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January-February 2020 | £4.95

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with Jim Buttar, new
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TURF MATTERS

2020: A vision of the future

It's my great pleasure to welcome you to the first Turf Matters of a brand new decade. I'm feeling good about this and about the next 10 years – even the name 2020 has a positivity, a clarity about it and I'm hopeful that we are emerging from the treacle we all found ourselves attempting to march through in recent years.

It is a big sporting year. The Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics will be a highlight. We all saw how well the Japanese organised the Rugby World Cup and the manner in which the locals embraced the tournament, even when natural disasters were leaving their mark. I'm sure the Olympics will be an even more spectacular few weeks.

The Euros, with a semi final and final to be played at Wembley, will have the country at fever pitch – especially if one of the home nations perform well. Remember back to Euro 96, and the way in which the entire country got involved in the tournament?

These are three huge events but there will also be the regular annual sporting calendar highlights to keep us interested throughout the entire year.

It is going to be an exciting year for Turf Matters, too. We have some great plans for the future, not only for the magazine, but also for our website and for our YouTube channel. I'm delighted to see that many more of you are enjoying our videos and are subscribing to our channel.

You can be sure that we will keep delivering interesting content over all our platforms through 2020 and beyond.

Scott MacCallum, Editor



YouTube

Distributed every two months to sports turf professionals, independent schools, universities, local authorities and buyers of turfcare machinery and products.

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AERATION: Keeping turf in tip top condition, pages 53-57



JCB ENGINEER SCOOPS TOP APPRENTICE AWARD

A JCB Design Engineer is the toast of the UK after winning a national apprentice award.

Louise Meredith, 21, scooped the title of Higher or Degree Apprentice of the Year at the finals of the National Apprenticeship Service Awards in London, just weeks after winning the regional final.

"I'm passionate about apprenticeships and undertaking a degree/higher apprenticeship has been a fantastic way to start my career, so to win this national award is just amazing. I still can't believe I've been recognised in this way," said Louise, a Design Engineer in the Loadall division at JCB World Headquarters, in Rocester.

"We are immensely proud of the outstanding achievements of all our award winners who have excelled in their studies at JCB," said JCB Director of Learning and Development, Max Jeffery.

Applications for JCB's 2020 programmes are now open.

Ernest Doe is authorised distributor for Ransomes and Jacobsen equipment

Ernest Doe will now serve as the authorised distributor for Ransomes and Jacobsen turf equipment in Suffolk and Norfolk territories, expanding its relationship with the brands.

The company will sell and service Ransomes and Jacobsen equipment from three branches in both Suffolk and Norfolk. Ernest Doe already represents the brands in Essex, Herts, Beds, Cambs, Kent, Surrey, East and West Sussex.

Ernest Doe recently showcased Ransomes Jacobsen's Ipswich factory to staff and customers, and hosted a golf day at Ipswich Golf Club.

"During these two days, we wanted our local customers and Ernest Doe staff to see the full capability of the factory and what we do here," said William Carr, Director of Sales for Ransomes Jacobsen.

"A lot of people who know of us don't always understand the scope of the operation, and by showing them around, we can give them a first-hand look into the manufacturing process.

"It's a perfect opportunity



for the Jacobsen brand in its home territory," said Andy Turbin, Groundcare General Sales Manager for Ernest Doe.

"We're back in Ipswich where the machines are built, and a lot of these customers have never been to the factory so it's a great chance for us to get them on board and

show them the products.

"I want every single golf course in Norfolk and Suffolk to go to the factory and see what's being produced locally. It isn't until you see a pallet of metal go in at one end, and a precision mower come out the other end, that you fully appreciate what they do there."

EXPANSION AND NEW BRANDING HERALDS BRIGHTER FUTURE FOR CLEARWATER

ClearWater, the British designed and manufactured, washpad water recycling system, has seen a recent expansion and new branding.

It's a well-established brand name in the UK since its introduction in 2003 by Highspeed Group Ltd. Following steady development and



the start of export sales, Acumen Waste Services Ltd acquired the company in the spring of 2017.

A separate ClearWater Division was set up, led by General Manager Matthew Mears. Sales

have since moved forward to enable the division to handle the extra business and expand further.

The company has recently taken on extra staff, and is reaping the benefits of the large parent company, Acumen Waste Services Ltd. The team are backed up by a contingent of "Cross-Trained" Acumen staff,

well versed in ClearWater.

These expansion plans have seen the introduction of new marketing initiatives too with the emphasis on re-branding; an updated logo (sympathetic to Acumen branding), a new and up to date video and fresh advertising/publicity.

"The logo may have changed but it's the same

class-leading ClearWater system. Watch out for it on social media, exhibitions, advertising and our other marketing," said Matthew.

ClearWater now has the opportunity with these extra resources to expand beyond the traditional, but still important, golf sector and target other markets (not always turf maintenance based).

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PROUDLY BRITISH

John Deere training sets new record



A record-breaking total of 66 young parts and service technicians are being trained in this year's John Deere Ag Tech, Parts Tech and Turf Tech advanced apprenticeship programmes, the highest total intake since the first Ag Tech induction in 1992.

The group includes for the first time apprentices from Ireland, the John Deere Forestry division and the Wirtgen road construction business, which Deere before (five altogether).

These annual, award-winning programmes are run in partnership with the dealer network and national training provider ProVO at the purpose-built John Deere Apprentice Training Centre in Radcliffe-on-Trent, Nottinghamshire in the UK.

"There's never been a better time to consider an apprenticeship with John Deere," said Training Centre Manager, Allan Cochran.

"The increasing levels of automation used throughout our products, including

artificial intelligence, advanced electronics, satellite guidance systems and telematics, give us the ability to diagnose and repair machines without even laying a hand on them."

John Deere's three-year Ag Tech and Turf Tech and two-year Parts Tech apprenticeships involve students being trained in engineering, electronics, hydraulics, diagnostics, communication skills, computing, sales and marketing.

In subsequent years qualified technicians undergo further education and adult training within the John Deere University programme, on a career path that can ultimately lead to the highest possible LTA Master Technician accreditation.

Now in its 28th year, Ag Tech was the first such scheme to be introduced in the UK and won a National Training Award at the end of 1997, the only one ever made to an agricultural machinery apprenticeship programme.

ETESIA LAUNCHES RIDE-ON MOWER



Etesia chose SALTEX to launch the new Hydro 80 MKHP5 ride-on mower ahead of its official 2020 release.

The Hydro 80 MKHP5 can cut and collect in all conditions

with the added benefit of a differential lock. The new model will give operators extra traction and stability on difficult terrain by reducing wheel spin, reducing damage to the grass and aid in cutting presentation.

Thanks to a range of additional accessories including a snow plough, users are able to extend the versatility of the machine so that it is ready for any scenario 365 days a year.

Cutting height and emptying of the grass collector can be adjusted from the driving seat, while the steering console is fitted with a timer, rev counter and electric starter.

A hose pipe fitting makes cleaning the cutting system quick and easy, while the tool-free access to the engine allows for easy maintenance thanks to quick access to all mechanical parts.

Farol use new Foley grinders

Farol Golf and Turf Machinery has purchased a Foley Company Accu-Pro 633 with Accu-Touch 3 Control and an Accu-Pro 661AT bedknife grinder to bolster its grinding operation.

Grinding is an integral part of the company's business and is fundamental to what they offer to the golf and leisure industries. Their current relief grinder, an Accu-Master 650, has proved popular with technicians and was one of the reasons they decided to go with Foley again and continue working with ProSport UK Ltd.

When it came time to decide on new grinders, After-Sales Manager for Golf and Turf, Oliver Longden, consulted with the technicians and appraised the Foley machines against others on the market.

"We had a look around at what else was available, but there was nothing comparable for what we need to do," Oliver explained.

"Our guys are already familiar with the Foley machines, and we've had a good history with our Accu-Master. We'll continue using it alongside the Accu-Pro 633 during the peak grinding season because it still does exactly what we need it to.

"The most significant benefit with the 633 against other manufacturers is being able to

relief grind correctly. We can relief grind any units without having to make massive changes to the machine, whereas with other manufacturers you must take a part off or swap something over and it all takes time. With the Accu-Pro you can switch from 7 to 11 to whatever number of blades, easily and quickly.



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To find out more

contact Marie Anderson

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Look out for our superb piece on Haileybury School and hear the thoughts of recently appointed Head Groundsman Andy Richards, in our next issue.

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Jacobsen 305 helps Lochemse to elevate its performance

After greenkeepers and members became frustrated with the quality of cut and condition of the fairways at Lochemse Golf Club, Head Greenkeeper, Geert Olthuis, switched brands to Jacobsen and has used a Fairway 305 to turn things around.

No stone was left unturned by Geert in his search for a new fairway mower. He trialled five machines before the cut quality, and simplicity of the Jacobsen 305 was picked to elevate the fairway's aesthetics and performance.

Initially, Geert was sceptical about the mower specification compared to the machine he had been using, but he explains how his opinion was soon changed.

"When we saw the cutting finish, we couldn't believe it because it was so good. I was unsure of the Fairway 305 when I first saw it because it only had seven blades and no groomers, but it cut better than our mower that



had groomers and 11 blades.

"We were looking for a simple machine with a better quality of cut and higher capacity. We had demos of four other mowers but the 2.94m cutting width, cut quality and simplicity of the 305 really impressed us.

"Nicely cut fairways

make a course better, but our members, and us as greenkeepers, weren't happy with the results of our old machine, even when we were mowing three times a week. Now, we as greenkeepers and our members are very happy with our fairways again."

That cut quality comes

from the five 66cm floating head cutting units that follow all contours and undulations to ensure an even cut on all areas. The floating head system works with the four-wheel-drive – provided as standard – which provides greater traction and causes reduced turf compaction.

Record-breaking attendance at SALTEX

SALTEX once again proved to be the industry's showcase event with over 500 brands on display and a record-breaking 9,104 visitors in attendance.

The show not only attracted visitors from the UK but also a high number of overseas visitors.

In fact, it saw visitors attending from 49 overseas markets. Many attendees made the journey to the NEC from Europe, Asia, America and Africa – underlining the international nature of the event.

It is also the perfect platform to inspire the next generation of groundscape practitioners and it was encouraging to see a younger demographic of visitors on the show floor, such as 13-year-old Jack



Davies who enjoys gardening and mowing lawns in his spare time and aspires to be a professional landscaper.

"I've been wanting to come for the past two or three years and this year I have finally managed to convince my Dad to take me. This is like

Christmas for me," he said.

The SALTEX College Cup competition, sponsored by Toro and Reesink, demonstrated just how well young groundscape students are being academically prepared for careers in the industry. The Myerscough College team saw off competition from

four other colleges to win this year's trophy and can now look forward to a visit to Real Madrid's Bernabéu Stadium where the winning students will get the opportunity to learn from Paul Burgess, Director of Grounds and Environment for the Spanish footballing giants.

All eyes now turn towards SALTEX 2020, the exhibition's 75th anniversary and CEO Geoff Webb is already looking forward to the celebratory event.

"SALTEX has moved from a horse racing track in Windsor to the National Exhibition Centre and the fact that we are now gearing up for our 75th annual show next year is testament to the community of the sports turf industry and how it has grown."



Proven reliability from Toro at Stowmarket

As part of a significant investment project, Stowmarket Golf Club has committed to its first fleet deal with Toro and distributor Reesink Turfcare.

The golf club has long been a Toro customer, but this is the first time it has bought multiple machines together.

Matt Gill, who has been at the club since 1989 and Course Manager for the last 13 years, explained that the club was investing in the future of the club and that Toro is very much a part of

that process.

"We're focusing on making sure the course can stay open for play all year round. We have been making improvements, enlarging our tees, overseeding fairways and improving the drainage and pathways. Not only are we keen to ensure that our members can play all year round, but that they can play uninterrupted for as long as possible each day, which is an area where Toro is key.

"In this deal we're replacing our existing Reelmaster

6700, a machine that has performed consistently and constantly for 11 years, ensuring we're always ready for play by 9.30am. I wanted the continuity of Toro and although the old machine is still going strong, we demonstrated a number of five unit machines but opted for the wider machine again, ensuring minimal disruption and increasing productivity."

Matt has also opted for a Workman HDX-D utility vehicle with a Multi Pro 200

top dresser.

"We've been thinking about how to tackle the pitchmarks on a regular basis and the solution is to use the Toro Pro Pass top dresser. Since they arrived we've made great savings in the time spent applying sand and incurring much less disruption as we do it."

Matt has been buying Toro machines for over a decade, throughout which time Toro's longevity, productivity and value has been proved time and again.

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Cub Cadet scoop Innovation Award

The Cub Cadet Infinicut SM34 Rotary Mower was the winner of the 2019 Innovation Award at SALTEX. Celebrating the most technologically advanced equipment in grounds management, the panel of expert judges selected the SM34 from a long list of entries that spanned the sports turf, grounds and landscaping industry.

From a final shortlist of three, entries were judged on what the product offers the industry and how it makes the life of the operator easier. The panel described how the Infinicut has 'taken the rotary mower as we know it into the 21st Century' – ticking the environmental box thanks to its emphasis on a modern, clean power source and utilising 'the InfiniApp

to eliminate spanners and grazed knuckles when adjusting the deck height.'

The introduction of a revolutionary side collector also impressed the judges, giving the operator a more comfortable and practical working position.

"We are incredibly pleased and humbled to have scooped the Innovation Award this year. The SM34 combines concepts, ideas and customer feedback to take product that is known but to place it firmly in the modern era," said John Coleman, who developed Infinicut over a number of years.

"We congratulate other finalists and say a big thank you to our employees involved in bringing this fantastic machine to market," added John



PELLENC UNVEILS AN EXTRA THIN BATTERY



Extra thin, compact and lightweight, the Pellenc ULiB 750 battery offers a superb power to weight ratio.

Developed to work with all Pellenc battery tools in the range, the ULiB 750 has a compact design, weighing less than 4.5kg, making this backpack

battery the ideal power source for tree surgeons as well as grounds maintenance professionals.

It has a full LCD display on the front of the battery which allows the operator to see power consumed, cost of fuel saved in terms of petrol, the tools that have been used and a battery life indicator.

The new battery is also IP54 water-proof rated, meaning that the worry some users have of working in the rain with a battery-powered product is no longer an issue.

It also comes complete with the new battery harness designed around user comfort which allows the battery to be stood upright when taken off of the operator.

Sandspreader for Kingfishers

Kingfishers Golf Club, in Suffolk, has purchased a GKB Sandspreader SP100 to maintain their impressive grounds, through GKB's distributor Ernest Doe.

"Finding a machine that's compatible with our Jacobsen Truckster was essential to us and a main factor when choosing the GKB Sandspreader SP100," explained Matthew Thacker, Managing Director of Kingfishers.

Matthew also made mention of the quality of customer service and the product range offered by GKB and its distributor Ernest Doe saying, "GKB machines are extremely well designed and built."

Developed and produced in GKB Machines' Dutch energy neutral industrial plant the GKB Sandspreader SP100 showcases premium quality with industrial durability.

Available in four different

designs with several options, Kingfishers Golf Club will mostly be sanding their greens with the GKB Sandspreader SP100. Accurately applying sand and

in varying quantities to keep golf courses in prime condition, this machine is ideal for both construction and maintenance.



A photograph of three men, likely greenkeepers, standing on a golf course. They are wearing black protective gear, including helmets and earmuffs. The man on the left holds a brushcutter, the man in the center holds a chainsaw, and the man on the right holds a long-bladed trimmer. The background shows a lush green golf course with trees.**STIHL**

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White Horse invests in Campey fleet



White Horse Contractors has invested in a fleet of Campey machines as part of a four-year investment plan.

In February last year, the Slatter Group added White Horse Contracting to their portfolio to enhance their natural turf and pitch construction services. As part of the acquisition, David Smith was installed as Managing Director from his previous position at the Slatter Group and began sourcing new machines.

With a particular focus on pitch construction and renovations, the list of machines included a Dakota

Turf Tender 440, Vredo DZ 225.75, Koro Speed Harrow and two Raycam Speedressers. Both Raycam machines have played a key role in the new build constructions with large quantities of sand required for the projects.

The drop-spreader is designed to handle all top dressing material. Its high work rate enables it to spread up to depths of 2mm-75mm in ones pass while the four flotation tyres minimise the risk of turf damage and compaction.

David had to consider numerous factors, including

machinery quality and operator feedback, but the speed of delivery was vital to ensure that planned projects could begin on time.

"We looked around the market at the various equipment and myself, and the operators preferred what Campey could offer us," David explained.

"We based our decision on operator feedback because I think it's essential to listen to the people that use the machines, and we also focused on the service.

"We had outstanding service from Ben Taylor and Campey in general, and I was

impressed with their ability to do the deal and deliver the products quickly. We needed a quick turn around with the new equipment to get started on projects, and Ben delivered a lot of the equipment direct to site to help us with that.

"White Horse Contractors have a fantastic reputation in this industry, and we want to use that experience while keeping the level of service and raising the aspirations of the company. The four-year investment plan is a major part of that as is the machinery we purchase to take us forward."

CULFORD SCHOOL OPTS FOR LATEST TDR-15

When Culford School in Suffolk were looking to replace their 10-year-old Progressive TDR-15 they had demonstrations of various other roller mowers, but found none of them quite made the cut... instead they opted for the new and improved TDR-15 model.

Size, versatility and manoeuvrability were among some of the main reasons they wanted another TDR-15.

"People's initial reaction when they see the mower is surprise at how large it is and think that the only place it can be used is in big wide spaces. Our estate has tree plantations with random trees dotted all around and is situated in a river valley," said Tom Atkinson, Head Groundsman.

"Despite that the mower with a skilled operator can get into small spaces by reversing into small gaps and using the rear deck. Where some similar machines are configured as three abreast, having one deck to the rear with the TDR-15 is a real advantage. All the decks are hinged so they follow the ground independently of each other and as it's a roller mower that leaves a fantastic finish."

All-weather tees 'best value'

Huxley Golf has completed a major installation of 27 all-weather tees at Poulton Wood, one of the most highly regarded pay and play golf courses in the south of England.

With this installation the facility will stay open throughout the winter months.

Poulton Wood is run by the Tonbridge & Malling Leisure Trust, responsible for the delivery of sport and leisure facilities for the council. As such, the course must be affordable, high quality and accessible to all members of the community.

"Our vision is simple: 'more people, more active, more often' and we're delivering this through the provision of a wide range of facilities which enable participation in activities that promote physical and mental wellbeing," said Darren Lanes, Head of Leisure at Tonbridge



& Malling Borough Council.

"Consistency is incredibly important but this is naturally harder to achieve when it comes to enabling outdoor leisure pursuits given the vagaries of the British weather.

"These winter tees have

proven to deliver excellent value for money through operational resilience and an uninterrupted year-round revenue stream which we can reinvest in, extending our efforts for the whole community's benefit."

Huxley Golf used its Premier Tee Turf 2 across both the 9 and 18 hole courses. Each tee measures 12ft x 12ft.

"It's safe to say that the Huxley Golf winter tees have been a real return on investment," said Head Greenkeeper, Stuart Crowley.

"We first installed all-weather tees with Huxley Golf 20 years ago and we've never looked back. With virtually no maintenance requirement, the use of these winter tees not only delights our customers, but it also frees my team up to ensure that the remainder of the course remains playable in increasingly challenging seasonal conditions."

Sherriff finds the 'ideal tonic' for Tiverton

George Stephens, Course Manager at Tiverton Golf Club in Devon, claims that Sherriff Amenity has provided him with the ideal tonic to help the greens combat stress and aid root development.

George has been the Course Manager at the club for four years and he revealed that the board laid out their expectations from the very start.

"When I first came in for my interview it was clear that they wanted change. Improvement was vital and they wanted the club to be the Augusta of the West," he explained.

Instead of feeling the pressure, George was determined to set out and make his mark and he began with an overhaul of the existing maintenance programme and products.

"I set out to trial a number of different products to try and identify which products would be the best for this site within our budget. I started with fertiliser trials on the fairways and there was one product which really stood out and that was Sherriff Amenity's Evolution Controlled 18.0.32."

Evolution Controlled is a fertiliser range

consisting of nutrients packaged in a coated granule that are released over an extended period of time. It is a controlled release autumn and winter fertiliser specially formulated with high potassium for turf hardness which ensures a rapid growth response, even at low temperatures – something which particularly impressed George.

"It gave us exactly what we looking for. The first time I applied Evolution Controlled was at the end of the summer to try and get the recovery. I put it down at 35g/m² and in the first two weeks it was like wildfire which is what we wanted. We then applied a growth regulator and from then on it was nice and gradual right the way through until the end of

December/start of January.

"I was surprised because there are not many other products that I've seen grow in this period – in fact my third fairway was still growing at Christmas. The other products we trialled Evolution Controlled against just seemed to slow up at the end of October."

As George continued to implement improvements around the golf course, his attentions soon turned to the greens. He persisted in trial work to find an ideal tonic to help the greens combat stress and aid root development and was adamant that seaweed was the solution.

"I'm quite particular when it comes to seaweed products and although it may sound strange, I can always identify a good seaweed by the smell of it. There are so many types of seaweed and just a basic sniff can tell you so much.

"Sherriff Amenity's Seavolution liquid really does smell of authentic seaweed. It is cold processed, not heat treated, which means you are getting all of the goodness straight away."

George Stephens,
Course Manager
at Tiverton

INNOVATIVE APP IS PASSPORT TO SUCCESS

Passport365, a sport facilities management app developed in the East Midlands, has sold its Australian territory rights to synthetic grass specialist Tuff Group in a six-figure deal.

Passport365, an innovative mobile application, allows all of those connected with sports surfaces across the world to book in jobs, record their daily activity and upload images from the sites they manage and maintain, which can be viewed by asset managers in head offices across the globe in real time.

The application is the brainchild of Garry Martin, Managing Director of Replay Maintenance, who developed the app over two years and launched it for global sale in April last year.

Fraser Gehrig, Managing Director of Tuff Group Holding Pty Ltd, heard about the app soon after its launch and after trialling the software was immediately impressed by its potential benefit to his company which operates across Australia and New Zealand.

"It's been a hectic few months for Passport365, having launched for global sale just last April," said Garry.

"Our early adopters have given us amazing feedback and we're now supplying the software to clients who are managing everything from single-use sports facilities all the way up to those running hundreds of surfaces across the UK."

Garry and the Passport365 team are currently in talks with sport and leisure surface specialists in other parts of the world who are interested in buying the rights to use the app in their territories.

AGROVISTA ACQUIRES MAXWELL AMENITY



Agrovista has completed its acquisition of leading sports turf, landscaping and horticulture business, Maxwell Amenity.

First announced in October, the deal brings together two of the most experienced and progressive teams in the sector, further strengthening Agrovista's position within the professional turf management.

A combined senior management team is currently working on plans to ensure a smooth integration of the two businesses – Agrovista, which currently services the sector through established brand Sherriff Amenity, and Maxwell Amenity.



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Colliers Park earns its stripes

Dylan Thompson, Grounds Maintenance Manager at Colliers Park, near Wrexham, believes that the Dennis PRO 34R far exceeds every other rotary mower he has used in the past.

The former Sheffield Wednesday FC Assistant Head Groundsman has been in the top role at Colliers Park for six months now and is already making his mark.

With all eyes on the brand new development centre, Dylan and his two members of

staff are helping to maintain the two natural turf pitches and the synthetic pitch to the standard expected by a national footballing body.

No stone was left unturned in the launch of Colliers Park and Dylan found himself in the fortunate position of receiving an arsenal of brand-new turf maintenance products – two of which were Dennis PRO 34Rs.

“To be honest, the PRO 34R was the machine I wanted most and this was based on

my previous experience of using Dennis Mowers,” he said. “I had heard about it on social media and I spoke to other people in the industry – I heard so many good things about it and to not hear anything negative whatsoever was obviously a massive positive.”

The Dennis PRO 34R is a 34” rotary mower which has been designed to help groundsman achieve an aesthetically pleasing appearance and desired

playing surface. It is ideal for sports pitches and lawns producing the enviable ‘Dennis Stripes’, while a powerful vacuum flow collects debris quickly and efficiently. “It’s very impressive – I was expecting it to be good but not this good! The clean-up is fantastic and it sucks up so much into the grass collection box. It is also quick so we are saving time – we are normally going on speed setting 3 which is perfect for us.”

Pathways provide winning routes

Rochester & Cobham Golf Club invested in a new set of pathways last year and their success has benefitted not just the golfer but also the maintenance of the course.

Part of the club’s ongoing development for members was to programme an upgrade of the pathways around the clubhouse, to the practice facilities and to the 1st tee along with upgrading the practice facilities with SSP All Weather Synthetic Grass Practice Tees together with a



covered teaching bay using SSP’s ProGrass Tee+ artificial grass.

SSP offers a variety of path solutions to suit the paving needs around a golf course,

SuDS Bond Paving is an attractive, extremely hard wearing, option which improves the safety of course members and visitors, and reduces foot and buggy/trolley noise and reduces the risk of water pooling due to its porous nature.

Resin bound gravel is a mixture of rubber granules and decorative stone, bound together with polyurethane binder. It is strong and hardwearing while being reasonably flexible.

Artificial Grass Pathways

is primarily made from a manufactured tufted synthetic grass carpet. The surface is laid over a base, while blending in naturally with the surrounding environment.

It is not just pathways which SSP offers. The ProGrass Tee+ system is the result of years of research to provide a system that will act in a similar manner to natural turf. The ProGrass Tee+ surface is dense enough to allow a golf tee to be inserted into it just like natural turf.






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STRIving for



SCOTT MACCALLUM RETURNED TO AN OLD HAUNT TO LEARN ABOUT THE PHENOMENAL TRANSFORMATION THAT HAS TAKEN PLACE AT THE STRI

You invariably get a nice warm feeling when you return somewhere that you haven't been to in some time. It might be a holiday destination, a pub in one of your old haunts, or just the town where you grew up.

For me, the most recent example of this, and forgive me if this sounds a little geeky, was the STRI in Bingley, West Yorkshire. It must have been at least 15 years since I last visited, but driving up through the country park and seeing those unassuming looking offices set behind a wall brought back some lovely memories.

That there was a specially-reserved parking space for Turf Matters made it all the more special.

Once I was inside, however, it became apparent that while everything appeared to be extremely similar to what I'd seen a decade and a half before the STRI is now a very different animal.

What was once the go-to body for commercial testing of grass varieties, chemicals and the like; the body, which boasted state-of-the-art research laboratories producing ground-breaking innovation, and whose agronomists where to go-to guys for golf clubs and sports facilities throughout the land, now has so many more strings to its bow.

Indeed, what was once a hard-earned reputation which opened doors UK-wide is now a body with a worldwide reputation, and one which has contributed to the success of some of the biggest sporting events on the planet.

One man who has been with the Institute throughout this remarkable metamorphosis is Richard Stuttart, who joined the STRI in 2003 as a Pesticide Trials Controller straight from university and rose to his current position as Head of Consultancy.

"You can track the change back to not long before the end of the 2000s, when we were approached by FIFA to assist them with the World Cup

in South Africa. It's not something which we had done before, but we were brought in because the pitches due to be used for the World Cup were struggling and not at the level they should have been. It was a serious problem," explained Richard, who also sits on the Institute's Executive Management Team.

The STRI was brought in with a mere 100 days to go before the start of what proved to be a vibrant and exciting World Cup. If you remember, the assault on the eardrums from the vuluzelas was a constant reminder that this particular World Cup was the first to be held on the African continent.

However, had the STRI not become involved, it may not have been the ringing in our ears for which the 2010 World Cup would have been remembered, but the less than satisfactory playing surfaces.

"Standards are massively variable all over the world so that's why FIFA engaged us. We assessed all the venues and put management strategies in place to bring them up to speed," said Richard, adding that it was not just for all for all the main pitches but all the training pitches as well.

It was a mighty task, made all the more so by the fact that in



success



Richard Stuttart, top
and Mark Ferguson

some instances there was only a matter of weeks in which to affect an improvement, but making a success of what was perhaps not Mission Impossible but more Mission Extremely Difficult was what put the STRI on the world map.

"A door had been opened and it was just the kind of big step which allowed us to become involved with other worldwide sporting bodies."

And there is none larger than the Olympics, and with London 2012 just around the corner it was another huge opportunity for the STRI to strut its stuff on the world stage.

"It was another big turning point for us as we were engaged by the London Organising Committee to design and build the Equestrian track in Greenwich Park. This was a massive change for us as it meant we were also involved in the planning of the project."

Managed by another man in Lee Penrose, who has risen through the ranks at the STRI, from work experience placement to become Group Director, the Institute was the principle contractor in building the track, then running it through the Olympics themselves, and then spent three years reinstating the park for its post-Olympic life.

"The park ended up in better condition than it started, which was a big scoop for us," recalled Richard.

"Being involved in events like the World Cup and the Olympics have brought it to where we are right now and it is thanks to people like Lee, who thought outside the box with regard to the Greenwich Park project, which has got us to the stage where we now have an organisation and people with the skill sets to make these big steps forward."

The portfolio of services and skills available through the STRI now is truly extensive – Research & Development, Sports Surfaces Design & Construction, Product Testing & Material Analysis, Stadia Pitch Design and Management, Agronomy & Ecology, Sportsturf Consultancy, Planning, Drainage & Irrigation, Aviation, Environment, Green Spaces and Training.

It is so much wider than the previous incarnation of the Institute and not only has the offering to the client become much greater the global reach has developed as well.

The STRI now has bases in Brisbane and Melbourne in Australia as well as Qatar, China and Hong Kong and the name Sports Turf Research Institute is known and

revered everywhere sport is played.

Indeed there are no real equivalents anywhere else.

"There are a number of smaller organisations, and some US university-based Institutes but they don't tend to have the range of staff under one roof which we have here. Having been established since 1929 the experts we have gathered under one roof is quite exceptional. Some of those staff have been here for a long time," said Richard.

As the man who leads the consultancy department, which offers an A-Z, start to finish service, of Plan – Design – Build – Operate Richard is well placed to talk about current requirements for any new or renovation projects and what is being worked on at present.

"I've got a staff of five. We have just appointed a higher level Planning Environment Manager and the team has the capability of producing Environmental Impact Assessments, within which we have associates we can bring in to assess the archaeological, cultural heritage, traffic and transport elements of an EIA.

"The fact that we can provide the whole package, that plan, design, build and operate, is where we have our USP and we are able to ►

“THERE ARE A LOT OF GREEN ROOFS NOW WITHIN URBAN LANDSCAPE DEVELOPMENTS AS THEY ARE REQUIRED TO MEET CERTAIN REQUIREMENTS. WHAT WE ARE DOING HERE HELPS THEM MEET THOSE REQUIREMENTS. THEY LOOK GOOD AND TICK AN AWFUL LOT OF BOXES”

- ▶ achieve planning permissions for golf courses and sporting facilities, in challenging environments which is extremely valuable as golf courses are often planned for designated or protected land sites,” said Richard.

The build side has become more significant to the STRI since they established the construction company Carrick Sport, based out of Cumbernauld in Scotland. The company was founded in 2018 and has already been responsible or the recently built pitch at Tynecastle, home of Hearts.

One of the most exciting projects currently underway is in Saudi Arabia for the Riyadh Equestrian Club. The world's richest horse racing event is being held there on February 29, 2020, and the STRI have been commissioned to convert the all-weather track into a grass track.

“We have had staff working over there for some time and, as it is the Saudi winter, the track is being sown out with cool weather grasses. It is another very exciting project for us.”

While the STRI's worldwide reputation grows at apace the traditional work in the laboratories and on the testing plots continues to be carried out. Indeed, the annual STRI seed booklet remains a must read for everyone in the industry.

Mark Ferguson is one of STRI's Research Managers and also the Institute's Mr Wimbledon, spending



time at the All England Club offering agronomic advice and taking court performance measurements to ensure that Neil Stubley has all the data he requires to produce pristine surfaces for the most important tennis event of the year.

Mark was keen to show me some of the innovative work that is being carried out in addition to the regular patchwork of testing plots for varieties and grass species.

Green roof technology is being trialled which obviously has potential environmental benefits which stretch far beyond the sports' brief more

associated with the Institute.

“There are a lot of green roofs now within urban landscape developments as they are required to meet certain requirements. What we are doing here helps them meet those requirements. They look good and tick an awful lot of boxes,” explained Mark.

Another product being tested on the extensive site is Permavoid, a product which interested the STRI so much that they took an interest in the company.

“Permavoid is a plastic layer which can replace the gravel banding within a rootzone. It is a really good product and can be placed under any construction whatsoever. It's been in Holland for years and we think that most water directives or regulations for the building of new sports surfaces will be required to use this to hold water or take water away. You can also put a wick in it to draw moisture up and act as sub surface irrigation,” explained Mark.

It goes to show that while the STRI's horizons are wider than ever, research is still at the core of the company and continues to produce great results.

I certainly hope that it won't be 15 years until I return to Bingley but I am sure that however short the break is between this and my next visit there will be more change and more exciting work to discuss.

I just hope that there will still be my reserved Turf Matters parking space.

An STRI 'Grass Roof', top, amid the impressive and extensive site at Bingley





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Don't score an own goal with your borehole

Last November Norwich City Football Club was named joint fifth in a sustainability league table of all 20 Premier League clubs.

The table was compiled by BBC Sport, working with the United Nations-backed Sport Positive Summit, and one of the reasons for the club's success was the fact its Carrow Road pitch is watered via a borehole and the training ground recycles the water from the pitches.

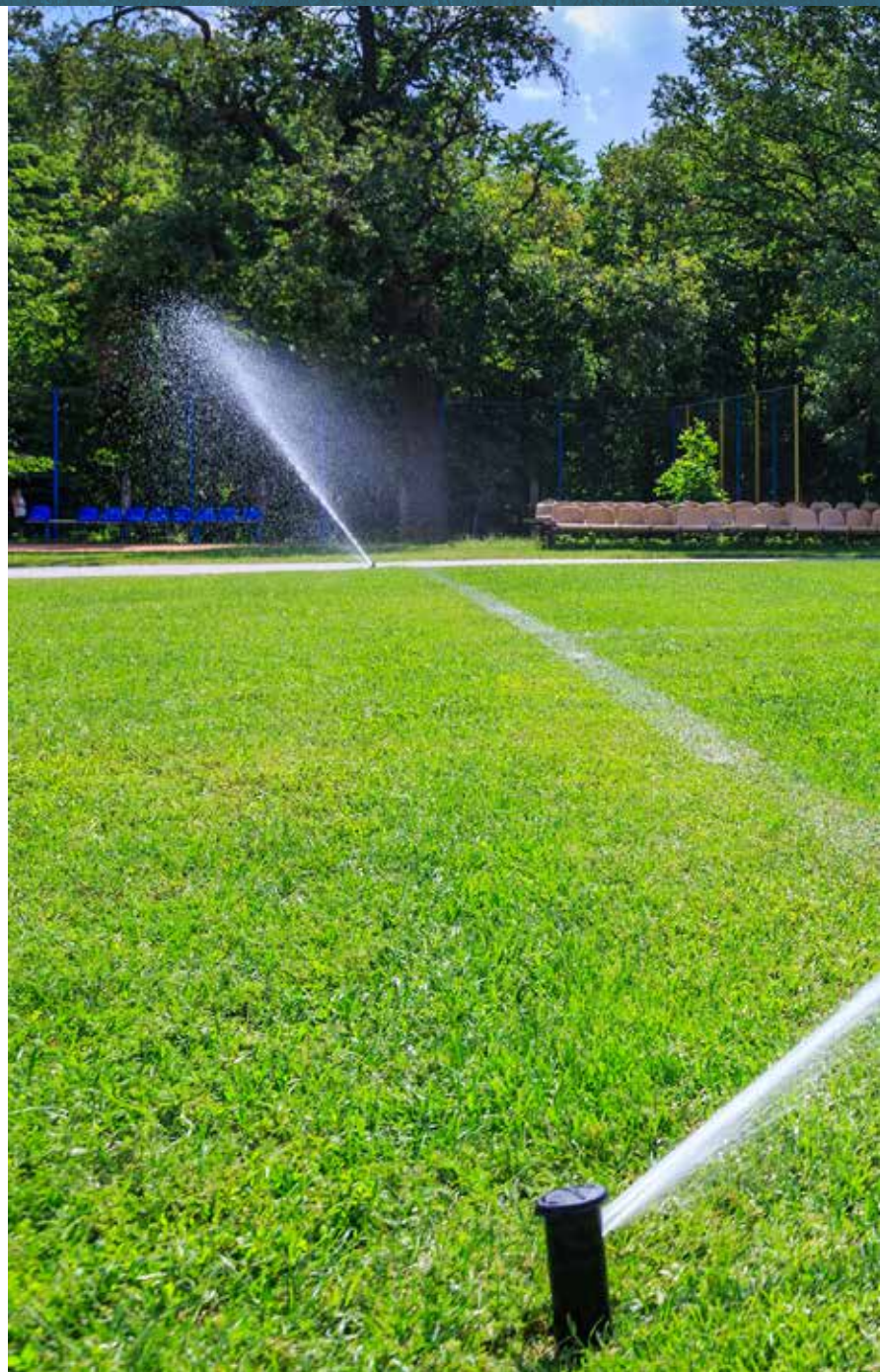
The reality is that many football clubs and other sports facilities, such as golf courses and racecourses, rely on boreholes for the critical irrigation of their sports turf.

Having your own private water supply delivers guaranteed water delivery and keeps costs down, but it also comes with the need to meet certain goals, says Mike Deed, Managing Director of Geoquip Water Solutions, experts in borehole management.

"A lot of the big football clubs have several wells which provide water to their network of training pitches and main ground," he said.

"It is absolutely essential that playing surfaces are irrigated to the best possible standard and remain in tip top condition throughout the season. If water quality or quantity is affected by borehole problems, then the impact can be wide-ranging.

"Investing in a borehole is a significant capital investment, but given the cost of mains water and



the fact that a typical borehole will be expected to deliver a return on investment in less than four years, it can also be very worthwhile – providing you take good care of it."

The trick, he says, is to make sure that an ongoing monitoring and maintenance programme is built in from day one.

"All too often, borehole owners take a 'fit and forget' approach in that they fit the borehole and expect it to continue delivering maximum yield without any proactive maintenance.

"In football terms, it would be like fielding your best team for every single match without addressing their physical or mental needs or considering how they might be able to keep delivering their best without any care or attention."

Typical borehole problems are likely to include reduced yield, a

change in the quality of water and/or a drop in water pressure.

All three can be caused by contamination, such as iron-related bacteria, iron oxide, manganese oxide and calcium carbonate deposits affecting the pumps, pipes and motors.

If too much iron in the water is allowed to build up, it can cause brown staining on hard and soft landscaping and infrastructure (such as buildings), another reason why boreholes need to be regularly treated.

Other problems will include the encrustation of casings and pipes, clogging of filters – preventing the free entry of groundwater, and potential damage to the borehole wall or pumping equipment.

A monitoring and telemetry programme, with the installation



of bespoke panels and dashboards, enables remote data collection from each borehole, allowing the user to see issues such as draw down, water pressure, general temperature and also the temperature of the motor.

Triggers and alarm points can be added to raise alerts when faults or particular combinations of problems arise, enabling early preventive action to take place.

Downhole cameras also provide a bird's eye view into the heart of the borehole, allowing images to be taken and, from there, essential decisions regarding maintenance can be taken before the condition of the turf is potentially impacted by poor water quality.

Geoquip works with a number of

partners, including Nicholls Boreholes, which recently helped one Premiership club struggling with dwindling yields from its two existing wells.

After site visits and a consultation process, the Nicholls team recommended a BoreSaver Ultra C Pro treatment solution, which now includes a biodegradable marker to guarantee that no chemical residue is left in the water.

A special system was put in place to capture the iron for licensed disposal and the clean water was discharged through the club's drainage system without fear of causing any blockage or contamination.

As a result, both the club and the Nicholls' team saw an immediate increase in yield and are now considering a regular treatment plan.



How iron contamination can affect a borehole if allowed to build up – a good reason to implement regular maintenance



Slime on a rising main after removal from a borehole

TOP TIPS

- Winter warmer – remember that in colder months, all pipes will benefit from the addition of insulation to protect against freezing conditions. If irrigation systems are not required during the winter, drain the pipes to avoid potential problems with water freezing.
- Plan ahead – carry out monthly physical checks on all systems and equipment to help identify any weak spots before they become a major issue. Book in an annual borehole service and maintenance programme.
- Monitoring matters – install monitoring equipment to check existing water flow and water levels before and during pumping, carry out a pressure test and general water quality. This will help establish a baseline in the event of future problems.
- Coping with contamination – a likely cause of low yield and loss of pressure is contamination, seek advice for the best treatment solution.
- Check – ensure all relevant valves, meters, mechanisms, electrical components and monitoring systems etc., are in good working order.
- Double check the site around your well – has anything changed (for example new drainage ditches) that might impact on water flow after heavy rain or snowfall
- Protect your wellhead to ensure contaminants cannot enter the well.
- If in doubt – ask an expert.

Better with a bit



**IN HIS FIRST
INTERVIEW SINCE
TAKING OVER AS
HEAD GROUNDSMAN AT
TWICKENHAM,
JIM BUTTAR SPEAKS
TO SCOTT MACCALLUM
ABOUT HIS NEW ROLE**

of Buttar...





Sunday February 23 will be a huge occasion at Twickenham. It is the first chance for the 82,000 supporters to congratulate England on a fine World Cup. Sure, they didn't get over the line in the final against South Africa, but they snatched away the cloak of invincibility from New Zealand in the semi. A feat worthy of congratulation in itself.

With Ireland the opponents it is sure to be a massive match and when the 46 players take to the field for the anthems there will be much emotion. Add another one to that list. Number 47 will also be full of emotion, pride and a few nerves. His chest will swell and the odd tear will be wiped away as those anthems ring out.

Except, except, except...

That was the introduction to this article I had fully intended writing, until "number 47", recently appointed Head Groundsman Jim Buttar, answered the question I had specifically posed

to elicit the appropriate response.

It was an answer which wouldn't delight any feature writer, but would certainly please his new employer, the Rugby Football Union, and give them confidence that they had appointed the right man.

Question: "How do you think you will feel when the teams run out on February 23rd for your first Six Nations game against Ireland – Nervous, excited, proud? What do you think your emotions will be?"

Answer: "To be honest, Scott, you get to that point in your career when you've done a certain number of games that you have gained the ability to tune out. You are aware that it is going on but busy focussing on pitch performance and noting where scrums have taken place for repair etc."

Thanks Jim!

In fairness, perhaps having sensed my disappointment, he did go on to throw me a bit of a bone.

"How will I feel? I think I'll probably be a little bit excited, with it being my first match under England Rugby. It will be slightly different to what I'm used to doing."

But then he couldn't help himself.

"On the whole I'll be cool, calm and collected and too busy to



MY TIME AT PROPITCH PUSHED ME RIGHT OUT OF MY COMFORT ZONE AND PUT ME IN PLACES WHERE I HAD TO DELIVER PITCHES WHERE THERE WEREN'T THE RESOURCES, AND THERE WAS OFTEN A LANGUAGE BARRIER. IT WAS A VERY GOOD TEST FOR ME AS A MANAGER AND AS A GROUNDSMAN.

have my mind on other things.”

Taking over from the redoubtable Keith Kent is a big task, but Jim boasts a strong CV, one which suggests he is a good fit to maintain one of the most iconic patches of turf in, not just UK sport, but worldwide.

He was Stadium Head Groundsman at White Hart Lane for a number of years before moving to become Pitch Consultant for ProPitch, a role which saw him jetting around the world working on pitches at events such as the Champions' League, the African Cup of Nations, the Club World Cup and the Asian Cup.

It was while travelling between two countries in his ProPitch role that he saw the advert for the Twickenham Head Groundsman job and decided to throw his hat in the ring.

“My time at ProPitch pushed me right out of my comfort zone and put me in places where I had to deliver pitches where there weren't the resources, and there was often a language barrier. It was a very good test for me as a manager and as a groundsman.

“I must also pay tribute to Dean Gilasbey, who was there to guide me in many of the scenarios we dealt with and how to deal with different climates and countries,” explained Jim.

The opportunity to work with the RFU at such a magnificent national stadium as Twickenham came at a time when was spending more time away from his wife and three young children than he was at home.

As you can imagine the interview process was rigorous and demanding, while his opportunity to view the pitch itself was limited as the stadium was being prepared for a Metallica concert!

“The whole process was how I expected it would be for an elite sporting organisation – very stringent, very thorough, with lots and lots of queries and questions. Afterward there were a million things going through my mind, and I must admit, a little self doubt. As usual I sought counsel from my mentor, my Dad, who I can always rely on for sound advice.

“That advice and being at an age now when I think that's done, park it and see what happens, saw me through and it worked out,” he revealed.

He has already prepared the pitch for a Barbarians verses Fiji match and, as we talked, he was a couple of days away from the Varsity Match. Overall, however, he has had a good chance to bed in before the start of the Six Nations.

“Because I started in a World Cup year there were no Autumn Internationals, so it's given me time to get up to speed with policies and meeting all the different teams of people who work for the RFU. I am slowing starting to remember names now.”

Having majored in football for most of his career a move into ►

WE HAVE AN ARRAY OF PRODUCTS WE CAN USE TO PRE-CONDITION THE PITCH AND HELP IT RECOVER AS QUICKLY AS POSSIBLE WHILE THE INTRODUCTION OF STADIUM LIGHTING RIGS WHICH CAME OUT IN 2005-2006 HAS BEEN A REAL GAME CHANGER.



- ▶ the oval ball game presents a different set of challenges.

But he is confident that while there are differences, it is fundamentally about plant health.

"With hybrid reinforcement the grass plant for rugby are very similar to football and they are only to move

so far before they are able to get traction, even during scrummaging, so the aim for a rugby groundsman is the same as every other groundsman – make sure the turf is as healthy as it can possibly be," explained Jim, who added that it was a case of working to deal with the stress of sports being played on the

pitch, and in the stadium environment

"We have an array of products we can use to pre-condition the pitch and help it recover as quickly as possible while the introduction of stadium lighting rigs which came out in 2005-2006 has been a real game changer. There was a learning curve with

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something so new but in the last three or four years everyone has got to the point where we understand what they can do and how to get them to work at their best – some underestimate what they can do and others overestimate. It was trial and error for a few years,” said Jim, who will be working with the rigs of Dutch company, SGL.

Jim is an advocate of pitch performance data and using the evidence provided to develop the best maintenance practices for the pitch and to help other stakeholders understand with data to measure pitch performance.

“There are many variables, the most obvious one being the weather, which we can’t do anything about, but we can gain a bit of control over other variables and by checking data and tweaking practices where necessary we say that we’ve done everything possible to make the playing surface as good as it can be.”

Although born in Kendal, Jim is very much a Northamptonshire lad, commuting home daily when he was at Tottenham and it is something he will continue to do in his new role.

“It gives me time to catch up with my voicemails and make my phone calls. I like it where we live, it’s, nice, quiet and out of the way.”

As a youngster, career wise, it was toss-up between a Government-sponsored groundsmanship apprenticeship and following his father into the Weetabix company on an engineering apprenticeship. The popular breakfast cereal manufacturer missed out and groundsmanship gained a new recruit. The thought of working in sports and being

outside were the big attractions for me and making my decision

And so it was a week before his 17th birthday he started at Kimbolton School, in Cambridgeshire, which combined with day release to Moulton College, in Northampton, to give him a solid start in the industry.

“I absolutely loved Kimbolton. I was working predominately on cricket and athletics, and I spent three and a half years there during which time I completed my Level 2 and started my Level 3. Then an opportunity came up at Rushden and Diamonds Football Club and I went in as an Assistant Groundsman. Three years later I was Grounds Manager. I was 22. My then boss had left to go down to Tottenham Hotspur and when a position came up there, I went for the job.

“I was 23 and thought it was now or never! I did have the option to stay but it was a chance to go and work at the very top end and it was a good time for me to go.”

That was in 2003 and by 2005 he was Stadium Head Groundsman, a position he held until 2017 when White Hart Lane closed.

He holds his first bosses in extremely high esteem and still uses the qualities he saw in them as part of his own skills’ package.

“The Head Groundsman at Kimbolton was Andy Trainell and he was one of those guys who showed me what it took to deliver good surfaces. You have to work hard and if you think it’s not good enough then the likelihood is that it won’t be good enough. He was of the work hard, play hard mentality.

“Ray Bailey, Head Groundsman at Rushden and Diamonds, was a very

THE HEAD GROUNDSMAN AT KIMBOLTON WAS ANDY TRAINELL AND HE WAS ONE OF THOSE GUYS WHO SHOWED ME WHAT IT TOOK TO DELIVER GOOD SURFACES. YOU HAVE TO WORK HARD AND IF YOU THINK IT’S NOT GOOD ENOUGH THEN THE LIKELIHOOD IS THAT IT WON’T BE GOOD ENOUGH. HE WAS OF THE WORK HARD, PLAY HARD MENTALITY

me that if things were starting to go wrong, just how quickly and easy it was to fix. Just because it doesn’t look good now doesn’t mean that it isn’t going to be looking good when we need it to look good.

“I was Deputy Head groundsman to Paul Knowles. We made a very good team and really strived to produce the best surfaces we could with the resources we had. I learnt what it took to work as a team, we still talk weekly as friends, he’s really great guy.

“Those were the cherry picks that I took for those two guys,” revealed Jim.

Other motivating driving ►



► forces over the last decade have been provided by his peers.

"There has been a generation of groundsmen who have really pushed things along and you really want to be a part of that. They are all delivering surfaces which are the envy of the world. That is what gives us the hunger to strive and keep going."

Jim is relishing his new role and getting the pitch into the best possible condition for the Six Nations. Frustratingly, he has to wait for the

third series of matches until that first home fixture, then has a couple of weeks to prepare for the visit of Wales.

He has touched base, via twitter, with his fellow Six Nations comrades-in-arms and is looking forward to meeting up with Jim Dawson (Murrayfield), Lee Evans (Principality), Majella Smyth (Aviva) and Tony Stones (Stade de France) once engagement commences.

Before that, and a couple of weeks after we spoke, he had a double header on December 28 with Harlequins playing

Leicester Tigers followed immediately by a ladies' match. It might seem that it's not much of a Christmas break but, coming from the congested Christmas football schedule, Jim is happy to accept his own festive assignment.

It is exciting times ahead for Jim Buttar and Turf Matters wishes him, and the rest of the grounds team, Deputy Ian Ayling and Assistant Andy Muir, all the very best for the future.

Just one thing please, Jim, give us a bit of a hand with the intro next time!



THERE HAS BEEN A GENERATION OF GROUNDSMEN WHO HAVE REALLY PUSHED THINGS ALONG AND YOU REALLY WANT TO BE A PART OF THAT. THEY ARE ALL DELIVERING SURFACES WHICH ARE THE ENVY OF THE WORLD. THAT IS WHAT GIVES US THE HUNGER TO STRIVE AND KEEP GOING.

Tea Break Teaser

An Olympic year and a return to Tokyo. How much do you recall about those particular Games?



1. In which year did the last Tokyo Olympics take place?
2. Which country was barred for the first time at the Tokyo Games?
3. Which New Zealand runner, who died in December last year, became the first to win both the 800 and 1500 metres at the same Olympics?
4. Which legendary boxer won the heavyweight division while competing with a broken thumb?
5. Name the Welshman who won the Long Jump.
6. Which famous footballing country won the Olympic Football tournament?
7. How many Medals did Great Britain win at the Games?
8. How many of them were Gold?
9. How long did the Games last?
10. Name a sport that was introduced for the first time at the Tokyo Games.
11. What feat did Abebe Bikila achieve at Tokyo?
12. Which former British political party leader represented Great Britain in the 200 metres?
13. Name the two British women who both won Gold Medals in their athletic disciplines.
14. In which athletic event did Great Britain win their other Gold Medal?
15. In which month did the Tokyo Games take place?

Answers on page 61



WHAT'S YOUR PROBLEM?

WE CAN HELP YOU FIND A SOLUTION



UNDERSTAND THE PROBLEM, FIND A SOLUTION

With a range of surfactants and bio-nutritional products, backed up by sound science and independent research, Aquatrols understands the problems turf managers are faced with and offers proven solutions designed with every need and budget in mind.

After over 60 years as world leader in soil surfactant technology, we offer more than just products. Our heritage and team of experienced, knowledgeable technical advisors give turf managers the comfort and support needed to tackle each challenge as it arises. Contact your local Account Manager today for advice that you can trust.

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Contact your local Account Manager today for help and advice on a Programmed Approach



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BTME'20

It's Harrogate time again...

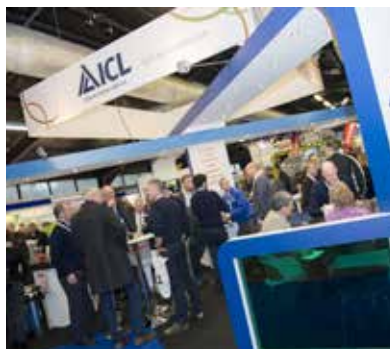


BTME has long been regarded as the “start” of the year for those working in the sports turf industry, and in particular, the golf sector.

The affluent North Yorkshire spa town of Harrogate braces itself for an influx of like-minded people who arrive from all corners of the globe and provides a welcome that makes this particular week in the calendar special.

The combination of high quality education and the research opportunities provided on the Show floors, married to an apres-show experience that cannot be equalled gives Harrogate its unique selling point.

This year the Show will feature more than 150 exhibiting companies spread across four zones and will



showcase the latest innovations and technology in the golf and sports surface maintenance industry.

Last year's exhibition saw nearly 9,000 BIGGA members, turf managers, golf club owners, managers and

industry decision makers pack into the centre to discover the latest products and innovations, plus superb networking opportunities.

With so many attendees from all over the globe, BTME is a hugely important event for the golf industry in the UK and across Europe. Exhibitors are often surprised by the engagement and expert knowledge of the greenkeepers and turf managers who attend and there is a strong case to be made that golf clubs the engage with the wider industry including BIGGA through staff membership, are better run and more successful.

■ The Exhibition will be open from 9am to 5pm on 21 and 22 January and 9am to 2pm on 23 January.



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BTME'20
WHO TO LOOK OUT FOR...

Aquatrols

AQUATROLS
STAND 140 BLUE ZONE

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solutions designed with every need and budget in mind.

After over 60 years as world leader in soil surfactant technology, we offer more than just products. Our heritage and team of experienced, knowledgeable technical advisors give turf managers the comfort and support needed to tackle each challenge as it arises. ►

BTME'20

WHO TO LOOK OUT FOR...



BLEC STAND 414 PURPLE ZONE

Blec will be returning to the Show with two new machines being launched into the landscaping and turfcare range in early 2020. With a Redexim touch, the Multivator returns to the renovation stable by popular demand, while a new pedestrian version of the Rotorake will also be introduced.

The Multivator offers good quality material from depths of up to 30cm back into the upper layers of the soil profile.

Also built in direct response to customer demand is the new Rotorake 1000. This new compact, pedestrian variant of the larger, tractor-mounted model powered by a BCS two-wheel tractor or similar, the Rotorake 1000 features a 100cm working width and uses a multi-tine rotor to rake down to a maximum depth of 30mm.



CHARTERHOUSE STAND 432 PURPLE ZONE

A brand-new addition to the Redexim Verti-Drain range will be a particular highlight on the Charterhouse Turf Machinery stand. Expanding the existing offering with a new 1.9m working width, it is ideal for use on a variety of turf surfaces.

The Verti-Drain 2519 is considered the next generation of high-speed,

high-productivity aerator. It combines its 1.9m working width with a variable working depth of up to 250mm and can accept a range of tine options including 12mm and 19mm solid tines, as well as hollow tines for coring.

Charterhouse will also be launching a new tool into their brush range. As an ever-increasing number of chemicals continue to be withdrawn from the market, Course Managers are turning to mechanical forms of maintenance to keep surfaces balanced and reduce contributing factors to disease.

The Redexim Top-Brush's six metre working width makes it ideal for large areas

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such as golf fairways and sports pitches. It is comprised of three poly brushes, that can be accurately set to the desired depth to achieve a light surface brush-in or more aggressively loosen surface material.

COMPO EXPERT STAND 143 BLUE ZONE

Compo Expert is a multi-national fertiliser manufacturer with 700 employees worldwide. All products are manufacturer from raw materials.

They have unique industry leading products like the surfactants; Kick & Kick LDS. The SRF Floranid Twin range is unrivalled and utilises the three forms of synthetic Nitrogen, providing an activity index

of 95%. They also have their DMPP biological coating technology which stabilises Nitrogen to an industry leading release pattern of eight weeks. The company's renowned Turf Research and Development facility is based in Wolbeck, near Munster and the state of the art factory is located in Krefeld near Dusseldorf, making Compo Expert the leader in Turf throughout Europe. This factory is the only one of its kind to be able to manufacture the three synthetic forms of Nitrogen; Methylene Urea. Isodur and Crotodur.

All products have a high activity index, low salt concentration, low volatisation and leaching, with good agronomic safety. The full product range includes innovative slow-release, special minerals, coated, nutrient salts, liquids, trace elements and soil treatments.



DENNIS AND SISIS STAND 244 RED ZONE

Dennis Mowers recently launched a new and exciting range of mowers called the E-Series and no doubt the ES-860 cylinder mower will prove to be somewhat of a show-stopper at the Show.

This 34" battery powered turf management system delivers maximum versatility and the range of 13 interchangeable cassette options provide a solution to many day-to-day maintenance tasks such as cutting, scarifying, brushing, slitting and aeration.

A weather proof colour LCD programmable display keypad screen is an integral feature of the handlebar console providing the operator with

a multitude of information options including ground speed, clip rate, service checks, lifetime running reports and battery information.

When it comes to all areas of fine turf, the Dennis FT510, has for many years, been celebrated for its top performance and durability. With a 51cm working width, the FT510 provides its user with comfort, flexibility and excellent presentation.

The SISIS range of pedestrian scarifiers come highly recommended by greenkeepers and course managers and the Auto Rotorake MK5 will be of particular interest at the show. This powerful self-propelled heavy duty scarifier is designed for the removal and control of thatch on fine turf.

The SISIS Flexibrush is a tractor mounted brush, ideal for both synthetic and natural turf surfaces. Featuring a 5.35 metre working width, its brush sections 'float' to follow ground contours providing maximum efficiency on large areas. ▶



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BTME'20

WHO TO LOOK OUT FOR...



DLF

STAND 214 RED ZONE

BTME signals the start of a year of celebrations for the Johnsons Sports Seed team, as 2020 marks the company's 200th anniversary. To commemorate, visitors the stand will have a chance to win big in a special '200 Years' competition.

It will also be the launch platform for the new ProNitro Seed Coating from DLF, and a

number of updated Johnsons Sports Seed formulations ready for the new season.

ProNitro seed technology was launched to much acclaim in 2016 and has proven itself to achieve a stronger germination and faster establishment, without the need to apply pre-seed fertilisers – saving both time and money.

Ideal for hard wearing, shaded golf tees and pathways, the 2020 formulation of J Tee now includes the new strong creeping red fescue Laverda. Laverda is the new number one rated fine fescue cultivar, that delivers unbeatable summer colour and shoot density.



GREENBEST/VELVIT

STAND 144

Velvit, and parent company GreenBest, will have new developments launching at the show, the result of a major ongoing programme of growth and investment.

GreenBest is a longstanding manufacturer of fertilisers, biostimulants and wetting agents. Specialising in providing customised formulations, own brand

packaging and a very flexible service for its customers; of which over 40% (by turnover) are international.

Every product GreenBest manufactures is made to order, ensuring you will always get exactly the product you need.

Velvit is a complete range of professional turf care products – ready to go! Available from distributors nationwide. Come and speak to us to find out more about Velvit products, how they can help you get the best results from your turf, where to buy them or about becoming a distributor.

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onyx
liquid

Fortitude

Velscape
Pro Landscaping Fertiliser

NMAXX

BESTWET

NUTRILONG
Controlled Release Fertiliser

TRACE

YUCCA
wetting agent

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BTME



GROUNDSMAN INDUSTRIES STAND 240 RED ZONE

Established in 1990, Groundsman Industries, based in N. Ireland, specialise in the Design and Manufacture of Turf Aerators, Turf Cutters and Sub-surface Irrigation Insertion Machines distributing around the world.

Groundsman two and four-wheel drive Turf Multi Cutter range deliver exceptional sod-cutting ability in all conditions. These versatile machines can be fitted with sod blades 30cm to 60cm wide cutting 1cm to 7cm thick plus Trench, De-compaction and Mole-drain blades to 13cm depth.

Groundsman Pedestrian

and Tractor Mounting Aerators 45cm to 180cm wide all use Groundsman's proven Elliptical Plunge Action mechanism for aeration to 15cm deep. Quick-change Tine Holders for Solid, Hollow and Chisel Tines plus Cluster Heads for dense pattern aeration and seeding.

Groundsman Flexblade Collectors 0.8m to 2.3m wide for Aerator Attachment to Core and Collect as well as Compact Tractor Mounting for Follow-up Collection of Cores and Linear Aeration Soil.



HEADLAND STAND 272 RED ZONE

Headland Amenity will be launching an updated and improved formulation of their

popular Turfite product at the Show. Visitors to the stand can hear how Turfite Elite is already showing excellent results in the company's leading '20-20-30' non-pesticidal tank mix, in the fight to minimise incidences of turf disease.

New Turfite Elite is based on potassium phosphite and Salicylic acid – a known systemic acquired resistance elicitor which provides a clear disease suppression pathway, by triggering the SAR mechanism. By stimulating stronger root development, it has demonstrated in trials to contribute to a stronger grass plant that is less susceptible to stress-related disease.

The company will also use Harrogate as a platform to launch two new biostimulant, seaweed-based products, together with a new non-pesticidal disease management concept.



ICL STAND 426 PURPLE ZONE

ICL will be using BTME as a platform to launch the company's new 2020/21 Product Guide which features the complete range of ICL and Syngenta products with advice on how to get the best results, including recommended period of use, directions for use and application rates.

Visitors to stand can pick up a copy of the new ProSelect grass seed brochure in which they can learn about the new and improved mixtures that are ideal for golf courses, sports fields, turf growers and landscape contractors.

ICL will also be hosting a number of seminars within the ▶

VISIT
STAND NO 126
BLUE ZONE
BTME 2020

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UNDERNEATH
THAT COUNTS

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BTME'20

WHO TO LOOK OUT FOR...

► Continue to Learn programme:

Glenn Kirby, Technical Manager UK and Ireland, Syngenta and Henry Bechelet, Technical Sales Manager, UK and Ireland, ICL will be providing a review of the latest IPM trial work looking at cultural, fertility and chemical control.

Glenn will also be joined by Dr Andy Owen, International Technical Manager, ICL, as they both look at the latest research into how turfgrass utilises light and will explore techniques for managing the challenges suboptimal light conditions can create.

Both Henry and Andy will be summarising five years of trial work in which a range of IPM methods have been developed to help course managers understand the approaches to Microdochium management.

Finally, Dr Alan Gange and Tamsim Williams are presenting The Potential and Varied Benefits of Soil Microbial Management.



ISEKI
STAND 145

ISEKI is showcasing a new compact tractor alongside their renowned tractor range, plus a new game-changing mower at BTME 2020.

Joining the established and reliable TH range of ISEKI compact tractors is the brand new TH5420, coming complete with a Stage V compliant engine, low emissions and a new range of accessories. Its impressive 1,200kg lift capacity with three speed hydrostatic transmission allows for ease

of control while powering implements.

For keeping the rough pristine there is the top of the range SF450, a powerful, large capacity centre collect mower which is now also available with a Muthing Flail deck, making it the ultimate combination of quality and reliability. Its large outfront deck and 1300litre high tip collector allows you tackle the thickest of grass while collecting and leaving a pristine finish every time.



JOHN DEERE
STAND 274 RED ZONE

John Deere has announced two new additions to the economical 6000A Series fairway mower line-up, which will be previewed at the Show.

Sharing technologies with the award-winning A Model mower range, the 6080A and 6500A E-Cut hybrid electric fairway mowers feature high-performance electric reel drive, which greatly reduces the number of potential hydraulic leak points to ensure maximum productivity and performance. In addition to their economical price, these new mowers can be operated at lower engine speeds, which further reduces operating costs by decreasing fuel consumption.

Equipped with a powerful 24.7hp diesel engine, the 6080A and 6500A E-Cut hybrid mowers feature a three-wheel smooth tyre configuration on a durable chassis, with premium performance and comfort features for all-day mowing. Another advanced

technology feature adopted from the existing A Model range is the innovative, password-protected TechControl display.

Cut quality on the new John Deere 6080A and 6500A E-Cut hybrid electric fairway mowers is further enhanced with rear-attaching yokes on the cutting units and standard hydraulic down pressure, which can tackle even the toughest mowing conditions.



KAR UK
STAND 270 RED ZONE

KAR UK, the leading wholesaler of irrigation equipment in the UK and an integral distributor of Hunter Industries irrigation equipment, will once again be exhibiting at the Harrogate based show.

The Hunter TTS-800 rotors provide maximum uniformity and longevity. The high-torque gear drives are the strongest in the industry, so the challenges of reclaimed water use or poor water quality are mitigated.

Another highlight on the KAR UK and Hunter stand will be the recently launched ST-1700V rotor which offers unrivalled high-performance irrigation for synthetic turf.

Engineered for sports turf, the I-80 is built with a robust, dirt-tolerant gear drive that offers the highest torque output of any rotor in the commercial sphere, and extends a radius range from 11.3 to 29.6 meters.

Hunter's line-up of controllers offer an array of user-friendly features and smart controller water-saving

options built to fit any sports and landscape irrigation system.



LIMAGRAIN UK
STAND 162 BLUE ZONE

Visitors can expect a range of market leading products that can significantly improve both the quality and aesthetics of a golf course.

For 2020 there are two new exciting MM mixtures which will offer turf managers new grass seed solutions for golf and general sports turf.

For golf greens MM9 – a three-way Browntop bent mixture continues to be a leading mixture for renovations and species exchange. For links style courses and sustainable golf, MM8 offers a great optional three-way fescue mix with excellent disease resistance, drought tolerance and minimal fertiliser requirements gives course managers a fine, dense sward. MM8 contains varieties such as Nikky and Apolina which have proved to be successful in coastal conditions.

The 100% ryegrass MM50 should be considered. It is capable of rapid establishment and fast recovery from divot scarring plus high wear tolerance and has extremely fine appearance.

For links style golf where damage and wear are lower, MM12 or MM13, are both well suited to this challenging environment as they are drought tolerant and have low maintenance requirements. ►

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BTME'20

WHO TO LOOK OUT FOR...



MTD

STAND 253 RED ZONE

With changes in pesticide legislation having an ever-deepening effect on sports turf quality, Turf Mangers are having to carefully consider the role of mechanical maintenance in delivering a proactive plant health strategy. The UltraGroomer cassette from the TMSsystem collection is specifically designed to provide a healthier turf environment by preventing the accumulation of thatch.

A thatchy surface that is moisture retentive not only reduces the movement of oxygen and nutrients, it also provides an ideal environment to harbour pathogens. The UltraGroomer cassette features over 80 tungsten carbide tipped blades, spaced at 5mm apart, to reduce Poa ingress, minimise puffiness and prevent the build-up of organic matter.

It can also be effectively used in conjunction with other cassettes from the TMSsystem range, particularly the SMARTVibe to increase greens speed. During the winter months, when the plant is at its most vulnerable, the SMARTVibe can be employed as an alternative to mowing to reduce plant stress.

PRICE TURFCARE

STAND 450 PURPLE ZONE

Celebrating the third anniversary of the start of the business, Price Turfcare is back at BTME where the

company was officially launched in 2017.

The hard work of the close-knit team over the past three years is now paying off as the company grows in all sectors of the groundscape industry, particularly in golf. Three years ago, the Ventrac brand was virtually invisible in the UK, but now it is established it as a credible brand.

"We've made significant sales into golf courses over the past year and have some serious prospects as we enter 2020. Prestigious courses across the UK are taking an interest in the versatility offered by our product," said Managing Director, Rupert Price.

"However, it's not just high-end courses that see the benefits of a versatile machine; many smaller clubs have committed to Ventrac because they can add attachments extremely cost-effectively once they have purchased an initial tractor unit," he added.

As well as golf customers, machines are going into major sports facilities, to large landscape contractors, rental companies and to some private buyers with large estates.



MANSFIELD SAND

STAND 126 BLUE ZONE

Mansfield Sand will feature a wide range of innovative products for sports, landscaping and equestrian uses.

Sourced from the company's Two Oaks Quarry in Mansfield where the Mansil range of Silica Sands

is produced. These products are predominantly used in the construction and maintenance of a wide range of sports surfaces – from winter sports pitches, golf courses, bowling greens and all amenity turf areas.

Produced for the fine turf market, Mansfield Sand's Soil Top Dressing is a manufactured homogenous product made from their own premium silica sands combined with top quality soils.

For renovation or construction, the company's superior rootzone blend Mansil 40 Silica Sand with a quality screened topsoil, guarantees the perfect start.

A range of premium quality sand organic material blends which are perfect for creating a rootzone where an organic rich material is required within the profile, aiding in the retention of nutrients while providing increased drought resistance.



RIGBY TAYLOR

STAND 424 PURPLE ZONE

Rigby Taylor will be launching a number of exciting new products at BTME, using touch-screen TV monitors to provide visitors with insightful on-stand presentations. The new Cold Start Boost-R fertiliser with added calcium for improved disease tolerance will be showcased alongside the company's 2020 range of grass seeds.

In particular, Carbon4Grass environmentally responsible grass seeds will be highlighted, as well as the Germin-8T treatment that

supports accelerated seed germination and maximum establishment plus, with the addition of mycorrhizal fungi and Trichoderma Viride, optimised nutrition and stimulated disease tolerance.

Also on show will be the recently announced Autumn Green BiO, the new micro-granular fertiliser with a BiO pack and zeolite for enhanced plant health, improved disease resistance, rapid green-up and extended two-three months of colour.



SHERRIFF AMENITY

STAND 164 BLUE ZONE

Visitors can look forward to new product information, refreshments and will also be able to test their golfing skills on the putting green.

They will be able to pick up a copy of the recently launched 2020 product brochure – which features an all-encompassing range of products for turf managers.

The new 2020 brochure contains in-depth information on the complete range of products which includes granular fertilisers such as the Marathon range and Evolution range; liquid and soluble fertilisers such as the E2 Pro range and iNTrench range, wetting agents featuring the highly regarded Aqua-Zorb; herbicides, fungicides, grass seed and much, much more.

The brochure will also contain valuable advice on how to get the best results from the products, including recommended period of use, directions for use and application rates.





REESINK TURFCARE STAND 211 RED ZONE AND 420 PURPLE ZONE

Reesink Turfcare is launching Toro's most eagerly anticipated technology, the most advanced on the market, at BTME. The all-new all-electric Greensmaster eTriFlex 3370 ride-on mower with the industry's first lithium-ion battery powered unit will be on stand 420, in the purple Zone.

It's the quietest ride-on greensmower and incorporates features that will revolutionise the market and Toro's innovation could not be more evident in this machine. Toro's 'radius dependent speed system' delivers an optimal perimeter cut by monitoring each individual cylinder and traction wheel speed during turns and that, in conjunction with the 'lift-in-turn' cutting unit levelling feature, standardises the clip rate of each individual cylinder and virtually eliminates the effect known as 'Triplex-Ring'.

All electric means lower emissions and fuel savings, yet ample power to get the job done, the eTriFlex 3370, which will be joined on stand by its hybrid counterpart the eTriFlex 3360, means customers can respond to business demands for increased revenue by cutting earlier and therefore delivering earlier tee times to customers.

The eTriFlex 3370 is not the only new machine Reesink is launching at BTME. Welcoming to the

UK, the latest model in the Greensmaster 1000 series, the GR1026. Like the other models in the range, including the GR1021 which launched at BTME last year and will also be at the 2020 show, the GR1026 brings consistency to fixed-head pedestrian greens mowing.



KUBOTA UK STAND 219/220 RED ZONE

Kubota UK Ltd will be returning to the Show with an exciting new show partnership.

Teaming up with fine turf maintenance equipment manufacturers Baroness, the exclusive show partnership will offer greenkeepers a full range of specialist turf-care machinery, covering all bases of expertise and product offerings to showcase a full line-up of turf care machinery.

Across the three days, Kubota UK Ltd will be showcasing its latest range and breadth of Groundcare machinery including the RTV-X1110 and L2 Series. With a team of Kubota industry experts on hand to discuss product technology and innovation, Kubota Finance packages, aftersales support and advice and enhanced Kubota Care Scheme, turf professionals visiting the stand can be confident that all their requirements will be satisfied at BTME this year.



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The high Iron content, in conjunction with Magnesium provides a rapid colour boost.

The added incorporation of Zeolite reduces nutrient leaching and improves Cation Exchange Capacity.

* See us at BTME - Purple Stand 424

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BTME'20 EXHIBITOR LIST



Exhibitor	Hall	Stand
2CL Communications Ltd	Red - South	232
Acumen ClearWater	Red - South	206
Advance Grass Solutions Ltd	Blue	121
AFT Trenchers Ltd	Red - North	280
Agrigem Ltd	Blue	130
Agrovista UK Ltd - Sherriff Amenity	Blue	164
Aitkens	Green	334
Amenity Forum	Blue	156
AMS Robotics	Red - South	201A
Aquarille Consultancy Services	Blue	151
Aquatrols	Blue	140
Arco Ltd	Blue	103
Bailoy Irrigation Controls	Red - South	203
Barenbrug	Green	315
Baroness	Red - South	220
Bayer	Green	338
Belchim Crop Protection	Red - North	255
Bernhard and Company	Purple	408

*Exhibitor listing information correct at time of going to press, but is subject to late change

Exhibitor	Hall	Stand
Better Billy Bunker, Inc	Blue	124
BIGGA - British & International Golf Greenkeepers Association	Blue	147
Bionema Ltd	Blue	170a
Biral	Blue	159
BLEC	Purple	414
Bluebird	Red - North	264
Border Sports Services Ltd	Red - South	209
Campey Turf Care Systems	Red - North	276
Charterhouse Turf Machinery	Purple	432
Cleveland Alliances Ltd	Purple	434
Club Car	Red - South	216
CMW Golf Course Equipment	Blue	167
Compo Expert	Blue	143
Consolidate Turf	Blue	131
County Sport Surfaces Ltd	Green	344
County Turf Ltd	Green	312
D & S Factors Ltd	Blue	113
Delta-T Devices Ltd	Green	320
Dennis & Sisis	Red - South	244



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 Stand 143
 Blue Hall

Exhibitor	Hall	Stand
DF Capital Ltd	Red - North	257
DLF & Johnsons Sport Seed	Red - South	214
Double A/Tru-Turf	Red - North	286
Durabunker Ltd	Red - North	298
Ecobunker Ltd	Purple	416
EIGCA	Blue	152
EMS Dashboard	Blue	154
Ernest Doe & Sons Ltd	Blue	107
Ferris, Wright, Spider & Jensen	Red - South	228
Fleet Line Markers Ltd	Red - South	208
Foley Company	Red - South	246
Garfitts International Ltd	Blue	111
GBR Technology Limited	Red - South	205
GCSAA	Blue	149
Germinal GB Ltd	Red - North	262
GKB Machines Ltd	Purple	406
Golf Club Managers Association	Blue	155

Exhibitor	Hall	Stand
Greenfix	Blue	158
Greenkeepers Training Committee (The)	Blue	148A
GreenTek Solutions Ltd	Red - South	200
Grillo Agrigarden Ltd	Red - South	236
Groundsman Industries Ltd	Red - South	240
Grundfos Pumps	Blue	122
Headland Amenity Ltd	Red - North	272
Herbotech SRL	Blue	166
Huck Nets (UK) Ltd	Red - South	231
Hunter Industries	Red - North	270A
Hurrells	Green	345
Huxley Golf	Green	346
Hydro App Systems Ltd	Blue	108
ICL	Purple	426
Indigrow	Purple	412
Institute of Groundsmanship	Blue	104
Inturf	Blue	169
ISEKI UK & Ireland	Blue	145

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KAR UK Ltd	Red - North	270B
Kioti UK Ltd	Red - North	252
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Lloyds & Hunter Grinders	Red - South	238
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Martin Lishman Ltd	Red - North	260
Maxstim Ltd	Red - South	234
Maxwell Amenity	Blue	139
Mixto & Idverde	Red - North	250
MJ Abbott Ltd	Green	302
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Exhibitor	Hall	Stand
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Otterbine on Toro stand	Purple	420C
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SRUC	Red - North	294
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Exhibitor	Hall	Stand
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UPL Ltd	Red - North	292
Valagro UK Ltd	Red - North	277
Velvit Ltd	Blue	144
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VGR Equipment BV	Red - South	229
Waste2Water Europe Ltd	Purple	436
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STIHL waters run deep



It was there from about 20 minutes into the journey and I couldn't shift it, not that in all honesty I really wanted it to leave.

The musical piece which had infiltrated my brain is a tune called "Pop Looks Bach" but it is better known as the theme tune for "Ski Sunday" and the reason that it had become my latest earworm was that we were heading into the Alps, or more accurately the Tyrolian section of the Alps, not far over the German border into Austria.

And the reason our group, comprising of trade journalists, gardening writers from the national press and our hosts, were traveling to this hotbed of Alpine sports was, ironically, to visit a factory which produces



SCOTT MACCALLUM AVOIDED THE URGE TO DON LEDERHOSEN DURING A RECENT TRIP TO AUSTRIA TO VISIT THE STIHL FACTORY BUT HE DID LEARN SO MUCH MORE ABOUT THIS ICONIC COMPANY

ground maintenance equipment.

STIHL is a name renowned the world over. It is synonymous with high quality grounds care equipment whether it be chainsaws, leaf blowers, and more recently professional and domestic ride on or pedestrian mowing equipment.

But not only is it one of the best known names in the world it is also a company which has manufacturing bases all over the world too.

We were being taken to Kufstein, in the Austrian Tyrol, which had originally been home to the Viking company, but which had been bought by STIHL in 1992 and whose name was integrated into the STIHL brand just last year.

Viking's first product was a domestic shredder in 1981, but it wasn't until

1984 that they began producing their own line of lawn mowers and it was those products, something which STIHL saw as squaring the circle and allowing them to offer a full portfolio of garden and landscape maintenance equipment, that brought about the union between the two.

With backdrops of snow covered peaks the factory, which has grown from 20,000 square metres to 43,000 square metres in recent times and increased staffing levels from 373 in 2015 to 650 now, is at the cutting edge of technology. So much so that we weren't allowed to photograph any of the work going on inside.

The company takes particular pride in its staff who jokingly admit that, ►

On the Stihl production line, left. The factory itself, top, is in an amazing location

THE SHEER SCALE OF THE PRODUCTION FACILITY AT KUFSTEIN IS SUCH THAT A TOUR OF THE FACTORY TAKES OVER TWO HOURS...

- such is the length of time that most employees remain at the company, the probationary period is 10 years.

The sheer scale of the production facility at Kufstein is such that a tour of the factory takes over two hours, more if you spend longer than the allotted time watching, for example, the stress tests that every element of a machine must survive – something it was good to see the unique mono handle bars on the mowers dealing with it with considerable aplomb Suffice to say, the recently installed robotic parts' picker proved to be extremely mesmeric and some of us had to be dragged away.

The man who is now a brand name as much as a family name – up there with the likes of (Henry) Ford; (Enzo) Ferrari; (William Henry) Hoover; (Walt) Disney; (Gianni) Versace and (Ronald) MacDonald – is Andreas Stihl.

Andreas was an engineer and a Swiss national, and he designed and hand built the first chainsaw back in 1926.

Andreas was onto a winner and the STIHL name soon became popular, and also synonymous with professional grade chainsaws and soon became the number-one selling chainsaw company in the world, a title that the company can still boast.

Company headquarters is in Waiblingen, Germany but has assembly facilities spread across the world in Brazil, China, Switzerland and the United States in addition to the plant in Kufstein and a sales and



marketing base in Camberley, Surrey,

Now the company boasts a product range that cannot disappoint any amateur gardener or professional turf or estates manager.

Power tools (cordless, gasoline, or electric) – chainsaws, pruners, brushcutters, shredders, scarifiers, tillers, sweepers, blowers, sprayers pressure washers, pedestrian mowers, ride on mowers, hand tools and forestry accessories, Personal Protective Equipment and more recently, some superb imow robot mowers, the technology for which is growing at a pace.

The staff, who are blessed with the finest “views out the window” to be found anywhere in the world,

are universally keen to explain and demonstrate their products. Some, if you are lucky, are even happy to share their chocolate with groups of journalists!

What is evident is that the care shown in assembling a machine is matched by the care shown in ensuring that part has been added just as it should and that it is ready to move on to the next stage of production.

Our group of 25 was treated royally during the two days of the trip. We ate and, purely in the interests of not being reluctant guests, drank well at our wonderful hotel and two unforgettable restaurants, including the oldest restaurant in the whole of Austria.

We also took in a traditional Christmas market and the Riedel glass factory – another world renowned company in what is a relatively small Austrian town – where we watched some of the finest wine glasses in the world being produced – four highly trained people to make one glass! With an unexpected additional cargo of wine glass, it made the flight home rather anxious for some of our party.

It was a superb, and informative, trip and a big thank you to everyone at STIHL, and HROC, for making it such a rewarding visit for us all.

I can also add that despite the surroundings no skis, nor indeed lederhosen, were donned during the trip but that earworm is still there and beginning to become a little tiresome.

The intrepid team, below and the STIHL mower line-up, above



Fife Golf Trust was very keen to improve the quality of cut on their sites and in order to do so, owning their own set of grinders became a perfect solution and an obvious choice. Outsourcing all their sharpening needs was taking up a large proportion of Fife Trust's maintenance budget and therefore cost savings was indeed a key element in the decision-making process, in addition to being able to control when and how they sharpen their cutting units.

The expertise and reputation of Bernhard and Company was also a contributing factor and in turn led to the outcome of acquiring the new Express Dual 5500 as well as an Anglemaster 4500.

The latest technology appealed to Fife Trust as they know it will constantly be updated and improved. The specialist trust coordinates the Council's golfing interests hence why the safety features were another major benefit as the machines are extremely quiet and the operator can be totally removed from the working part of the machine. These were all vital elements that led to the Fife Trust choosing Bernhard's newest and most innovative machines.

The automated reel surveying on the Express Dual 5500 will allow for maximum precision; it helps to determine wear and assists resolution of "coned" and "barrelled" reels – achieving the highest precision grind available in the industry.

Laser measurement has been used for many years in the aerospace and automotive industry to measure large parts and assemblies, as well as improving industrial robot accuracy and precision.

Why would a laser surveying device be used in a grinder?

The laser surveying unit is used to highlight deformation and dynamic measurement. This is important because some modern-day cutting units rely on the cylinder to bed-knife being parallel within very tight tolerances to ensure optimum performance.

During continuous mowing or backlapping, the cylinder can be subject to coning which can only be corrected through precise grinding. The Bernhard laser

Fife Golf Trust is the first user of Express Dual 5500 in the UK



surveying device will measure the cylinder to highlight any coning, thus allowing the grinder to remove the taper out of the cylinder with an optimised grind cycle.

In the scanning process, the laser will also measure the outer diameter of the reel. This gives the operator reassurance that the cylinders are within the manufacturer's recommended specifications.

The new features of the machine include smart motors; high torque, load sensing motors with integrated position feedback that give users total control and flexibility on how they want to sharpen their mowing equipment.

The Anglemaster 4500 now benefits from variable grind motor and traverse motor speeds, allowing the machines to be totally adaptable to the type of blades being sharpened. Having flexibility in motor speed enables the user to optimise the speed of grind according to the type of stone chosen.

This, in conjunction with RFID technology, delivers consistency – no matter who uses the equipment.

RFID is an easy way to assign a unique identity to an object, meaning that each individual user can have their own settings programmed into a card no bigger than a credit card. The settings of each mower can also be uploaded onto the card, making it easy to recall previous settings and keeping consistently sharpened mowers to the same specification.

This means that turf/equipment managers can ensure the quality of cut is consistent without having to intervene, so even a newly-trained user with little experience of sharpening will be able to achieve the highest quality expected.

The combination of this unique technology makes the Bernhard sharpening systems the most innovative systems yet.

Speaking about the investment Paul Murphy, Golf Course Manager for Fife Golf Trust said that they knew that the whole set up was something new and improved on a product that was already good anyway.

"I think the new laser set up will improve the precision and accuracy in what we do and this was another important factor. Everything we have seen about the machine relates to the reason why we went down this route."

Tom Johnston, Mechanic at Fife Golf Trust added that the level of finesse you can get with these new grinders are second to none, more precision, better finish, have more control of the final product and that all added to the effect out on the course.

IAN ROBSON, PROSPORT UK LTD THE UK & IRELAND IMPORTER/DISTRIBUTOR FOR FOLEY UNITED, EXPLAINS WHY RELIEF GRINDING MAXIMISES THE PERFORMANCE OF REELS BY GIVING A FACTORY FINISH EVERY TIME.

PREVENTION BETTER THAN CURE

Firstly, why is having sharp cylinders (reels) that are the correct shape so important anyway? The answer is obvious – unhealthy turf brings a whole host of other issues which are costly to correct. Therefore, prevention is a far more economic approach than a cure. A huge amount of research and development has gone into designing a cutting unit to produce the cleanest cut possible with the least amount of fraying and tissue damage to the plant.

The result is that all manufacturers of grass cutting equipment supply new units with relief ground edges.

WHY RELIEF GRIND?

Tests carried out by leading manufacturers have established that relief ground cylinders stay on cut up to three times longer than spun ground ones and require less horse power to drive the unit, resulting in greater fuel efficiency and less stress on the hydraulic power systems. In addition, ►



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THE OVERALL CLEANER CUT ACHIEVED BY RELIEF GRINDING GIVES A BETTER AFTER-CUT APPEARANCE, INCREASED RECOVERY RATE...



► a relief ground cylinder will withstand the abrasive effects of top dressing far better than one spun ground because the relief edge on both the bed-knife and the cylinder allows the top dressing to clear the cutting blades easily, helping to prevent the dulling effect seen on spun only units. Continual relief grinding also decreases the squeezing and tearing of the grass as the units get dull, and most importantly it allows the cylinder to be returned to a factory specification perfect cylinder as quickly as possible. The overall cleaner cut achieved by relief grinding gives a better after-cut appearance, increased recovery rate due to the clean cut of the grass and reduces the stress on components because less horsepower is needed to drive the cylinder.

HORSE POWER STUDY

As a reel wears flat and loses shape (becomes coned), more stress and strain is put on the cutting systems. Using the figures from the above study a 5-gang cutting unit with relief can require up to 4.5 HP ($5 \times 0.88\text{HP} = 4.5\text{HP}$) to drive the cutting units therefore a 35HP engine has 30.5HP remaining to drive the rest of the traction system. A 5-gang unit which has been spun ground only, can require up to 13HP ($5 \times 2.59\text{HP} = 13\text{HP}$) leaving only 22HP to drive the rest of the traction system. So, it has been established that relief grinding your cutting units saves you money not only by reducing workshop maintenance time with far

fewer grinds but also through a reduction in fuel costs and replacement parts. It is also important to acknowledge what relief grinding does for a reel. By removing metal from the trailing edge of the blade it forms a relief angle, which reduces the contact area of the cutting edges, resulting in less friction, longer wear life. Typically, when a new mower is delivered the reels will be a perfect cylindrical shape. Over time the blade naturally loses shape, and the sharp edge it arrives with becomes flat and dull, often meaning the reel is no longer a perfect cylinder from end to end. This is referred to as 'coning' and a natural point for grinding to take place. The decision then sits between touch-up and spin grinding, or relief grinding. If there is sufficient relief still on the reel then a quick touch-up is fine but once more than 50% of the relief has gone my advice would be to relief grind again and remove any coning. Failure to remove the coning will eventually be seen in an uneven cut appearance of your turf. But, the main question mentioned at the beginning comes back; how to get the most out of your workshop resources by choosing the most effective method to sharpen your cutting units. The answer is to trust the manufacturers judgement and return the reels as close to the original factory standard as possible, and for that, relief grinding is the best option. The bonus is this method also maximises performance and gives the best cut.



Revolution in professional turf care

Strained sports turf surfaces are particularly stressed by the influence of walking on, playing on or driving on, which can lead to a change in the physical or chemical properties of the soil due to compaction.

Compaction has negative effects on the vital growth of a healthy and durable grass population as well as on the functional safety due to the often highly reduced air and water permeability of the soil, a lack of water and nutrients available to plants, poor regeneration growth and changes in soil organic structure.

The remedy can be found with the airtier light 14160 – pneumatic soil aeration device for professionals, which loosens the lawn root zone homogeneously into a depth of 22 cm and supplies it with fresh oxygen. This is done by steplessly adjustable compressed air in a continuous process. A football field can be completely processed in seven hours. A total of 14 specially developed compressed air injection lances with triple jets push up to one million litres of air per pitch into the ground in an efficient working process.

The airtier aerates the root zone homogeneously and with full coverage without any significant visible damage to the top surface. The penetration depth can be selected to match local

soil conditions by using different lances so the soil compaction can be reduced up to 30% (verifiably tested). As a result, water flow and air circulation improve remarkably. Novokraft's airsoftroll roller technology guarantees low ground pressure during sustainable aeration of the root zone with oxygen! Unique and unrivalled!

ADVANTAGES AT A GLANCE:

- Effective and sustainable aeration of hybrid, sports and golf surfaces.
- Reduction of pesticide use and prevention of black layer through active ventilation. Efficient and biological pest control (e.g. larvae & grubs).
- Improved water absorption/storage within the root zone enabling shorter irrigation cycles and reduced water consumption, especially during the vegetation and heat periods.
- A measurable, homogeneous de-compaction of about 30% in the treated root zone layer.
- Reduction of downtime (no need for post-processing work, play areas can be walked on and played on directly, less waterlogging due to improved separating effect).
- Reduction of maintenance time (reduction of traditional aeration intervals and top-dressing needs, lower patch work and

over-seeding requirements).

- Low maintenance cost (simple pneumatic/hydraulic system).
- Scientifically validated system (STRI in the UK and University of Hohenheim in Germany).
- Efficient operation (continuous operation, simple machine operation, high productivity).

The airtier can demonstrably loosen the hardened hybrid turf systems. In all hybrid turf systems, the root zone cannot be optimally and professionally ventilated using conventional mechanical loosening methods (e.g. deep loosening with solid chisels).

Over time, these procedures inevitably lead to vertical compaction of the lawn base layer.

Novokraft has developed the airtier to solve this problem and to professionally loosen the root zone. This prevents the formation of decomposition gases, which are toxic for lawn roots.

Practical tests on new hybrid turf fields have shown that with the loosening effect of the airtier, the players subsequently felt the fields to be much softer.

Likewise, this homogeneous pneumatic loosening method massively improves all bioactivity in the soil. The airtier is also ideally suited for the reliable maintenance of water permeability.

Stemming the flood



After the wettest autumn/winter period on record, contractor Ecosol Turfcare is offering its legendary Drill n Fill this spring for flooded and slow draining golf greens, goal mouths and centre circles. Those groundsmen who had it done last autumn are reaping the benefits with fewer closures and better grass cover.

The Drill n Fill's ability to penetrate down to 30cm with a grid of drills, take out the spoil and backfill it with either pure kiln-dried sand or

a mix of sand and soil amendment, has numerous benefits for fine turf that puddles with retained surface water, has thatch or blackgrass, poor grass growth and compaction.

The ducts created last for over a year, allowing water to percolate off the surface, through obstructions caused by thatch or compaction and into the rootzone and drainage layer. Soil amendments such as Ecosol's zeolitic Sportslite, impart their benefits to plant's roots – allowing improved uptake of nutrients; increased cation exchange capacity; better germination, drainage rates and levels of plant-available water; and reduction compaction and leaching.

The system is particularly beneficial for old clay-based golf greens with push-ups and even for USPGA greens where too much sand or fines have been used in their construction. Severely poached and compacted football and rugby pitches, even racecourses and polo fields will also benefit. Some clubs like to use Ecosol's Graden, a linear aerator which rips through

thatch and can also be backfilled with sand. After Drill n Fill or Graden, greens can be back in use very quickly and the results are long lasting.

Brexit or no Brexit, French golf clubs have been quick off the mark to book the aeration process.

"We are visiting four clubs across the country in March for Drill n Fill, and are already taking orders from their British counterparts for spring 2020," said Ecosolve Managing Director, Bretton King.

The contractor also performs end of season renovations, pitch reconstruction and drainage system installation with a variety of state-of-the-art equipment. The DnF's brother aerator, Deep Drill, which does not backfill, goes to a depth of 45 cm, ideal for severe compaction and is a vital part of the cricket club's armoury for end of season.

"We provide a multi-dimensional expert service to help groundsmen maintain a consistently high standard of sports turf surface, whatever the discipline," added Bretton.

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OxyShot to the rescue

The OxyShot, from Charterhouse Turf Machinery, came to the rescue of waterlogged surfaces at Ipswich Town Football Club's Training Ground.

Despite having a thorough aeration programme in place, Grounds Manager Ben Connell called on the air-injection unit, to treat deep-level compaction and improve drainage.

"In the lead up to the winter period, we had been aerating regularly with solid tines to best prepare ourselves for the wetter conditions" explained Ben, who oversees 13 surfaces at the club's training facility, together with the stadium pitch.

"When we started to find waterlogging on one of our academy pitches, I called Peter Knight of Bury Turfcare, who deduced that there was a pan layer roughly 400mm down causing these areas to hold water. As the OxyShot can work down to a depth of 500mm, he brought the unit in to shatter the pan layer and since then, this area has been free-draining."

Using a single 25mm probe, the OxyShot injects air into the soil in four directions, at a pressure of up to 110psi. Perfect for 'on the spot'



treatments, the highly manoeuvrable unit can be easily transported for use in a variety of situations – from golf course walkways to goal mouths, tennis baselines and sports pitch touchlines.

Impressed with the results achieved, Ben had the Oxyshot back a few weeks later to carry out further spot treatments on another problem area.

"We worked on an area roughly 10m2 and the results were fantastic. We had some really significant rainfall in the few weeks that followed and while some surrounding areas were very wet, the test patch was free-draining and clear of any puddling. Months later and we're still seeing the benefits of the work, with no compaction to report."

Three years ago, an Aberdeenshire golf club with a keen focus on ecological, environmental and sustainable best practice, chose a Wiedenmann Terra Spike GXi8 HD deep aerator. It was the first purchase made by the then newly appointed Course Manager at Banchory GC, Richard Mullen.

"Aeration needed to be done quickly without compromising standards. The GXi8 meant we could reduce operator time, reduce fuel and importantly use just one machine," explained Richard.

"We didn't start off as a GEO certified golf course when the aerator arrived and we certainly weren't sustainable. Now three years down the line we're getting better. The fungicide usage has been reduced by half and we haven't used any insecticides at all in that time," he continued.

"We're like a links course inland. We share many characteristics of a links course. We've sandy soil and the terrain has been naturally formed. It's maybe not the largest of courses but the GXi8 goes everywhere; wall-to-wall if you like, fairways, greens, tees, approaches; it misses nothing.

"On any modern course, golfers hate the sight of holes. Frequently it's so clean our golfers are unaware we've actually been out. If your golfers aren't noticing holes then that's a huge bonus.

GXi8: It goes everywhere



Instantly you've got more options. "

Wiedenmann's GXi8 HD offers a patented Advanced Tine Control system. ATC controls the entry point of the tine into the turf. All moving parts of the system like springs and heave linkages are positioned behind covers at the front of the machine away from the workings and 'dirt area'. Wear and tear is reduced and the covers help quieten the machine.

"In a year the GXi8 can be out about 50 times but all the while helping the soil biology of our site. It's not uncommon for us to give the greens two passes, using 14mm

solids, one at 5mm with 75mm centres and then 200mm deep with 10% heave at 50mm centres. Any oxygen can then be used by plants roots and soil microbes during respiration while carbon dioxide is released allowing nutrient uptake."

Richard, working with just two other colleagues, has made huge strides which have been welcomed by the local community. Already Banchory has been a finalist in the 2019 Golf Environment and 2019 inspiring Aberdeenshire Awards.

"With a small team you appreciate the versatility and the ease of use of the GXi8."

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Terrain Aeration score croquet points in Shropshire



Church Stretton lies in the Shropshire Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the local geology has some of the oldest rocks in England.

Among the many amenities the town has to offer, Church Stretton Town Council provides facilities such as crazy golf, hard tennis courts, a bowling green and croquet pitches. The two croquet lawns run by the Council had been placed on a hard surface and over time, becoming so compacted, they developed severe waterlogging problems.

Good management proving very difficult, the Council looked around for a solution and after a number of consultations brought in Terrain Aeration.

"We chose to go with Terrain because we needed to open up

the ground for better drainage and with the ground being so hard it needed breaking up very much deeper than normal aeration," said Michael Turner, the Council's Amenities and Services Officer,

"The lawns are available to the croquet club and members of the public and the other reason for improving the facilities was the fact the town team won the West Midlands League and needed the lawns to match their prowess."

Terrain Aeration carried out the work over a day and a half, with their Terralift machine's JCB hammer slicing through the compaction to allow the hollow probe to reach up to a metre under the lawns.

Working on a staggered grid pattern, once the probe reaches the optimum depth, compressed air is released up to



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a maximum of 20Bar (280psi).

The blast effect fractures the compacted soil to allow drainage and deep aeration, with the grid ensuring each shot interconnects the fissures and fractures.

As the probe withdraws, dried seaweed is injected which expands and contracts with the moisture content in the soil to keep the fissures open. The probe holes are then back-filled with Lytag, an inert product which

allows air and water to percolate through but is mower friendly.

"The whole process was very clean and professional and Terrain Aeration were nice people to work with. We've done a further piece of work with scarification and the combination of the two is bringing the results we wanted. We're very happy with the work done," added Michael.



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SISIS keeps turf healthy at Welsh club



Two SISIS machines are helping to keep the natural grass pitches clean and healthy at Colliers Park according to Dylan Thompson, grounds maintenance manager.

Colliers Park in Gresford, Wales has benefitted from a major renovation following the FAW's acquisition of the site. It has now transformed into an elite training facility with two full-size training pitches and a synthetic pitch.

Dylan embarked on his new role in March 2019 and found himself with an arsenal of brand-new turf maintenance equipment at his disposal. The new equipment was based on what the grounds staff use at Dragon Park (the FAW's other football development centre) and there were two machines which particularly caught Dylan's eye.

"After using them for the first time I could immediately see why both the SISIS Quadraplay and the SISIS Multitiner were high priority," said Dylan. "They are both superbly built and can carry out a wide range of tasks."

As Dylan says, the multi-functional SISIS Quadraplay single pass maintenance system is perfect for busy groundsmen as it incorporates a mounted frame for up to four implements

such as grooming rakes, spikers, slitters, rollers and brushes. The implements can be fitted to the mainframe in any order and can be independently adjusted to achieve the desired effect. Compact, robust, versatile and with the ability to carry out up to four operations simultaneously – the Quadraplay makes life a lot easier for many groundsmen as Dylan explains.

"We've got the four implements and we mainly use it for brushing and raking. When we are brushing, we will have the slitter down and go as low as we can go just to provide a little aeration – it is great at breaking up the surface algae if we have any. The roller is used to give the pitch a light roll, rather than compacting and is perfect for a nice presentation. With regards to raking we will vary the depth depending on how aggressive we want to be.

"I would say that we use the Quadraplay at least once a month – it's nice and easy to use and changing the depth of the implements is incredibly simple. It is one of those machines which you can get on and complete a number of tasks within a short timeframe."

Case for

The Christmas and New Year festivities are now just a lingering memory but though the days are starting to lengthen, there's a long way to go before the onset of warmer weather.

With the turf suffering from prolonged periods of wet weather, waterlogged and weakened roots, the grass will be stressed and more open to disease attack. Deciding on which fungicide to defend your turf territory is key to ensuring a successful outcome. For winter applications, the requirement is to identify fungicides that contain 'actives' which work well under cool and cold conditions and, where possible, provide added physiological benefits.

Particularly effective under cool, cold conditions is the broad spectrum turf fungicide Eland and applications now will provide disease protection for up to 50 days.

This long term protection is achieved through the spray deposit being held on the leaf long enough to penetrate and be held within the leaf tissue, which serves as a fungicide reservoir constantly releasing its active ingredient, pyraclostrobin, to provide

long term protection.

Eland is specially suited to being applied as a preventative treatment, especially when disease pressure is high. It is very effective against all stages of the fungus within minutes of being applied and can restrain mycelial growth to provide additional curative activity.

In addition to its proven abilities as a turf fungicide, research has shown Eland to have a number of additional physiological benefits.

Such benefits include improving plant health in the form of stress management under cold conditions and during aeration. This has the effect of helping the plant and root system to endure a stressful event and overcome stress through root system retention.

In addition to combating Microdochium Patch attack, a major benefit during early winter months is that applications of pyraclostrobin allows a plant to recover more quickly from root damage or surface foliar damage caused by ball mark injury.

Of course, prevention is always preferable and more effective than reacting after the event. STRI research trials prove that



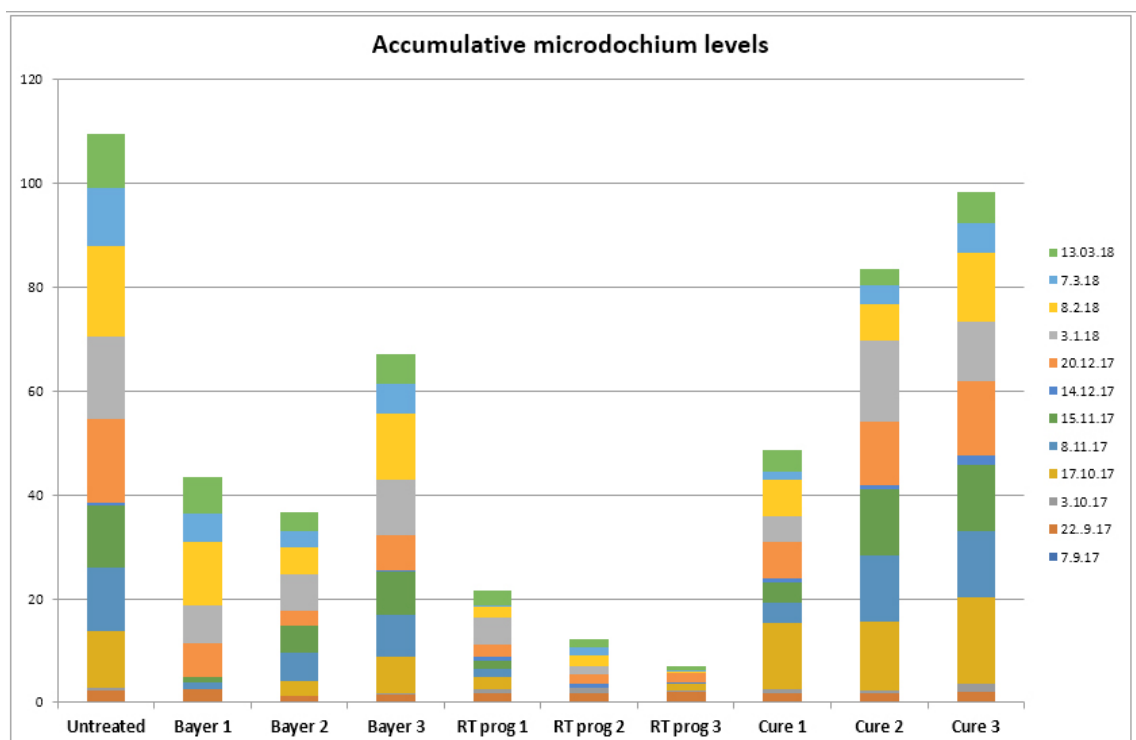
the defence

preventative disease control programmes outperform curative options when analysed for turf quality, colour and presence of Microdochium Patch (right).

The eight months trial compared nine preventative and three curative programmes, as well as one untreated plot. The first three programmes used purely preventative fungicides from Bayer. The rest of the preventative plots used a combination of Rigby Taylor fungicides, together as tank mixes with plant health products to reflect a more realistic approach. See bar chart, below right.

In general, preventative programmes five to seven (see graph RT prog's 1, 2 and 3) showed the most consistent results across turf colour, quality and Microdochium Patch presence by using an integrated approach with both fungicides and plant health products. The fungicides within the curative programmes (11-13) were applied as and when disease developed to an unacceptable level, mimicking traditional control strategies. It is important to note that none of the trial plots had any cultural controls or biological practices applied prior to or during the trial, other than mowing and switching, which was carried out when necessary.

Pre-planning and control are essential requirements as it may be necessary to integrate some of the aforementioned products into the winter programme, which will enable the plant to resist or repel disease attack and be in an ideal state to advance into the spring in a healthy state.



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Tea Break Teaser

Answers

1. 1964; 2. South Africa because of apartheid;
3. Sir Peter Snell;
4. Smoking Joe Frazier;
5. Lynn Davies;
6. Hungary; 7. 18; 8. 4;
9. 14 days; 10. Judo or Women's Volleyball;
11. He became the first athlete to win the Olympic Marathon twice;
12. Menzies Campbell;
13. Ann Packer, 800 metres and Mary Rand, Long Jump;
14. Men's 20 km Walk - Ken Matthews;
15. October

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GOLFING NOBODY'S

Blog.

I played my last game of golf of the decade yesterday. As you will have no doubt guessed, I lost. But it wasn't so much that I threw it away from a winning position – courtesy of my poor technique and weak mind – it was the fact that not for the first time I was at an enormous disadvantage off the tee.

My opponent, a decent player, but one who hadn't played a full 18 holes in a year and a half, was so far ahead of me off every tee it was embarrassing. At one point I looked at one of his drives and thought, "Ah, he's not quite got that one. I've got a chance here." I then struck one of my best. I like to think that I still

have the ability to rise to a challenge occasionally.

We then marched up the fairway, me feeling that at least I'd achieve something approaching parity, and him telling me that he thought it was my best drive of the day... Only for the conversation to be halted as we came across my ball, some 60 yards behind his.

Now I've never been a long hitter. I've not even been an average hitter. But I've never been someone daunted by a long par-4. In fact, I have occasionally been on the front edge of a long par-4 in two and walked away with a very satisfying five.

I'm now looking for explanations and solutions to enable me to carry on as a worthwhile club golfer. My driver, an expensive purchase about 10 years ago, is regarded as a very fine club but I scoured the reviews and found that it wasn't felt to be one of the longest driver on the market. Ah, ha.

Therein lies an explanation.

That doesn't account for the fact, that even playing friends 15-20 years older than me – yes they do exist – I still have to give ground off the tee.

Could it be the ball I use, or even the tee? I'm not a student of the golf ball and use balls I've come across during the course of the round – I often find myself in areas where there are many lost balls. Nowadays a modern ball, so I'm led to believe, can be the making of a golfer off the tee. While I've also read that there are actually tees, the marketing says, which can add yards to a drive.

Maybe I should spend less time looking at the latest waterproofs and more time at balls and tees.

My research into my lack of distance

then took me in another direction.

For many years I was famed for having the worst swing in the club. I was brought up at a great little nine hole course but there was no professional and my swing was developed by me, and by me alone. I can admit now that I am no Butch Harman and what I built for myself was poor, very poor. Not only was it extremely short – a throw back to my days as a very fine shinty player – but it had more moving parts than a traction engine.

I persevered with this swing for many years, much to the amusement of my opponents and disgust of my partners, until last year when I developed the urge to make some radical changes. I was helped by the fact that my club had just built a fantastic new driving range and I could belt balls into the distance without the bother of having to pick them up.

I know that I have said in the past that I had always considered practice to be akin to cheating, and unfair on those weekend golfers who don't have the opportunity to visit the practice ground. But in the interests of fulfilling whatever talent I might have, I decided to change my beliefs.

So, I developed what I think is something resembling a proper golf swing. It might not be great, but it is an improvement – admittedly it's a very low bar.

But, and I think I've arrived at the crux of the matter, it is not properly grooved and I am still guiding the clubhead onto the ball, hence the loss of 60-70 yards.

So, I've decided, my next trip to the range is going to involve me trying to create clubhead speed. I'm going to thrash away, not caring if I miss the ball, or miss the width of the range, like a demented Happy Gilmore. If that club speed is there it will be down to me to incorporate that into my newly, nearly, grooved swing.

It's going to be an eventful 2020.

**As told to Scott MacCallum*



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