



## Headland Amenity

Accurate weather forecasting tailored to a specific location is one of the most useful tools for greenkeepers and groundsmen aiming to plan course maintenance operations.

Headland Amenity offers Weathercheck, a personalised weather forecasting service allowing turf managers to access information on temperature, wind speed and direction as well as rainfall, with the choice of a general seven day forecast or a more detailed projection."

The innovative 'RainNow' option produces a 25km 'rain radar map' with their sports facility at the centre, and by using the Agronomic module, which combines anticipated rainfall, wind strength, precipitation, air temperature and evapotranspiration, they are able to accurately judge spraying conditions over the coming week.

Mark Wilshire, Head Greenkeeper at Wenvoe Castle Golf Club says that Headland Weathercheck's accuracy is impressive. "I use Weathercheck on a daily basis, if not hourly. Weathercheck is always the most accurate. I apply my pesticides and fungicides through a sprayer and Weathercheck helps me pinpoint the best weather window for spraying. Our time window for spraying isn't huge so an accurate weather forecast is invaluable. Weathercheck proved very useful last summer with all the rain."

Eric Olson, Estate Manager at The Royal Automobile Club in Surrey also added: "I use Weathercheck 3 to 4 times a day as it is updated regularly and is most accurate for the local area."

## Two Bunker Solutions in One

Two of the country's top bunker construction companies have formed an alliance to ensure that golf clubs across the country will receive the best possible advice and service when it comes to developing bunkers on their golf courses.

Envirosports Ltd and Blinder Bunker Liners have each developed unique bunker products which have been warmly embraced by golf clubs over the last two years and between them the two companies have solved many of the bunker problems that have bedevilled golf clubs during that time.

The two concepts are different. EnviroBunker is a bunker face and edge solution which is resistive to all forms

of erosions while Blinder Bunkers provide a rubberised, flexible free draining liner which prevents contamination of sand. Both are developed from 100% recycled material, have a design life of 20+ years and together offer a completely maintenance free bunker solution.

EnviroBunker Blinder can be used jointly as seen at a recent collaborative project between the two companies at Royston Golf Club in Hertfordshire where the two products were used together to produce a fully sealed bunker solution.

There are also occasions when one or other will be the best solution to a club's bunker issues.

"We know that our product

is suitable for bunkers with faces over 45 degrees and that Blinder works best with faces that are under 45 degrees so we are more than happy to recommend Blinder if we believe that is the best option. Blinder also offers a base solution, we do not, and likewise we offer a finishing revetted edge solution which is unique to our product" said Rhydian Lewis, Envirosports Director.

"Once we've taken a look at the bunkers in question we will offer the best solution and should that be EnviroBunker we will be more than happy to recommend that option to the golf club," said Murray Long, Blinder Director.





## JSM SWEEP N FILL BRUSHES COMPETITORS ASIDE

The latest version of the original and unique Sweep N Fill brush – the SNF III – has built on the legacy of the original with enhancements to make it even more user friendly and convenient. These include a narrower transport width, higher & faster transport lift with more ground clearance and a fully enclosed drive mechanism which allows for adjustment without removal of the protective covers.

The ground driven brushes can be towed by a golf cart, bunker bike or any small utility vehicle. The brush action mimics a 'push-broom' action – gently flicking the plant leaves upright while moving sand and topdressing into aeration holes and the crown of the plant.

Jim McKenzie MBE, Celtic Manor Resort said, 'Having been told about the SNF by existing users we arranged a demonstration while visiting BTME last year. The demo immediately proved the point as to how effective this brush is. It has transformed a laborious task.'



## GreenTek showcases TuffTek

GreenTek, the well-known mower attachment manufacturers, used BTME to showcase a wide range of security equipment from their TuffTek division.

The True-Surface Select-A-Vibe rollers supplied by GreenTek are well known for their ease of use and their ability to create outstandingly smooth fast

putting surfaces.

What not everyone is aware of, is that they are also uniquely effective for vibrating topdressing into the turf and down hollow coving holes. GreenTek therefore focused their 2013 BTME stand around a working demonstration display that shows how this is achieved.



## CourseTracker

A free and easy to use new online system that helps golf courses manage themselves more sustainably and efficiently has been launched by The R&A.

CourseTracker was unveiled at BTME 2013 in Harrogate. It's designed for golf course managers and club secretaries to record the income derived from the course and what is spent on its maintenance.

The secure system allows golf clubs to monitor their performance over time and identify strengths, weaknesses and areas where savings could be made in terms of energy and water, for example.

CourseTracker also enables golf clubs to anonymously benchmark their performance against that of other clubs of a similar size in their country. It produces accurate performance reports for the use of course managers and club secretaries and can be used to keep committees informed and to aid decision making.

The system has been extensively tested with course managers, club secretaries and industry bodies and their feedback has been used to develop and refine its range of functions. It has been endorsed by England Golf, the Golfing Union of Ireland, the Scottish Golf Union and the Golfing Union of Wales.

Steve Isaac, Director – Golf Course Management at The R&A, said, 'There is more pressure than ever on golf clubs to make the right

decisions to manage golf courses sustainably, efficiently and cost effectively. CourseTracker can help them do that through recording, monitoring and reporting their activities and inputs. We know this is an area where many clubs struggle due to lack of time and resources.

'CourseTracker is free, completely secure and can enable clubs to compare their performance on an anonymous basis with other clubs of a similar size and situation. The aim is to give clubs more information and understanding of their course maintenance activities to enable them to improve performance.'

Paul Keeling, Club Services Manager at England Golf which has supported CourseTracker, said, 'CourseTracker is an excellent new resource for golf clubs which can really help them get a grip on their expenditure on course maintenance. It is so important to manage golf courses sustainably both to protect the environment and reduce costs. This is a quick, easy to use system which can deliver accurate and useful management information for golf clubs. We will certainly be recommending CourseTracker to courses we work with in England.'

CourseTracker can be accessed online at [www.coursetracker.org](http://www.coursetracker.org). Golf clubs need only spend a few minutes registering before using the system. It is simple to use and there are full online tutorials available for guidance.





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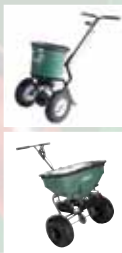
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# BTME 2013

Thanks to all for attending - see you next year

# A generation devoted to turfgrass testing

Dr Andy Newell this year celebrates 25 years of unbroken work compiling independent test data for the TurfGrass Seed booklet. Jim Goodwin spoke to him

turf – which links the sea and land – possessed finer characteristics, hence the preference for using this type of turf in a non-links setting grew.”

The STRI recognised that a better range of grass species was needed for golf and sport at large. “We started to look at breeding grasses for golf, and our first success was with Dawson Slender Creeping Red Fescue, bred at Bingley and eventually sold to a manufacturer.

“We were also trying to find grasses from other sources, as well as developing some early commercial elements. Today, you couldn’t rightfully breed grasses for golf yourself and then test other manufacturers’ breeds. The commercial world back then wasn’t what it is now. Needless to say, it probably took us 25 years to produce a grass worth cultivating.”

When courses began to be built inland, course architects moved grasses inland from their links environment, which worked well in some instances. But the necessity of a scientific focus to seed testing was accelerated by companies selling grasses and heightening claims for their performance without any independent trialling to back them up.

The STRI began testing more widely and invited growers to submit their grasses for trialling alongside other manufacturers. The first competitive trial took place in 1965 and five years later, the STRI and growers came together and decided that a publication should be assembled to collate all the results. The first booklet was launched in 1978 and has grown to become the industry ‘bible’ it is today. “When I started the brochure was very much based on opinion. Part of my remit was to move the science of the industry forward. In the early days the respect for my predecessor John Sheldrick’s analysis proved sufficient for con-

sumers but as the business side of the industry moved on, it became more pertinent to have quantifiable data, numbers and rankings. The numbering system currently in place can be traced back, allowing today’s consumer to see exactly how and why a cultivar has been given the rating it has. Ultimately, our job is to help the breeder sort the champions from the also rans.”

If his 25-year association with the Institute has taught him anything, it’s that you should never advocate using a poor cultivar, in any circumstance, even if it’s just down to a cost consideration.

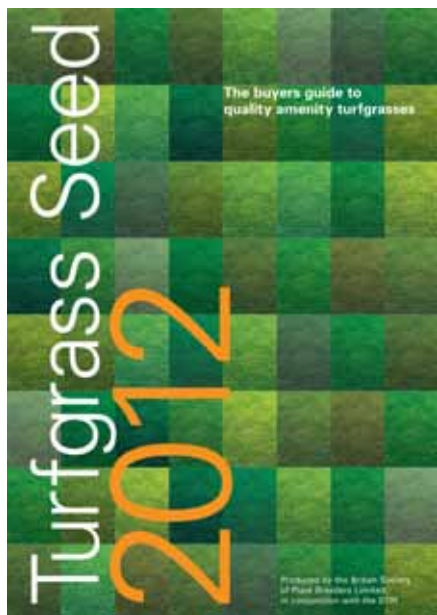
The quality of your turf has to be a long-term factor, so any differential in price should be thought of over a longer period, in which case the price difference becomes minimal.

“If you use the booklet superficially, merely going by who tops the table, you won’t get any rubbish but if you’re an educated greenkeeper you can make some far more well-informed decisions based on the specifics of the course and the environment.”

Although the turfgrass industry is constantly evolving certain grasses differ little from the 1970s, he says. The slowest evolving grass in his quarter of a century stint has been bent grasses. “Some of them on the list now have been there for over 20 years, largely unchanged. In stark contrast, the perennial species and red fescues are big business for breeders, so the turnover of new cultivars within these categories is frequent.”

The nature of this vitally important reference work has changed and evolved as much as the industry has in a quarter of a century. But what does the future hold?

“The tall fescues are where we predict the major evolution will occur. They’re at the stage where perennial ryegrasses once were and the breeding potential is vast. If we can improve the attractive-



**It’s been a staple of the industry for generations, has continued to shape current trends and given us a scientific footing concentrating on impartiality and quality.**

The Turfgrass Seed Booklet is at the heart of sports and amenity turf breeding and is the UK’s most trusted source for independent grass cultivar trials data.

Since the first booklet was published in 1978, one man has exerted perhaps more influence in its evolution than any other – and this year he celebrates 25 years of compiling the catalogue of turf performance data that characterises the publication.

Dr Andy Newell, Head of Turf Grass Biology at the Sports Turf Research Institute in Bingley, West Yorkshire, has been responsible for data analysis and the assembly of trial results as performance ‘league tables’ since 1988.

In that time, aspects of seed trialling have changed beyond recognition, while others have varied remarkably little.

“When the STRI was formed in the 1920s, one of the core aims of the Institute was to create a scientific base for testing and trialling turf,” he explains. “There was very little science behind the way turf was used prior to this but what they did know was that sea-washed



The patchwork of trial plots where STRI conducts tests on cultivars provided by growers.





**“The quality of your turf has to be a long-term factor, so any differential in price should be thought of over a longer period, in which case the price difference becomes minimal”**



ness of them, there’s huge scope for commercial growth from breeders. You wouldn’t recognise a perennial ryegrass now from 20 years ago, and the same could be true for tall fescues.”

He claims the most pressing issue would be to stop talking about *Poa annua* and start doing something about its prevalence in turfgrass.

“*Poa* really needs some investment and for decent research to be done, the end game of which would be to understand the relationship between *Poa* and other grasses so users can exploit its weaknesses better,” he argues.

The whole thrust of the Turfgrass Seed booklet is a willingness to adapt and evolve, take on new practices and welcome new cultivars into the increasingly multi-faceted repertoire of greenkeeping skills.

In the UK, more senior grounds professionals have grown up with a host of chemicals at their disposal - treatments that they could fall back on to keep the ills of turf maintenance to a minimum. Or as Andy puts it: “We’ve moved from nuclear weaponry to small arms, and in the future were likely to just be using bow and arrows. We have to adapt and it’ll bring real greenkeeping skills to the fore.”

He offers an example of what modern greenkeepers have to contend with. “You might sow what you believe to be a preferred seed mix, but in reality, you can never guar-

antee that that’s what you’ll get. If you sow a mix of bents and red fescues, for example, one or more will come to prominence depending on the weather. Nature will start to select the best cultivars for the environment and that’s where the art of greenkeeping comes in to play – working to the strengths of the desirable grasses and to the weaknesses of the undesirable.”

The longevity of the booklet is

proof enough of its impact on the industry but for Andy, it’s the reward of knowing that you’ve helped produce something of worth that’s praise enough.

“We’ve prevented a free for all among breeders, and guarded against those with bigger budgets producing poor seed but enjoying the biggest consumer base.”



**Richard Brown, amenity sales manager at British Seed Houses, said: “The BSPB Buyers guide is an invaluable guide to turf professionals as it records the results of independent and thorough trials which accurately reflect a cultivar’s performance. A variety that does well in these trials is taken seriously in the market place and gives greenkeepers added confidence. We have a reputation for quality and investment in developing cultivars and understand the real worth of the guide.”**



# The sands of time

Laurence Pithie MG met up with Matthew Nutter, Course Manager at the East Berkshire Golf Club and a BIGGA Section Secretary, to find out more about the recently completed bunker renovation project

**Now celebrating its centenary, East Berkshire GC is largely tree lined, with housing and a main rail line to London around its perimeter.**

Although relatively short by today's standards at just over 6,200 yards, playing the course requires accuracy with numerous ditches, bunkers and heather awaiting an errant shot. Most areas of the course are blessed with fine indigenous turf, overlying an acidic soil which although not sandy in nature, does provide reasonable natural drainage and sufficient growth.

In terms of layout, little has changed in a hundred years except for the inevitable growth of trees, loss of heather and the impact this has had on the character and playability of the course. Both shade and limited air movement are issues that constantly have to be addressed and achieving a balance between the needs of the turf and the wishes of the golfer can be a constant challenge at any club. Trees apart, turf conditions have remained relatively consistent on most playing areas of the course. However it was the 54 bunkers which were increasingly bearing the brunt of members' concerns. As turf conditions have generally improved at most clubs throughout the UK, it is bunkers that are often at the top of the agenda for improvement. The three main criticisms at East Berkshire were inconsistency in sand depth caused by irregular shaping to the bunker bases, poor internal drainage caused by a membrane wrapped around drainage pipes, and an uninteresting style and loss of shape over a period of time. On a number of holes, the location of the odd fairway bunker

## about the author



### Laurence Pithie MG

Laurence Pithie MG runs his own training and consultancy company, Turf Master One Ltd. Previously he spent 17 years managing multi-site golf operations in the UK. With 42 years in the golf industry, Laurence has used his experience and knowledge to produce a number of recent 'case study' articles.

RIGHT: Typical bunker style prior to renovation work

BELOW: Matthew (4th right) and his team who carried out the finishing work







was also not relevant to the modern game although this was generally regarded as less of an issue.

In 2008, Matthew Nutter was appointed as Deputy Course Manager, having previously gained an HND at Myerscough College while working at The Wisley Golf Club. After a spell at Pelican Marsh in Florida, under the auspices of the Ohio State Program placement scheme, Matthew progressed to East Berkshire and became Course Manager in 2009.

He says: "With continued improvements to the course, in terms of turf conditioning and presentation as well as project work on tees and paths, the bunkers were the one area of the course which fell below the standard expected. After initial consultation with the club, Howard Swan from Swan Golf Designs was appointed as Course Architect to make an assessment of the golf course and form a strategy for bunker improvement. Having received his in-depth course report and recommendations for all bunkers, the club then presented the plan to the membership, receiving full Board approval to complete the work on 11 bunkers over three holes with the remainder to be completed in a further two years.

"The plan included the appointment of John Greasley as the external contractor to carry out the main renovation work, while

all turfing and final sanding of the bunkers was to be carried out by the six greens staff. Work started in 2009 and the 11 bunkers were completed largely as planned for a total cost of just over £30,000. The basic objectives were to produce bunkers that were more in keeping with the natural character of the course, being better shaped and giving consistent playing standards throughout the year. They also had to be as maintenance friendly as possible in order to keep future costs to a minimum and that meant being well drained and free from wash-out and sand contamination.

"After initial success and positive feedback from the members, full consent was given to complete the remaining 40 or so bunkers over the next two years. Completely remodelling 20 bunkers per year was no easy task and it meant that all other winter course work over those two years would be kept to a minimum. Member competitions in 2010 and 2011 would finish on 30 September, enabling work to commence in October when ground conditions were still favourable.

"We estimated the contract work would take three months with final turfing to be completed around six weeks later. This worked out at one bunker being completed every three days. Snow cover and very low temperatures throughout December and early January delayed the work



**MAIN ABOVE:** Greenside bunkers largely completed and ready for turfing

**ABOVE MIDDLE:** Bunker shaped, drained and turf wall inserted

**ABOVE:** Extensive turfing work around the bunkers carried out 'in-house'

for six weeks. However, work was finally completed in late March just before the start of the season. With over half the bunkers now completed and the membership pleased with the results, the third and final phase started in October 2011 and



was completed on time by the end of February 2012. A much more favourable winter with low rainfall certainly helped to make life easier.”

All shaping and mounding was carried out by the contractors with soil being retained on site. Fortunately most of the soil was used ‘in-situ’ which meant very little had to be moved any great distance. As a result, any damage to the turf was restricted to small designated areas which were then re-turfed. Existing bunker drains were replaced with standard plastic perforated pipe and stone and connected to existing outlets, except for a few that either had to be replaced or have new laterals installed. This ensured each bunker would drain efficiently. The method used within the bunker was to shape the base with existing soil, sloping gently into the drain and to consolidate the entire area with a wacker plate. Fortunately the soil was of reasonable quality and free of stone which negated the use of any liner, saving time and money. A turf wall formed the

fully re-turfed with heather added to a number of bunker banks to give a more natural look. During the first phase of work, existing and designated areas of heather were removed by the excavator in large sections but this was difficult to work with. Afterwards, areas of heather were cut with the turf-cutter at 50mm depth, removed and laid as per turf. Once the newly laid turf had established, sand was placed in each bunker and spread to a consolidated 100mm depth. It took approximately one day to complete the turfing on each bunker using four staff. For the entire project, around 500 tons of Kingsley Washed Sand were used, 50 tons of drainage stone, 500m of plastic drain pipe and about 10,000m<sup>2</sup> of Bargold Classic turf from Inturf. 10 bunkers were relocated and six removed or amalgamated into one. The total cost of the project was just under £150,000 which worked out at less than £3,000 per bunker - this included architect fees, contractor cost and all materials.

**Drainage and playability have been fully tested this year following record levels of rainfall and the work completed by Matthew and his team have served as an indication for other clubs as to what can be achieved**

perimeter and gave each bunker a distinctive shape and defined edge.

The native soil was then replaced to form the newly shaped mounding in line with the architect’s recommendations. The style of the new bunkers consisted of a ‘rolled’ turf edge with moderate sand faces featuring a short but moderate slope and visible from the main playing area. Each bunker surround was

This was an ambitious project to undertake but one that was well planned and completed to an excellent standard throughout. Along with fairway re-shaping to accommodate the renovated bunkers, the project has been an outstanding success and greatly appreciated by both members and guests.

Drainage and playability have been fully tested this year follow-



**ABOVE TOP:** Fairway bunker complete and base consolidated prior to sanding

**ABOVE:** Raking the ‘new’ 18th bunker after heavy rain. No wash-out or sand contamination

**BOTTOM LEFT:** Greenside bunkers on 6th

**BOTTOM RIGHT:** Bunkering by 17th green

ing record levels of rainfall and the work completed by Matthew and his team have served as an indication for other clubs as to what can be achieved. Bunkers are no longer an issue at East Berkshire and the work completed has raised the standard of a club that continues to have a waiting list and an entrance fee for membership; an investment that has clearly paid off.

Laurence is grateful to Matthew Nutter and East Berkshire GC for their support in producing this article.





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*Augusta from the Philippines, 2011*



*Roderick, from Moldova, 2011*

*In the time I have been here, I have learned different irrigation techniques, various soil conservation methods, different methods of fertilizer application, and equipment maintenance and operation. I believe I will be able to get a good job in this field when I return home.*







# Temperate turf

**Microdochium nivale is the universal plant pathogen of temperate turf. Wherever turf is sown, laid and managed, as a professional playing surface in temperate climates, then M. nivale is never far behind. M. nivale is the well-known and well-worn disease of grass stems and leaves popularly known in the UK as Fusarium Patch.**

Younger greenkeepers may wonder why a disease caused by a fungus named *M. nivale* is called Fusarium Patch since *Fusarium* is a fungal genus in its own right with dozens of different species.

The reason is that for many years this fungus and pathogen of turf grass plants was officially called *Fusarium nivale*.

Greenkeepers can blame mycologists (people who study fungi) to thank for this 'neo-Orwellian name game'. They will have changed the name in accordance with some obscure characteristic (like 'bumps' on the microscopic spores) which placed the fungus closer to the *Microdochium* genus than the *Fusarium* genus. In fact the change from *F. nivale* to *M. nivale* was simply the last of many name changes 'ordered' by mycologists since the fungus was discovered

and described in 1825 as *Lanosa nivalis*.

## **Microdochium in a maritime climate**

*M. nivale* performs best and leaves turf looking its worst in maritime countries with a classic mild, moist climate maintained by the benign influences of the 'surrounding' ocean and its associated currents and winds. For the UK and the Republic of Ireland, where turf damage caused by *M. nivale* is as bad as anywhere in the world, the environmental influences on which this fungus relies are The North Atlantic Drift (Gulf Stream)

## **about the author**



### **Dr Terry Mabbett**

Dr Terry Mabbett is a disease, pest and weed control specialist with forty years international experience covering research, advisory and journalism. His current fields of focus are professional turf and alien insect pests and pathogens of Britain's native and naturalised trees.