



ABOVE: Work is well underway on the amazing new 18th hole with the creek crossing in front of the still-to-be-constructed green

time and our business plan works round playing 12 months of the year and we look at 35,000 rounds per annum.

“We all agreed that the grass that would suit us best was Colonial Bent although, to my knowledge no-one has tried it before.”

The contract to supply the turf was put out to tender and after a series of site visits and discussions Tillers Turf were appointed.

“Tim Fell had an area set aside for us in Lincolnshire and the seed was put to ground in the same 15 cm nutrient-filled rootzone as we were using on the new greens. Straight after the PGA we did a core out,”

Wentworth resident, Ernie Els and his company Ernie Els Design, who had been responsible for the

previous re-design three years before, won the contract for the design of the new greens while MJ Abbott won the construction contract. Arden Lea Irrigation completed the team.

“We started on June 1, the drawings for all 18 greens were approved by the Board and a re-opening date of November 6 was set.

“However, as time went by Richard Caring saw the opportunity to create a totally different golf course. Although he loved Wentworth, having played golf all over the world, he felt that the challenge had been reduced over time and that modern players had overtaken the golf course.

“He felt that this was his opportunity to create a tough golf course

that has great impact and be his legacy to the game. It would be something he’d do just once.”

Richard Caring began to get involved - hole by hole, green by green - with Ernie Els toughening up the course and adding difficulty to the greens, and what had initially started as a project covering greens and 10 yards beyond, began to escalate, sometimes stretching to two acres around the green, occasionally amending fairways as well as doing all fairway bunkers.

“The owner always walks the course on the Saturday and Sunday of the PGA and he watched Paul Casey play from a fairway bunker on the 3rd to three feet and make birdie. You need to be good to be able to do it, but he didn’t think that



it should be possible to play that sort of shot so fairway bunkers have all been toughened up. He feels that sort of shot should cost at least half a shot and a player shouldn't be able to play straight to the hole."

Chris is aware that there will be golfing traditionalists who will be unhappy that the original Harry Colt-design has been so radically changed, but having been involved in the project and having spoken with various people including Greg Letsche, Ernie's Head of Design, he has begun to appreciate the counter argument.

"Wentworth is regarded as a Harry Colt masterpiece but the feeling is that if Harry had come along today he'd be thinking along the same lines as the new design. When he was building golf courses they were done with a horse and cart and he didn't have the opportunity to move earth and use the sophisticated machinery that is around today," said Chris.

An example of this comes on the 2nd hole, a par-3 made famous when Isao Aoki holed in one during the World Match-play in 1979 and won himself a house at Gleneagles.

"I'd always thought the hole was amazing the way it was, but Greg felt that on a short par-3, where players were only hitting an 8 or 9-iron, you should always see the ball finish. However, because the front of the green was higher than the back that didn't happen and if there was a hole-in-one you'd have to rely on the crowd telling you or wait until you'd got to the green to find out. You've got to agree with the guy," said Chris, as we surveyed the entire new green from the tee.

Chris is quick to confirm that it is still the Harry Colt routing plan, but he does admit that the new course takes the ground game out of play.

"Modern equipment, the ball and clubs, are designed for a through the air game and the new course takes account of this but that means that the opportunity to run the ball in, rather than fly it in has been removed."

The quality of the work from all concerned has been of the highest quality and Chris has nothing but praise for them. Abbotts used their own turf layers, or brought in professionals, rather than calling in unskilled labour, while they have

ABOVE: The new 17th green now features a fiendish drop off to the right

ABOVE RIGHT: Spectating has been improved at the rear of the 9th by thinning out some trees to show the raised green.

RIGHT: The 12th has become a difficult par-4 instead of an easy par-5

operated an 11 days on three days off schedule with Arden Lea going in on the three days to carry out the irrigation work which has required virtually a new system because fairways have been amended and the bunker has changed.

"The eight inch main which feeds the whole system has been rerouted and we've got double heads on all surrounds which is totally new," he said.

The new course will require more intense maintenance but Chris has been assured that he will be given the staff to make sure that the usual high standards are achieved.

With so many changes to the original spec it inevitably placed increasing demands on everyone involved, but despite this an opening date of early April is envisaged giving Wentworth members an opportunity to play the course in for a couple of weeks before it closes in preparation for the PGA.

It would be fair to say that not many, if any, established courses have ever taken on such a dramatic project between major tournaments but as things stood in late



Courses Manager, Chris Kennedy



September they were on track to pull it off.

“Wentworth tends to be at the forefront of most things and I think, with this project, we are there again.

“I have had some sleepless nights, not to mention some fairly fraught meetings but the greatest pressure came waiting for my daughter, Suzanne, to make me a granddad,” said Chris.

“Callum arrived at seven pounds six ounces. I had to give my apologies for a planning meeting to be there, but I wouldn’t have been anywhere else and Mr Caring was extremely supportive.”

Chris has been at Wentworth since 1989 and done 20 PGA Championships, 20 World Matchplays and 10 Wentworth Senior Masters, but next May the relief he always feels will be all the greater as it will signal the end of the most intense period in his professional life.

“When that final putt goes down on that Sunday afternoon the feeling of satisfaction will be greater than ever and I’ll know by the look on Mr Caring’s face if it has all been worthwhile.”



www.harrogateweek.org.uk

Continue to learn

at Harrogate Week 2010
Sunday 17 to Thursday 21 January 2010

The Flagship Education Event for the Sports and Fine Turf Industry

Visit our Harrogate Week page on...
facebook

Venue
Harrogate International Centre
North Yorkshire
England



HARROGATE WEEK 2010 PRESENTS...

WILD WEST BONANZA

TUESDAY 19TH JANUARY 2010 - 7PM THE OLD SWAN HOTEL, HARROGATE

ENTERTAINMENT INCLUDES...

- DOLLY PARTON AND KENNY RODGERS TRIBUTE ACT
- DJ AND PODIUM - SALOON BAR SHOOTOUT - BUCKING BRONCO
- TIN CAN ALLEY - COCONUT SHY - ARCADE GAMES MACHINES

Plus! Wild Casino with 8 Luxury Full Size Tables

BUY YOUR TICKETS BEFORE 30TH NOVEMBER 2009 FOR ONLY £20^{+VAT}
- CONTACT SANDRA ON 01347 833800 FOR FURTHER DETAILS **(£25^{+VAT} THEREAFTER)**



Field woodrush

The grass lookalike weed

Dr Terry Mabbett looks at the strange case of the grass that isn't

Broad-leaved plants and coarse grasses are clearly different and easily distinguished as turf weeds, but suppose you are faced with a weed that looks like a grass but isn't and colonises turf like broad-leaved weeds though is essentially unaffected by selective herbicides.

Culprit is field woodrush (*Luzula campestris*) one of the most stubborn and difficult to control weeds of turf in the United Kingdom.

Field woodrush exploits impoverished soil low in humus and nutrients and acid in reaction. Greenkeepers in northern and western regions generally face the biggest and most intractable problems. That said field woodrush will exploit pockets of impoverished acid turf almost anywhere, even within 'chalk-flavoured' alkaline soils in south eastern England.

On the gentle rolling land where north London meets south Hert-

ABOVE: Field woodrush typically grows in patches plainly visible in April due to a mass of brown flower heads (panicles).

fordshire is a small attractive golf course laid out on ancient 'common land' that pre-dates 'Magna Carta', and famous as the actual site of a fifteenth century battle in the 'Wars of the Roses'. The course has its own perennial battle with tracts of wet acid soil on impoverished land within an otherwise fertile and free draining region of the Home Counties.

The whole area is traversed by brooks and ditches and dotted with springfed ponds. Many of the greens become flooded in winter and some fairways are infested with field woodrush. The field woodrush only becomes obvious in April as large patches with a chestnut brown hue from the flowers that may persist for several weeks because the ground is too soft for prompt regular mowing. The patches of white flowers that follow in June are heath bedstraw (*Galium saxatile*) another other low pH (acid) indicator species.

Field woodrush and heath bed-

straw whether as wild flowers or turf weeds are quite rare in south Hertfordshire, where chalk seams rippling down from the Chilterns to the north provide the overriding soil influence. Without this peculiar pocket of wet acid grassland I would have been forced to travel a long distance to find pictures of the field woodrush used to illustrate this article. That said I doubt whether 'rich' is an adjective the head greenkeeper at this course would use to describe one of the UK's most difficult to control turf weeds growing in perennial abundance in his 'backyard' and well outside of its usual range.

Plant profile

Field woodrush may present a puzzle to all except the dedicated botanist. According to its description field woodrush bears long, narrow and tapering leaves sheathed in a loose layered rosette



Close up on field woodrush with some usefully placed organic fertilizer (rabbit droppings)



Chestnut brown panicles typical of field woodrush



After spring mowing field woodrush retreats into the sward to blend in with coarse true grasses



White flowers of heath bedstraw appear alongside field woodrush in June confirming acid nature and low fertility of the soil



Field woodrush plants showing their tough stolons covered with dead and dying leaf tissue to form a substantial thatch.



Golfers may suddenly find themselves in what looks like and feels like a mini-rough in the middle of the fairway

around smooth stems bearing clusters of brown flowers borne on panicles. On this basis *Luzula campestris* sounds remarkably like a true grass belonging to the plant family Graminae, but this perennial monocotyledon actually belongs to the Juncaceae or rush family. Field woodrush is one of a dozen or so wild *Luzula* species characterised by tufted appearance and dark green grass-like leaves, in this case fringed with long soft and silky leaf hairs. The shiny chestnut-coloured flowers borne on short spikes and developing into three-seeded fruits stand-out en masse in spring, the only time of the year it becomes clearly apparent from a distance.

Profile as a turf weed

Despite being called 'woodrush' *Luzula campestris* is strictly a plant of open aspect grassy places like golf course fairways. That said the 'woody' component of the name could equally well refer to the tough fibrous nature of its stems and leaves which may tear and bruise even when cut with sharp and well set mower blades.

Field woodrush is easy to overlook especially outside its flowering period when the narrow flat leaves blend in with coarse grasses like Yorkshire fog (*Holcus lanatus*) along the fairway. Mowing scythes off the panicles allowing the remaining vegetative parts to melt back in the sward. But field woodrush will not go away because tough creeping stems called stolons continue to spread relentlessly across the surface of the ground rooting at the nodes. The stolons are sheathed with a thick layer of dead and dying leaves which collectively produce an extremely dense thatch on the fairway where patches of field woodrush occur.

Similarity to true grasses in morphology (shape and form), anatomy (tissue structure) and physiology (metabolism) is why field woodrush is such a troublesome weed and almost impossible to control even with modern selective herbicides. Being a weed of impoverished acid soils it is unlikely to occur in the well-managed and nutrient rich professional turf of greens or tees constructed on well-structured and free draining substrates.

Preferred areas may be sandy and free draining or with poor surface drainage, but invariably of low pH and poor fertility. Massed patches of shiny chestnut brown flowers appearing within a narrow flowering 'window' during April and May is the only time field woodrush

is obvious, without getting down on 'all fours' with a magnifying glass. Field woodrush is generally regarded as a problem for turf in the wetter western and northern areas of the country on soils suffering high leaching, high acidity and low fertility. However, this 'pseudo' grass readily invades and takes over equivalent soil profiles wherever they occur, as seen by this particular infestation on the northern fringes of London.

Hard on herbicides

Selective action of early hormonal-type herbicides like 2,4-D and MCPA and later mecoprop was based on the superior adherence of spray to the bigger and rougher leaf-surface targets of broad-leaved dicotyledonous weeds, compared with the narrower and smoother leaves of true grasses. This surface-based selectivity is supplemented by anatomical (inner structure) and physiological (metabolism) differences between grasses and broad-leaved weeds and responsible for differential herbicide translocation rates and varying vulnerability of target sites in the plants' metabolisms.

Field woodrush appears to resist selective herbicide action on both counts. Plants are morphologically similar to true grasses with narrow leaves, and in this case covered with long prominent white hairs that can only further impede herbicide action. The monocotyledonous lineage shared by Graminae and Juncaceae make field woodrush close in form and structure to true grasses, which is responsible for the generally low susceptibility of *Luzula* to selective herbicides.

Clear-cut differences between dicotyledonous broad-leaved plants (e.g. common daisy – *Bellis perennis*) and monocotyledonous true grasses is the very basis of selective herbicide action. However, any differences such as they are between turf grasses and field woodrush appear insufficient for its commercial control by selective herbicides approved for use in managed turf.

Field woodrush is recognised as one of the most difficult to control weeds of managed turf. Some control is known to occur during routine application of newer and more target specific selective herbicides usually after repeated application. That said field woodrush rarely appears on the 'label' of selective herbicides, even as providing moderate control which is sometimes claimed for other 'difficult' weeds like slender speedwell and yarrow.

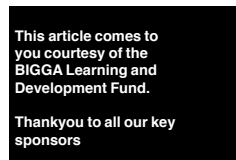
'Commercial Experience' is the unofficial industry-used term to describe 'insider' knowledge on incidental control of field woodrush achieved by certain selective herbicides, though it is not listed as controlled on the product label. Reasons for absence of field woodrush from product labels in spite of its high weed status could be many and varied. They are often related to scope of field trials (e.g. insufficient number or diversity of sites) or nature of trials data showing insufficient control for field woodrush to 'pass the test' and appear on the product label.

Cultural control

Golfers have been known to complain about patches of massed flower and seed heads of field woodrush in spring, when golf balls land in what looks and feels like a mini unofficial rough slap bang in the middle of the fairway. But such complaints are generally few and far between because regular mowing should prevent massed appearance of flower heads. That complaints occur at all just re-confirms the common close association of field woodrush with poorly drained acid ground that cannot be mown promptly and regularly during wet springs.

Cultural control is only realistic way of managing severe field woodrush infestations, by feeding fairways adequately to boost fertility and thicken swards. And by investing in high quality lime-based products to reduce acidity and create conditions less to the liking of field woodrush, without altering composition of the turf grass population. Or else ignore the weed and reap some benefit from having fewer casting worms on the surface of an inherently high acid soil. Any recommendations for physical removal of field woodrush should be approached with care because cut pieces of stolon can root to form new infestations.

Field woodrush is also called sweep's brush after shape of the flower spikes but this not a weed that is easily swept away. However, weeds are just green plants in the wrong place at the wrong time and in other sectors *Luzula* species are valued as ground cover plants especially for poor moist soils. Indeed 'Lawns and Ground Cover' written by Geoff Stebbins and produced by the Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) recommends *Luzula nivea* and *L. sylvatica* 'Aurea' and 'Marginata' for this purpose because they are fully hardy and prefer wet soils and ground in partial shade.







Cream of the Crop

Derek McJannet has been a fine golfer all of his life but his win in the BIGGA National Championship, sponsored by Kubota and Charterhouse, ranks above all his other achievements





Photographed with BIGGA Chairman, Peter Todd, from top to left to bottom right: Gary Thurman, Associate winner, Regional Winners; Ian Robins, Stableford winner; Gavin Robson, Nett Winner; Derek McJannet with the sponsors, and Richard Whyman, Burnham & Berrow Course Manager, below.