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# DECEMBER COURSE REPORT

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Welcome back!



We counted down the days... literally! Our whiteboard in the welfare block animating the countdown.

It was good to see golf back on the course!



## Frost greens

The recent trial of using the main greens in frost has gone well. I have been eager for this to work as it frees so much time up for the staff to get on with other things. If playing in frost, please can you keep knocking the ice off your shoes before entering the putting surface. If this happens, we can continue to provide the main greens for use.

There are (rare) exceptions to this rule, in all cases a temporary hole will be used:

- When ice forms below the surface for a prolonged duration and then defrosts above. This is the most dangerous time for the greens as the roots can shear as the ground moves.
- When temperatures are so low, the plants ability to protect itself is compromised.
- If frozen for long periods it may be impossible to change the pin position.

## Disease



Microdochium nivale. The causal fungus of the Fusarium disease on our greens and tees recently.

We currently have a few scars on the greens but compared to the tees they are doing remarkably well. You may have noticed the unfortunate black tyre marks on the greens when you returned to play. This is from a high dosage of Ferrous Sulphate, (iron). Iron temporarily changes the pH of the surface. The disease does not like the low pH conditions, this gives the grass plant time to recover from an attack. The method worked this time and is 10 times cheaper than a fungicide!

The picture above shows how severe Fusarium patch can be, given the right conditions. Mild, wet weather is ideal for the fungus to grow. Our efforts to combat disease outbreaks include:

- Keeping the putting surface as dry as possible
- Increasing the height of cut – Currently 5.5mm
- Nutrient management
- Aeration
- Cutting blades as sharp as possible
- Changing holes – moving the traffic

## Nutrition, going forward to 2021

I have recently sent a sample of our leaf tissue for analysis. This will give us an indication of the plants ability to use what nutrition is in the soil. Together with soil analysis we can target any deficiencies or identify any nutrients 'locked' in the soil. Going forward I suspect we can hold back on fertilisers. Our thought process here is that the plant can not use or take on more than it needs. Adding more fertiliser is simply a waste and can lead to other problems. We plan to test more to be more accurate with our feeding programme.

## Clearing the long, ecology rough

This work is ongoing. It has paused for a while until it is dry enough to get the machine out there and working efficiently.

We manage these areas, so they do not go through the ecological 'progression' from grass to plants, shrubs, and eventually trees. We scarify the areas while at the same time flail cutting with our machine. The machine collects the grass, so it does not break down and fertilise the ground. Starving the area of nutrients will hopefully deter the coarse grasses and let the finer grasses prevail.

## Traffic Management

Every morning we look to move all the ropes and hoops to avoid any concentration of wear. This process in the dark sometimes results in one or two being missed!

Black rubber mats are moved 3 times a week, unless they are at ends of paths or around the halfway hut this year.



It is unfortunate that when we put a rope up to stop golfers entering a troubled area, the flow of traffic is immediately concentrated. It is like this at pinch points around the course.

Moving traffic hoops and ignoring signs for convenience, is one of the challenges we are faced with.



## Staff Development

Graeme Barnsley has started the process to gain his level 2 diploma in Greenkeeping. He has an assessment on the 21<sup>st</sup> of December to ascertain the level of training required.

Personal Development Reviews will take place before the end of the year.

I must report on how well the staff have managed with the Covid-19 restrictions. We start in staggered times and have breaks in our 'bubbles'. As jobs go, greenkeeping must be one of the safest in a pandemic, but even so the team have shown commitment and discipline to keep each other safe.

## Plans for the winter

- Woodland management, as per course policy.
- Surface drainage work. Weather permitting
- Clubhouse entrance. General improvements to surrounding area and car park
- Staff Development Reviews
- Repair work to 13<sup>th</sup> surfaces (using cores from surface drainage work)
- Finish landscape work on 14, as directed by the Architect
- Weed control around the pond (Willow saplings)
- Transplant trees from the course to left of 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> to aid screen
- Lift sprinkler heads which have sunk over time
- Repair irrigation electrical faults found on the course – rather than wait until spring to find lots of problems we have found a way to electronically check the system. We do this monthly and hopefully we can routinely repair these or identify them for an irrigation technician to fix. To date we have 8 decoders to replace.

Due to the strange year we have had the team have arrived at November and December with a lot of annual leave left to take, leaving us with few numbers on the ground and not a lot of big changes to report on. While the course is our number one priority, we are taking time to tidy and clean the workshop, organise the tools, spare parts, and machinery to be as efficient as possible.

We are also trying to make more use of our software package. This needs to be populated with all the machinery, stock, budget, health and safety, diary etc. As you can imagine, an arduous task but one that will pay off once we are on top of it.

Most of the machinery has been taken away for its annual service. Blades and reels have been sharpened ready for the new season.

This leaves me to say, on behalf of all the course staff, merry Christmas and let us hope for a different 2021, with lots of sunshine and golf.

Kevin Hensman

Head Greenkeeper RCGC