



SHEPHERD JOINS AVONMORE

Avonmore Associates has appointed John Shepherd with a brief to consolidate the Fine Turf Maintenance and Construction Departments along with developing the Irrigation and Water Management Departments.

John, 45, joins Warwickshire based father and son management team, Brian and Philip Buttler, who have grown Avonmore Associates to be a national supplier of bowling greens, golf greens, lawn tennis courts and croquet lawns

Brian said, "John has had an exceptionally interesting and successful career to date and we have worked closely with him on a number of projects. His expert knowledge of design and management of irrigation systems will undoubtedly strengthen our management team and we are delighted to have him on board."



New TurfCare Appointment

Tom Kenny joins TurfCare Group as technical sales representative for Kent, Sussex and the South Coast.

Pictured here with Daniel Jones (on right) from TurfCare, Tom will be bringing with him over nine years Course Manager experience and over 15 years within the golf industry some of which was as an assistant professional.

"We are delighted to have Tom on board as he has a wealth of knowledge and experience within the industry, and he will further increase our market presence and customer service in the South East," said Daniel.

What's your number?

Our regular and random profile of an industry figure continues with this month's lucky number...

Name: Bruce Jamieson

Company: B Jamieson Golf Advisors Ltd

Position: Managing Director

How long have you been in the industry?

I started as an apprentice greenkeeper in 1975 so about 36 years.



How did you get into it?

By accident really, I had resigned from a job in retail and my father insisted on me having a summer job raking bunkers at Turnberry Hotel and Golf Courses until I decided what to do with myself.

What other jobs have you done?

I worked for a brief period in retail, in a tailors in Ayr, and hated working inside. I have also been a Greenkeeper, Head Greenkeeper, Course Manager and Director of Agronomy for the European Tour. I am also retained as a consultant to the Toro Company giving advice to key clients and working with colleges and training providers.

What do you like about your current job?

I like travelling and meeting people. I also like visiting golf courses all over the world and working with dedicated professionals who wish to present their courses to the highest standards possible within the budgets set by their individual clubs.

What changes have you seen during your time in the industry?

Everything: education, irrigation, machinery, specialised products such as wetting agents, fungicides, pesticides etc. The biggest change is probably the machinery, cutting heights and their frequency and the way we communicate with mobile phones, text messaging, internet and e-mail.

What do you like to do in your spare time?

I like spending time with my family, cycling, fishing and playing golf.

Where do you see yourself in 10 years time?

Who knows what the future holds but probably doing the same thing as I enjoy the challenges.

Who do you consider as best friends in the industry?

I have a lot of very good friends in the industry but I suppose Mark Black who is the Superintendent at Quail West in Naples Florida.

What do you consider to be your lucky number? 5

Pick a number

43.

Bruce has picked Andy Russell, of Headland.

All-New Toro Greensmaster TriFlex Available as a Hybrid



MAIN PHOTO: The Toro Greensmaster TriFlex 3400 and TriFlex Hybrid 3420 greensmowers are completely new, only the DPS cutting units having carried over from the existing range. Reduced and eased maintenance plus round profile tyres are among the new features. First hybrids should appear in the UK next year.

INSET BELOW: Detail shot of new cast alloy double A-arm suspension fitted to the new Toro Greensmaster TriFlex 3400 and TriFlex Hybrid 3420 greensmowers. In action, the mountings allow the units to follow complex contours for a claimed boost in overall cutting performance.

The latest Greensmaster TriFlex 3400 and TriFlex Hybrid 3420 greensmowers are to be made available in the UK following a successful launch in the USA. New features include a unique Flex double A-arm suspension system for the units. Claimed to ensure the standard DPA cutting units float across contours, the new suspension system is also said to keep the units parallel to the ground for a consistent and quality of cut across the most challenging of greens.

Other new features include redesigned balloon-style tyres that are designed to make tyre tracks virtually invisible and enhanced clippings capture system to leave the course clear of stray cuttings. Those looking after the new models will also appreciate the lift-gate footrest that provides eased access to the central cutting unit and the tool-free, quick-change cutting units. There are no daily grease points either to reduce maintenance.

The mowers can be fitted with spiking or verticutting units without the need for tools, with Toro offering cutting units in 8, 11 and 14-blade versions to suit requirements. These can be set to mow from a 1/16inch to 1inch height of cut. Faster transport speeds and improved ground clearance further increase versatility while saving time.

Both mowers are powered by Kubota 24hp/17.5kw diesel power units, the TriFlex Hybrid 3420 featuring electric cylinder drive with up to 3hp driving each reel.

A stored energy feature on these models eliminates clip marks at start-up, with improved braking power and safety when cylinders are disengaged. Toro has not gone down the all-electric route for these new models, the company stressing the new hybrid models ability to deliver an outstanding cut quality above other advantages.



“We’re prouder than ever to introduce these models,” said Lely’s Toro UK Sales Manager Jeff Anguige. We’ve worked closely with The Toro Company’s research and development team to create a greensmower with the UK golf market in mind. Of course, greenkeepers are excited to see Toro’s first hybrid, but the overall benefits of both mowers are just as impressive.”

www.toro.com

NEW RANGER CREW DIESEL FROM POLARIS



The new Polaris Ranger Crew diesel shares the 904cc, three-cylinder Yanmar diesel engine with the Ranger Diesel, coupled with the ability to carry six adults.

The fully-sealed, fixed centre distance clutch drivetrain keeps water out of the clutches and provides excellent

performance. Inside the cab, the vehicle has the ability to carry six adults comfortably due to its superior comfort and ergonomics, including a slide-through cab design for easy entrance and exit that also provides lots of leg room.

The Ranger Crew Diesel includes a 55

amp alternator that gives the operator the ability to run many hard working, higher electrical load accessories, such as ploughs, extra lights, cab heaters and fans at the same time.

www.polaris-britain.com

Terra Groom New from Wiedenmann

Wiedenmann UK has added another brush to its product list that is equally suited to both synthetic and natural grass use. The Terra Groom shares similar characteristics with the Terra Brush; however, it is lighter and offers a different 'zig zag' brush arrangement.

Fitting units 15 hp and up, the 1.87m wide brush can either use 3pt linkage or there is a trailed option with electric lifting.

The 3pt linked version weighs just 90kg while the trailed just 110 kg.

There are three rows of brushes configured as a solid

row, a zig-zagged row and a final solid row.

On natural grass, the Terra Groom is ideal for removing early morning dew. It can help turf to look its best by presenting it really well, leaving it as the name suggests, groomed.

The Terra Groom is ideal for either light or heavy dressings on all natural surfaces. The trailed option also offers the operator the opportunity to adjust the pitch from the front brush to the back brush allowing dressing in, rather than spilling down both sides.

www.wiedenmann.co.uk

NO MORE SLIPPAGE

Grassform Group has launched Grasslok, a safety surfacing for grass covered play areas, which is designed and manufactured in the UK. The product can be cut to any size or shape and is quick and easy to install. It can also aid with grass and land retention by controlling erosion. Grasslok comes with the highest rated slip resistance certification, promotes natural play and is exceptionally hard wearing.

Mark Dunning, Director of Grassform Group, commented: "At Grassform Group, we are constantly striving to improve our offering and service to as many industries as possible. We are confident that the launch of the Grasslok will allow us the opportunity to expand our client portfolio."

As well as supplying ground protection solutions, Grassform Group supplies plant hire equipment, land drainage systems and natural grass sports surfaces.

For more information on the new products

www.grassform.co.uk

One man bands

Working as a lone greenkeeper on a nine-hole course can be a tricky yet rewarding business, as Jim Cook found out, after speaking to Chris O'Dowd, of Cambridge Lakes Golf Club, and Miles Skehan, of Ampleforth College Golf Club, in North Yorkshire

The number of bicycles which can usually be seen propped outside Cambridge Lakes' clubhouse give a sound indication of the ethos of the club; everybody is welcome.

From students cycling down for a round before lectures, to groups of children curious to give the game a go, the team at the club, which lies just one-and-a-half miles south of Cambridge city centre, pride themselves on giving all a warm greeting.

Teamwork is the key at this nine-hole, par-three club and although Chris O'Dowd is the sole greenkeeper, he has the backing of sagacious colleagues to help deliver quality throughout the year.

Chris explained his daily routine: "Normally first thing on a morning I come out, clear the dew, repair pitch marks, check the tees and rake the bunkers while cutting the greens. I usually prepare during the

week and on a weekend we have some school children come in and do some work around the course. Then I'm back in Monday morning getting the course ready for the following weekend. We handle around 30,000 rounds a year here and cater for everybody. Anyone can stroll in and play so we try and make it a bit of a challenge but also fairly generous to any standard of golfer."

Cambridge Lakes' greens now contain around 80% fescue and Chris said he, Club Owner, Bob Barnes, and the rest of the team at the club worked hard to bring them up to standard, with minimal use of nitrogen.

"We limit our use of nitrogen on the greens. Our main supplier is Symbio and we work with them to try and improve the soil biology. We've been on it for about a year now and it's going really well.

"It has reduced the number of times we need to cut the greens as well because you don't get the unnatural growth from the nitrogen. It's more sustainable. We use compost tea once a month to help worn areas recover. It smells a bit funky but does the job."

Chris spoke about the advantages of being the sole greenkeeper: "You get a lot more involvement in what goes on. I make a decision based on what I think and because I play golf myself, I know what needs to be done."

Five-handicapper Chris also happens to be the joint holder of the course record, along with the club's pro, James Burton.

A qualified greenkeeper himself, James has been mentoring Chris since he began working on the course and as a team along with Bob, they are a positive example of how a group can work together at a





club to support the greenkeeper out on the course.

Bob and Chris have undertaken mechanical courses to get themselves up to speed in case of a breakdown.

Chris added: "I like fixing things, it's always good fun and I do a bit of everything, which is something else positive about being the solitary greenkeeper; you get to do all kinds of jobs."

This 'Jack-of-all-trades' mentality must be one of the most important traits for a lone greenkeeper of a nine-hole course and one that Miles Skehan, of Ampleforth College Golf Club, shared.

"It was a bit of a shock to the system when I first started because I wasn't trained on the mechanical side of things, but I found that I had to very quickly learn it," he said.

"I've got to plan every week that something is going to go wrong with the machinery.

"If something doesn't go wrong in the week, I'm ahead of the game.

"I try and use the rule that if something is broken, I fix it straight away. I'm also trying to have a backup for every piece of machinery, for example after I got the new greens mower, I kept the old one in good condition as a reserve in case there is a problem."

He emphasised the importance of planning as a lone greenkeeper and said: "I've learnt a lot of skills

"We limit our use of nitrogen on the greens. Our main supplier is Symbio and we work with them to try and improve the soil biology. We've been on it for about a year now and it's going really well"

Chris O'Dowd, Cambridge Lakes Golf Club

for maintenance, organising and planning.

"It is vital to plan a structured week. I plan absolutely everything and it is all on my mobile phone and computer; I put nothing on paper."

Miles said these organisational, structure and planning skills originated from a spell at Loch Lomond and his education at Myerscough College. He added his previous job, as manager of a large clothing retailer, also helped.

"I have been out of the game for a little while doing business management and I learnt so much there. I feel as though I've brought my business head into the world of golf and I reckon if I hadn't have done that, I couldn't have run this golf course. In terms of researching cheapest prices, materials, suppliers and having the confidence to go to the committee and the manager of the club and say 'this is why we're doing this'."

This planning helps him stay in

control and if there happens to be a problem, he is in a position to deal with it. Miles saw this as being integral to effective lone greenkeeper golf course management.

"I've tried to make every single part of what I do everyday as efficient as I possibly could. It really is the key. One of the major ways I've gone about this is by managing the golf course culturally rather than using large doses of fertilisers and chemicals and excessive amounts of water.

"I've also introduced large areas of conservation, because they're in out of the way places so there's no point in cutting it when it could be perfect for flora and fauna."

While anybody in this situation will have their own methods for getting the job done, Miles was geared toward using every piece of modern technology available to him.

"Everything I do is digital. It saves time and ensures it's recorded. If I see a problem while driving out on the course, I email myself from



TOP LEFT: Ampleforth College
ABOVE AND MAIN ABOVE:
Cambridge Lakes



my phone as a reminder to sort it when I can. I make myself a list of jobs for the week on my PC, so any issues encountered can be added to the calendar and either resolved myself or reported to the appropriate person.

“I have a parts book up in my workshop, but if I’ve broken down out in the middle of the course, I get my phone out, find the part, get the number and get it dealt with.”

He saw prioritising as an essential ingredient of lone greenkeeping.

“I prioritise jobs using a really simple system of A, B and C on a spreadsheet. The only ones I give A to are health and safety issues that have to be done straight away. B is something that needs doing and C is a job to be done if possible.

I love this system, it works for me and that’s the key of finding some-

thing that works and personalising it to your needs.”

Miles has two other people, including his dad, who are on zero contracted hours, but step in to help out when necessary.

“They are both fantastic because they are both flexible. If I have a machine break down and can’t cut a part of the course I can ask them to do it. It works because I am flexible too.

“I can’t work from 6am-2pm every day because if it rains when I’m due to cut, I’ll go home and come back to get a better finish. If we’ve had a really bad week of weather and been unable to do the jobs at the start of the week, I’ll work 12-hour days or whatever is required to catch up. I couldn’t do this job if I wasn’t flexible.”

As well as this support, he has

the support of the members.

“I’m very lucky on this course because there are a lot of passionate, helpful members who are always willing to come and help. They care about the course and just want to get stuck in.”

Miles highlighted the advantages of lone greenkeeping.

“When I’m out there by myself, I know what I can do, I’m not having to manage other people and I can just get on. Because I’m organised and clear in my planning I feel I couldn’t be any more in control than I am now. The one thing that stops me being in control is the weather.

“I feel I’m very much involved in the golf course because I have to check green-fees as well as maintaining it. Because of this, I’m the face of the course and I feel I’m



Ampleforth College



Ampleforth College

trying to sell it every time someone is playing. If I see someone on green-fees, I'm always trying to sell them membership."

Loving the vocation, as with any greenkeeping job, is a prerequisite for lone greenkeeping.

"I love this course passionately and I can't describe how much I enjoy being out there doing my job. It's never going to be a championship 18-hole golf course with our budget, but it is a great little 9-hole course.

"I work harder now than I've ever

worked in my life and that is vital for the course. It wouldn't survive otherwise. I have to be willing to take on responsibility for everything. If something goes wrong and I need to work until 9pm to fix it then I'll be working until 9pm because it's my responsibility.

That's the sacrifice you've got to make in this business. If there is a problem with anything I deal with it straight away otherwise it will cost money in the long-run.

"You can't come into greenkeeping and take on a course on your

"You can't come into greenkeeping and take on a course on your own if you don't love the job. But you can't achieve everything and I am by myself. There just aren't enough hours in the day. You want to make it perfect, but it can't always be. You've got to stop somewhere"
Miles Skehan, Ampleforth College

own if you don't love the job. At the same time though, you can't achieve everything and I am by myself. There just aren't enough hours in the day. You want to do everything and make it perfect, but it can't always be. You've got to stop somewhere."

This attitude was common to both solitary greenkeepers featured here. What shone above all the organisation, planning, versatility and humour, was their love for the role they had taken on and the clubs they represented.

Whether it was Chris stealing onto the course in the dead of night to water his parched greens, or Miles labouring over a broken fairway cutter late into the evening, both strove toward achieving a standard of golf course maintenance they could be proud of calling their own.



Miles Skehan



Chris O'Dowd

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THIS PAGE (BOTH IMAGES)
A stake was provided for the
hornbeam (12) and the pine
(12A) but no-one bothered to
secure the trees with a tie and
they are consequently bent.