

November

Course Report

Greens

As growth has slowed, the need for feeding reduces. After implementing our feeding programme this year, it is hugely satisfying to see good results. Still early days, and a few things I would like to implement to really understand timing better, but ultimately it has given us confidence to keep going.

Disease



Unfortunately, we have had an outbreak of disease on the greens. We are doing everything we can to stop the spread.



Conditions are perfect for it as you can see here in the 13th fairway.



Leather Jackets

The help prevent the Crane Fly laying eggs in the green surface, we did not aerate for 12 weeks. To not aerate for so long was difficult for us to comprehend, it has been a mainstay of greenkeeping and general soil health for ages. It seems impossible to quantify on both counts – did we see any drop in turf quality? Or will we see any benefit next year when the Leather Jackets become active? As the risk of damage is so great, it is worth trying.

When we stopped seeing Crane Fly activity, and conditions were favourable, we did manage to get the greens spiked over a two-day period.



Worms and Fairways

Not a good combination. Sticky mud, wheels, rollers, foot traffic and we see the results. Playing golf is not its best and greenkeeping is worse.

Why did we cut?

With fairways at this time of year, we are thinking whether this is the last time we cut before the ground conditions are too soft for machines. If an opportunity arises, we take it. Leaving the fairways to grow is not an option as we do not have another mower to cope with large areas like this.

The only machine we could use is the big rough mower, but as you know, it is even bigger than the fairway machines. It would be good as it does not have rollers, it has jockey wheels so smearing would be limited, but it does not cope with undulations well, 16th fairway for instance.

If we left the fairways to grow to 25/30mm (semi height) to bring the rough mower in to play (its lowest setting), and ground conditions turned wet, then we would have a very hard job retrieving the situation.

Why did we cut them so low?

This is not causing the issue, the issue is the roller in front of the cutting unit, much like a golf trolley wheel, it smears the worm casts.

There are products available which kill worms, why are we not using them?

This is correct. There are products being sold as "soil conditioners" which contain saponins. Washed into the soil (recommended for 5-10 minutes!), these "soil conditioners" will cause the worms to suffocate. The dead worms come to the surface and need to be collected. However, if this product is a pesticide, then it has not been through the correct certification to ensure its safety. On top of that, it is expensive roughly 3 times the cost of a bag of fertiliser. One bag of this material would cover about 600m², we have around 90,000m² of fairway area.

Worms are good?

For the soil, yes. Worm numbers have declined over the years (not at RCGC!) so there is an effort to recover the populations for the good of the soil. As I have said before; any new pesticide must prove it **does not** harm worms at the very first stage of testing.

What can we do?

Expectations must change. There is not going to be a chemical solution like we had in the past. Our site is a wet one and any mechanical means of removing or brushing for instance, requires dry conditions. We are always on the lookout for new innovations, and I am sure something will come along which will improve our situation.

Can we use turf protector mats?



Absolutely, this is a good idea. With recovery low to absent during the winter, using these purposely designed mats would help the course, but also help you enjoy your round more. A perfect lie every time!

Other clubs have introduced the use of turf protector mats. This is commonplace in links courses throughout the winter months, some clubs locally used them to help recovery after the 2018 and 2019 summer droughts.

Here are a couple of links, but I suggest doing a bit of research as with most things, there is a host of variety -

[Home - Spurk Golf](#)

[Verde Sports: Artificial Grass, Artificial Lawns & Turf](#)



14th Path improvements

We would like to improve the existing path on 14 and reroute a section of it to help complete the vision of the Golf Architects of Swan Design. Work has started with a wooded area being cleared. The new section will cut through this area and the whole path re-surfaced. A new corner of ground where the old path was, will be made into a playable grass area.



Ecological rough

Work is ongoing, cutting and collecting. The use of a graminicide has been used in varying ways and areas to help weigh up what works best on our site.



We are striving to thin the sward to help find errant balls, but also to help keep these vitally important areas.

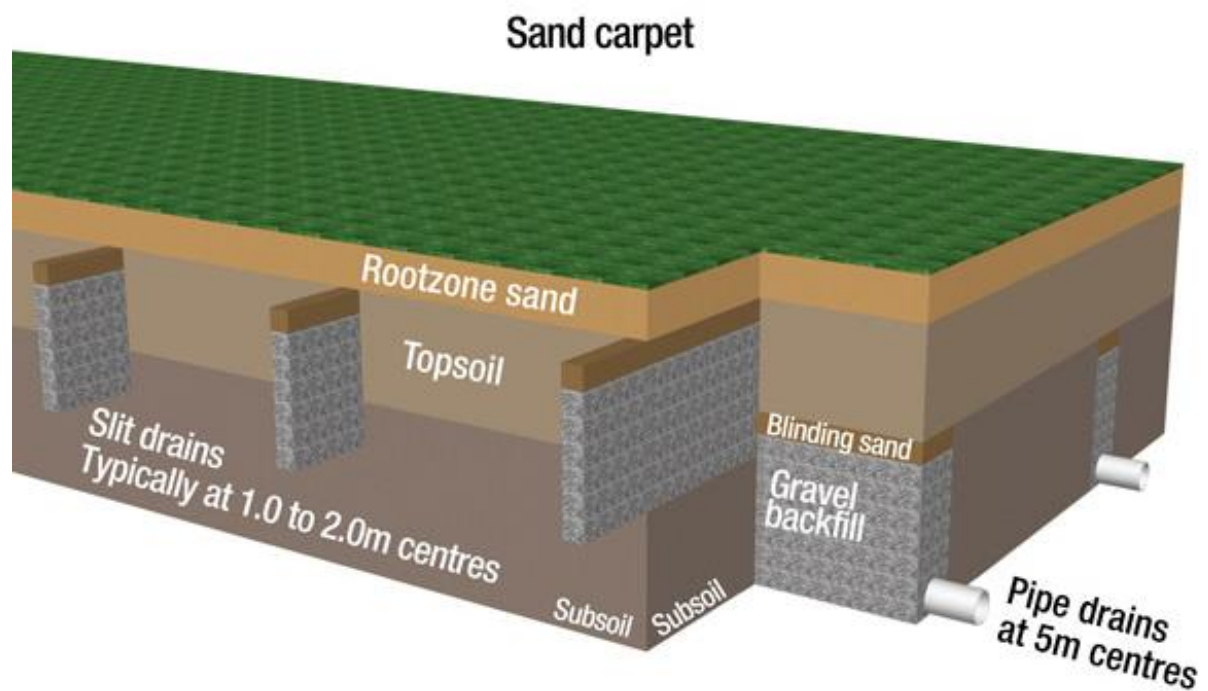
We have also sown Yellow Rattle (*Rhinanthus Minor*) in the soil where the grass is at its thickest. We need to get it in the ground now because the seed needs prolonged periods of cold weather to trigger germination.

13th Green drainage

I am pleased to report that the drain has been unblocked. The pipe was exposed in two places, we made sure the pipe work was free of debris and running freely. The pipe to the right on the green was full of silt, sand, and organic material. This was pulled out and the grills were replaced. Fine work from Paul Glue and Graeme Barnsley.

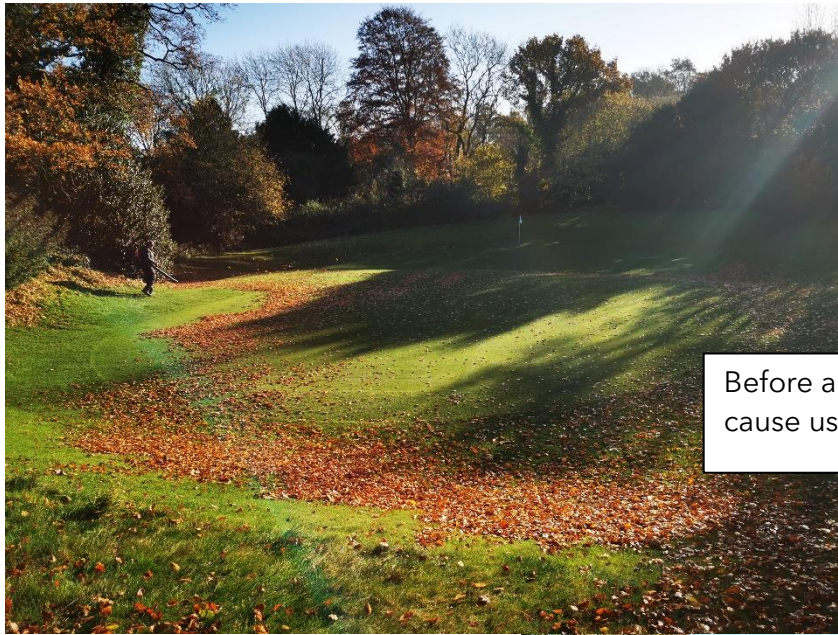
Top dressing

To keep surfaces dry, we have top dressed areas of high traffic but also, and most importantly, the drainage areas. This is called Stage 3 drainage. Stage 1 would be the pipes below ground, stage 2 is the sand banding or sand slitting. Stage 3 is to make a sand carpet on top of these sand bands and slits to keep the drainage functioning.



This image was found online, it illustrates the drainage stages very well.

Leaf Clearing



Before and after... the 13th Oaks
cause us a lot of issues!



Leaves, Leaves and more leaves!



This is the 7th green. The larch trees left of the green had not yet lost their pine needles. The wind turned to a stiff northerly and blew them across the green. This green alone took 2 hours of labour to clear! 2 big blowers and 2 back packs for 30 minutes! And the needles kept falling!

Irrigation System

- Decommissioned for the winter.

We are currently getting prices to improve the electrical side of the system. This will give us greater reliability and control over the system.

Every month during the winter, we check the system electronically to see if there are any faults in preparation for spring. Unfortunately, 5 decoders failed on the first check. The new upgrade will eradicate this problem.

We will update you as things progress.

Bore hole

We are waiting for the contractors to fit a new borehole pump and pipe work to the surface. Currently the pipe seems to be losing water, so it takes longer to fill the tank. Also, it was pointed out that the water will be washing the walls of the borehole away which could result in the pump being buried and the hole blocked.

New Staff Member

Brandon Bell will be starting with us on Monday 29th of November. Brandon showed bags of enthusiasm during the recruitment process, we cannot wait for him to join us. This brings our team up to six, although for the first few months he will be under close training and observation. Please make him feel welcome if you see him on the course.

Tee Markers

Over the next few days, we will be bringing in the tee markers to help protect them from the winter weather. These markers were a big investment so we will try our best to make them last as long as we can. The old markers will replace them for a while.

Tee Marker placement and Mats

Please be aware that we will also reduce the amount of teeing area to reduce wear on tees. We do this by moving the whites and yellows together, but also decreasing the width. As growth is down to a minimum, recovery from divots is very slow.

We have invested in some new tee mats which will be used on the par 3s or the worst of the par 4s if the wear is becoming intolerable.

Ongoing work

- Top dressing
- Ditch clearing
- 14th Path re-routing and re-surfacing
- Leaf clearing