leave here. But it does mean that we have quite a turn over of staff," explained Archie, who pointed out pictures of Sean Connery, Lee Trevino and Peter Alliss from a visit they made during the old Pro Celebrity Golf series in the '70s and '80s.

The conventional neighbouring club mutual back scratching does go on between Auchterarder and Gleneagles with machinery swapping on a regular basis.

"They borrow as much from me as I do from them, particularly if they have the same job being carried out on all three golf course at similar times."

Despite have the shadow of one of the world's most attractive golfing destinations hanging over it Auchterarder Golf Club shines extremely brightly



A Gleneagles greenkeeper cuts the 15th green on the PGA course, just a few yards away

in its own right. Last year the club came third in a Scotsman newspaper poll for Best Value Golf behind Lanark GC and Boat of Garten GC for the quality and affordability of what is on offer.

“We didn’t enter a visitor must have put us forward but we got some superb publicity in the Scotsman just the week before The Open at Carnoustie.”

And it would be hard to argue with the poll. Auchterarder, at one end of a town known as the Lang Toon as it’s the longest town in Scotland, has 850 members with all gents and ladies paying £340 a year subs while visitors pay £27.50 a round during the week £33 at weekends - £39 and £50 respectively for day tickets.

“We brought in well over £100,000 in visitors fees last year and with medals on Sunday’s and Wednesdays, ladies’ medals on Tuesdays, and juniors playing two evenings a week, it does get busy,” said Archie, who still finds time to act as Scotland’s BIGGA Board of Management representative.

With that sort of drive the club has moved forward on all fronts with improvements to the clubhouse – a first floor function room complete with balcony looking out at some of the finest scenery money can’t buy – recently opened while on the course major changes have and are continuing to be made.

The original nine holes were built in 1892 with a second nine being added around 30 years ago after the club leased land from the council.

“The second nine was designed by the then Gleneagles pro, Ian Marchbank, and built for around £50,000. The layout works pretty well but we’ve spent a lot of money over the last 10 years improving areas, as you only get so much for your money and the £50,000 didn’t stretch to quality construction. However, it was all that could be afforded at the time and it moved the club forward.”

The improvements have included 12 major tee reconstructions – doubling them in size and including two double tees for the 3rd and 9th (completed but not yet in play) and the 12th and 13th.

They have also reconstructed three new greens in the last six years with pride of place going to the 12th.

“It was the third green we rebuilt after the 7th and 8th and it was probably the most problematic on the golf course. It was in a wet heavily wooded

clay area, was disease prone and always the first to close the course when it rained,” explained Archie, who explained that everything except draining work, which is contracted out because they don’t have the equipment, is done in-house by the five man team including himself.

“We increased the size of the 12th threefold, added some undulations, put in three new bunkers and a 500 square metre pond, which has totally rejuvenated the whole area. It is now the feature hole of the course and the feedback we’ve had from members is very positive.”

The difficulty of attacking a major project like a new green is that all the other day-to-day work must continue and it can stretch the length of time taken to complete the work.

“It took us three months to complete but it all depends on the weather and how quickly we can start. Nowadays you can still be cutting well into November. With construction work you have to make sacrifices and sometimes we don’t rake the bunkers every day during the week to allow us to get on.”

Weekend bunker raking is carried out by members of the Junior Section and Archie has already employed... and subsequently lost to Gleneagles, three members who discovered a love of greenkeeping through this route.

The green was out of play from the first week in November until the first week in May but the speed of re-introduction owes much to another hands across the fence alliance between Auchterarder and Gleneagles.

“We were very fortunate that Gleneagles were lifting the 14th green on the PGA course and that’s where our turf came from. We paid the going rate for it but it meant we had turf that was green height and it probably saved us six to eight weeks because our putting surface was established a lot quicker,” said Archie, who is hoping the arrangement might be repeated when they tackle the two remaining greens on the list to be rebuilt.

With the construction side moving forward on an on-going basis the environmental work on the course is also making real progress.

“We have a five year plan, in conjunction with Elspeth Coutts, of Green Progress, for our environmental management work and at the moment we are doing heather regeneration and scrub clearance.

“Some of the heather had been 25-30 years old and had become very leggy

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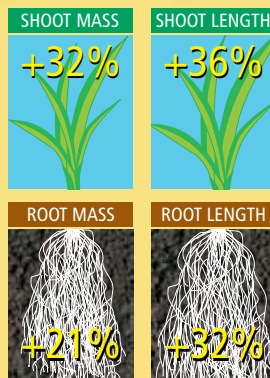
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and totally unplayable – it was 18 inches to two feet high on some of the playing areas with gorse around eight feet,” explained Archie.

“We had hoped to get started a lot earlier but the weather was against us over the winter so it was only recently that we were able to bring in a two metre flail mower. We are still to rake off the debris to see what is left and whether we will have to scarify and vertidrain to reproduce the heather bed.

“The whole course features a lot of heather and I do expect to get a bit of criticism from members for stripping it out but as Jimmy Kidd once said to me, ‘You’ve got to crack an egg to make an omlette’.”

When Archie arrived at the club he began a policy of adding definition to the fairways and leaving out-of-play areas to develop naturally.

“It has softened the whole landscape down and is much more pleasing to the eye. It’s given us less grass to cut, we’ve been able to transplant saplings to other areas of the course and the wildlife we see out of the course has increased in number.”

The club has red squirrel postcards in the clubhouse which are sent to the Perthshire Red Squirrel Group when one is spotted, while there are also buzzards, herons and deer on regular display. The club has also applied permission for a rope to be extended across the busy road outside the course which will give safe passage from one side to the other and let them display their daredevil high wire skills.

Archie is always very keen to try new ideas when it comes to course management and is currently investigating the purchase of a set of rollers which he would use to reduce the number of occasions the greens are cut.

“Over the last few years some guys have saved up to 30% of cutting and still produced a surface. I know of guys who are rolling three times a week instead of cutting and it enables them to raise the height of cut by a mil.

Instead of cutting seven time a week you are cutting four and rolling in between. It doesn’t compact the surface too much and reduces the stress on the grass plant. It’s an idea I started to hear about 18 months ago and I like to try new things and perhaps take a chance occasionally.”

Another example of this is his use of Primo Maxx on his greens.

“I used it on the tees last year and got some good results and decided to use it on the greens. It is an expensive tool but you have got weigh up was you are saving on cutting as a small labour force. I think you need to practise with it, particularly on timings of applications and the grass plant must be strong before you apply it because you get no regrowth after you’ve sprayed it. What you’ve got is what you’ve got.”

Archie is a progressive greenkeeper at a progressive golf club and the results achieved have been impressive in keeping up with the Jones’ next door.



The results of scrub clearance on the 1st



The view of the 12th green and pond



# TRACTOR TALK

*Lots of models but do you really have much choice? James de Havilland takes a look at our options*

**If you are after a compact tractor in the sub-45hp power bracket, you may think you are spoilt for choice - there are now more than 20 compact tractor suppliers in the UK. Concentrate on what a tractor's transmission offers and it emerges that you may not have as much choice as you think.**

Not so long ago, a key job for a tractor would have been to drag a gang mower up and down the fairways. It is all too easy to forget that gangs were and, for some still remain, the key large-area mowing tool on the golf course. Now that has changed, the role of a tractor has also altered, with the operation of top dressing and aeration equipment forming the primary on-course role for most new tractor buys.

There are then the compact tractors that are purchased with general purpose mowing forming their primary role. A more versatile tool than a dedicated ride-on mower, a tractor with a mid-mounted mower can be fitted with a front end loader, be used to pull a trailer and carry out a range of other tasks using its rear lift linkage.

With apologies to those who can guess where this is going, a sweeping generalisation now follows. Most tractors selected for general on- (and off-) course duties will have a mechanical transmission. A tractor purchased for 'ride-on' mowing is more likely to have a hydrostatic transmission. That is not to say that the roles cannot be reversed, but the reason why this pattern tends to be followed is simple.

With a mechanical transmission, once the best gear ratio and engine speed to match a specific job has been determined, it can be easily repeated. Anyone using a specific bit of kit can be told, for example, to 'select mid-range, gear 2, a 540 PTO speed and 1,900 engine rpm' and it can be pretty much assumed that the operator will then run the tractor at a forward and PTO speed to match the implement and task.

With hydrostatic drive, the same job can be more complicated. At a fixed engine speed, the amount by which the hydrostatic pedal is depressed determines forward speed. There is absolutely no reason why the tractor cannot be operated at a fixed forward speed with hydrostatic drive, it just takes the right operator firstly to know when the correct speed for the job has been achieved and then maintain it. Every time the speed is changed, during a turn for example, the operator has to revert back to the right speed again.

Hydrostatic cruise control can of course help, but there are occasions when the system will alter the forward speed to accommodate a change in load on the tractor. So although hydrostatic drive has its advantages, it is not always the optimum choice for fixed speed work.

For most courses, a 3x9 or 12x12 mechanical transmission will be up to the job, provided you get a forward speed of 0.5 kph for low creep speed jobs at rated speed. It may be possible to specify extra creep speeds that allow a the right mix of speeds to suit, but this will be down to the tractor