



ally with different modes of action and target species spectrum. This provides more breadth and balance in weed control activity and action. Dandelion is generally recognised as one of the more resilient turf weeds. Together with other 'hard to kill' turf weeds, dandelion often requires higher, more frequent or differently timed applications (according to stage of weed plant growth and development) as per recommended on the herbicide product label.

Everything may be 'dandy' for the control of dandelions and other broad leaf weeds in turf at the moment.

However, if the EU continues to squeeze the availability and use of herbicide actives across the board, meaning less chemical weed control and more weeds in the amenity and agricultural sectors, then the story ten years down the line could be completely different.

Dangerous dandelions

Anyone who thinks the dandelion is not a 'dangerous' weed should ask the Japanese how British dandelion, as an alien invasive weed, is hybridising with their native dandelion. The British dandelion (*Taraxacum officinale*) is more difficult to control than Japanese dandelions (*Taraxacum japonicum*) (called 'Kansai tampopo'), and more importantly 'crosses' with it to form hybrid plants that are essentially infertile.

Research work in Osaka's Tsurumi Ryokuchi Park showed British dandelions were 'wiping out' Japanese dandelions, although UK amenity and sports turf managers faced with Japanese Knotweed would probably argue the Japanese had got a better deal.

Anyone still not convinced about dandelions need look no further than the UK railway network where a brand new and powerful locomotive was recently 'brought to a halt' by the dandelion. In May 2010 Grand Central Trains reported a brand new train on only its second run (return trip from Kings Cross to Yorkshire) limping into Halifax Station an hour late because the filters on four of its five engines were clogged with hairy dandelion seed (pappus). Greenkeepers on golf courses alongside railways, and there are many for historical access reasons, beware.

Mention of any herbicide active is not a recommendation for its use. Users and operators should read the product label and if in doubt ask the supplier and/or manufacturer.



Prostrate dandelion biotypes lay flat on fine turf so that the growing point, leaves and sometimes even the flowers escape the mower's blades



Dandelion (top right) is not a dedicated turf weed like slender speedwell (centre)



Dandelion is an opportunistic turf weed, its seeds exploiting gaps in the sward



Turf can quickly go from 'grass green' to 'dandelion yellow' in April

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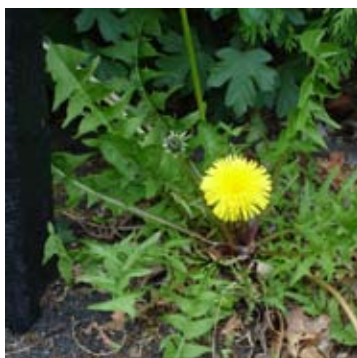
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This year has seen a flush of dandelions especially in uncut amenity swards



This is the fall out for greenkeepers from the dandelion explosion in the amenity sector



Dandelion taproot can penetrate weathered tarmac



A dandelion between 'a rock and a hard place'

This article comes to you courtesy of the BIGGA L&D Fund.
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Practice makes perfect



Two years ago Ransomes Jacobsen opened its superb three hole par-3 course in the grounds of their headquarters. Last month the Ransomes Jacobsen team clinched the annual BIGGA Charity Golf Day at Aldwark Manor, with a winning score of 83. Coincidence?

I am pretty sure RJ's Managing Director, David Withers, will have ensured that his chosen fourball were well honed and peaked for June 14 and that the short game skills, as displayed by Messrs Campbell, Brown, Pattenden and Jones, were genuine evidence of an intensively drilled squad.

A mere point behind were the Q Hotels team and BIGGA's magazine printer, Warners, who each scored 82 with the former benefiting from a slightly better inward half.

This year the Chairman's Nominated Charity was Help for Hospices with all profits and the proceeds from the raffle going to that extremely worthy cause.

Thank you to all the companies which entered teams in this popular annual event, which has been running since 1997, as well as all those who donated prizes for the aforementioned raffle.

INSET ABOVE: Winning teams (left to right): 1. Ransomes Jacobsen, 2. Q Hotels 3. Warners - *photographed by BIGGA Membership Assistant and Happy Snapper, Brad Anderson*

Thanks to those who attended...



RESULTS

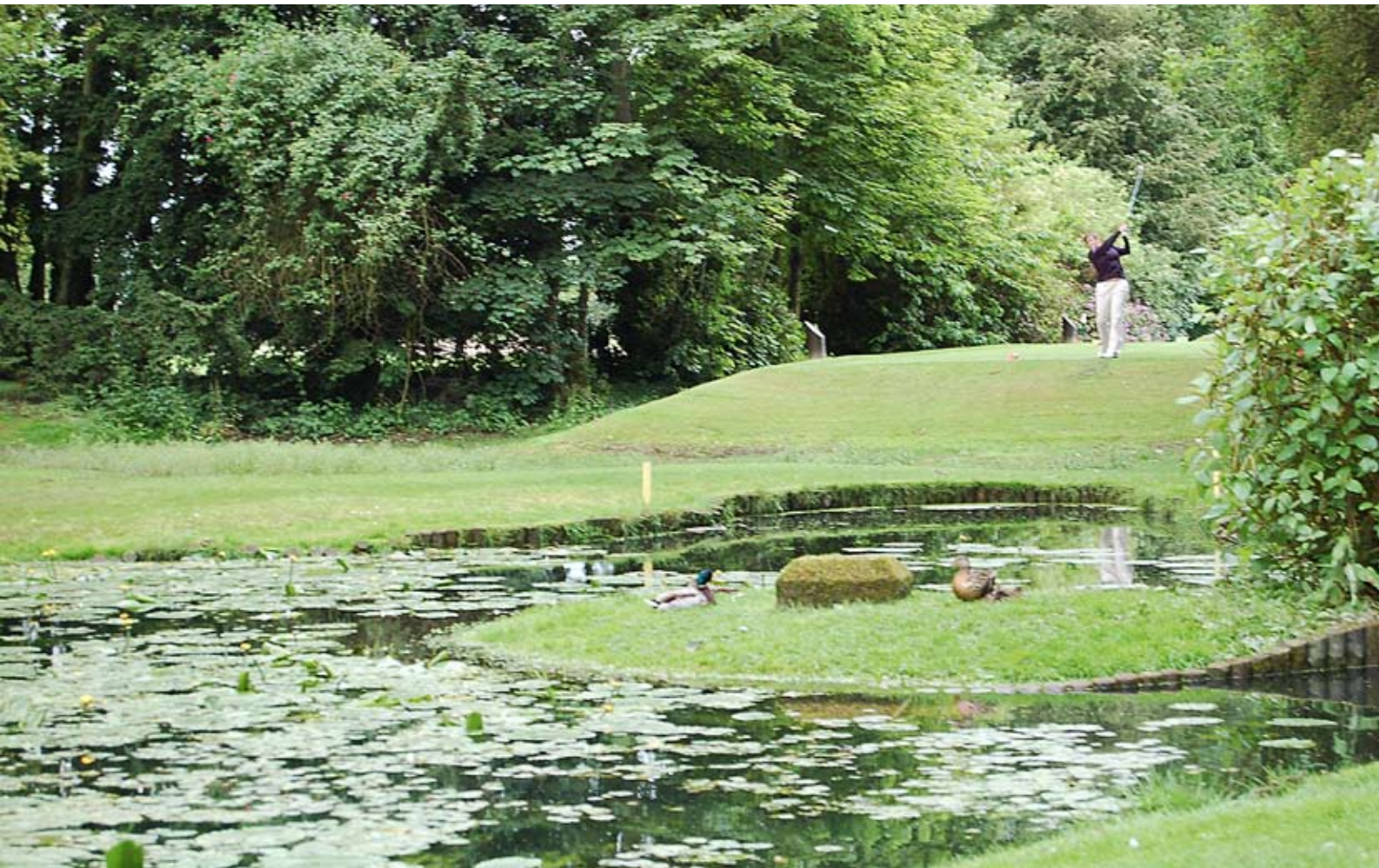
- 1. Ransomes Jacobsen, 83. Andy Campbell, Nick Brown, Peter Pattenden, Stefan Jones**
- 2. Q Hotels, 82 (BIH) Andrew Cook, David Norton, Chris Cottam, Dan Greenwood**
- 3. Warners, 82. Martin Harris, Dave Chapple, Rob Asperlagh, Kevin Greenfield**

NEAREST THE PIN
David Snowden,
Agronomic Services
Longest Drive:
Rob Maxfield, PGA



Practice makes picture perfect...

Just a selection of images from BIGGA Golf Day 2010...
Photography by Helen Fannan







Testing times ahead for Trent Bridge

The England and Pakistan test series begins later this month at Nottingham's Trent Bridge cricket ground. Jim Cook talks to Head Groundsman, Steve Birks, to find out how things are shaping up



Trent Bridge cricket ground in Nottingham is widely regarded as one of the finest of the sport's venues in the world and from July 29 it will host the first test of the series between England and Pakistan. With all eyes and cameras focussed on the pitch, Head Groundsman Steve Birks gives an insight into the preparation involved to create a world class test wicket.

At Trent Bridge there are twelve wickets for first-class cricket in the

central 'square' and of these, five are used as television pitches because of their centrality in the ground as a whole. Several pitches either side of these are used for net practice. In the middle, clay accounts for 30% of the surface and because of the punishment taken during a match, the used wicket is re-seeded after every game. The outfield is built up of *Lolium perenne*, with a hint of *Poa annua*.

Due to the preparation needed for an international test match, Steve begins planning early.

"We normally plan a year in advance; we use the same wicket every year for the tests so we'll find out what test matches we've got. We played the World Cup on it last year, so after that game we seeded it all up, scarified it out and got it all ready for this year. Checked it in September again for all the levels and then top dress any little hollows out and then do the pre-season roll on it leading up to the game. We start about fifteen days before by trimming it out and then watering it and away we go."



“If England come and win then it’s a bonus but you just try for the best pitch out there. The real troubles are from the commentators who are looking at it. Everyone will have their say, but as long as it can last four days and you can get a result at the end everybody is happy usually”

the ground. Every blade of grass has to be spot on, with every angle covered. Plus, it puts a bit more pressure on because we’ve got five television wickets in the centre of the ground, so the more cricket we have on television, the more they have to replay on these five pitches. They look old and tired sometimes if you play maybe about four games on them. For the 20/20 matches we also have to think about marketing because you have the executive boxes behind the stands so that dictates which pitches we will use. There are certain boxes they want to sell so we’re taking a lot more into account with marketing, the cricket manager and everybody else. We normally get on well; as long as we’re pulling in the same direction we’re happy because that’s the big thing.”

And although planning as a team is important, it can also have its limitations.

“At the beginning of the season we do a plan of the pitches. I have the say normally. We show it to the cricket manager, he has a quick

Steve is never pressured into producing a wicket to suit the home team.

“You just try and produce the best possible pitch. If England come and win then it’s a bonus but you just try for the best pitch out there. The real troubles are from the commentators who are looking at it. Everyone will have their say, but as long as it can last four days and you can get a result at the end everybody is happy usually. People listen to what the commentators say and they don’t know what’s

happened in between, but you have to take it both ways; the criticism and the positive.”

With the media, executives and sponsors looking on, Steve is well aware that his work is being scrutinised from all angles.

“They have loads of cameras now. When Sky first started they had about five cameras, now for a test match they will have about twenty. One guy walking around with the roaming camera, one as the players come out of the pavilion, one on a crane and others around



look, we show it to marketing and they have a look, and we sometimes tinkle things about. But the problem with plans is that you could have all the plans in the world but then you get one cricketer who slides on the pitch because nowadays they slide all over the place. They can take a divot out and that pitch might be out for a couple of weeks while we re-seed it up, so you've got to take that into account."

Steve believes that regular interactions with turf professionals from other sports can only be beneficial.

"I go over to Notts County FC and talk to the Stadium Manager, Greg Smith, and Mark from Rigby Taylor, who used to be Head Groundsman at Derby County FC's Pride Park, so we often have a chat with people like that. I think it can really help with different ideas especially now with the grow lights. Football has been using them for quite a while now and they are just beginning to come into cricket as well. If you come into a cloudy day and you want to dry your pitch off you would think about putting them on to help dry it out a bit. And maybe pitches that have just been played on to get the grass back more quickly."

Preparing a cricket wicket, while similar in some areas to preparing a golf course is also vastly different in others.

"You need a good base to start with, with some decent grass on it and all you do is scarify it out then give it a good water. We normally have a screwdriver that we push in to about six inches to check moisture, and then we will start rolling it out. Then it is just a case of keeping an eye on it. If you get the sunshine out it helps a lot.

When you're rolling it with a two tonne roller, you're pulling the water up. All the moisture is coming out then you compact it down. So you've spent all winter growing the grass and then you kill it off by putting the two tonne roller on it. When all the moisture is out of the pitch, we stop rolling. We shave our wickets down to 5mm. The first cut on the wicket would be about 12mm, then down to 8mm, then keep it at 8mm for five or six days and then cut it down to match height about three or four days before the match, which is 5mm."

After a game it takes around three months to have the wicket back in a playable condition.

"The outfield is built up in a similar way to golf greens but the square in the middle is 30% clay, so is completely different to prepare. Like golf greens, every wicket is different and will have its own characteristics"

Steve sees similarities between his job and that of the Course Manager of The Open or Ryder Cup venue.

"They are very similar jobs, but ours is obviously a lot smaller. You've still got the world looking at you and you want everything spot on, that's the key. You've got the pressure of people looking and with cricket it's such a fine balance of getting it right or wrong.

"There is such a fine line of getting it overcooked, especially if you are dealing with clay, that's the difficult thing. With cricket the line is so fine. The outfield is built up in a similar way to golf greens but the square in the middle is 30% clay, so is completely different to prepare. Like golf