

## Head Greenkeeper Report

### March 2022



### Winter Programme Update

The team have altered surface levels on greens 7, 10 and 15. As sand top dressings are worked into the surface it can get pushed to the outside edges of the green and over time this has built up sand banks which function as a dam preventing surface run off and causing puddling. Now we have our own Sweep n Fill brush it is easier to pull this sand back into the central areas of the greens rather than with the old style drag matts which will stop this re-occurring. The work involved stripping the turf re-shaping the rootzone and re-turfing. We needed to strip some turf from the chipping green to replace some turf that was lifted as it completely fell apart as we attempted to lift it due to the areas sitting wet for many years. The turf was completely anaerobic and full of black layer with a strong sulphurous rotten egg smell due to the high organic matter content being saturated. I have started to extend the chipping green to compensate for the removed turf and we will repair the area as soon as resources allow. The new areas have been rolled three times with the Toro GP1260 and are starting to root; even with all the recent poor weather, no puddling on these areas has occurred which is pleasing. Due to the high O.M levels; the turf is still soft but as soon as it dries out, we will start to aerate and top-dress with straight sand to improve surface levels and incorporate sand into the surface to initiate O.M breakdown. Next winter there are some other smaller areas on greens we will need to look at.

The conifer hedge which completely shaded the 1<sup>st</sup> Tee has been removed and the scrub behind it cut down and accessible stumps dug out. The rear hedge was left in to protect our neighbour's privacy but lowered to improve light levels to the rear of the tee. A root barrier will be installed to limit root invasion issues. The remaining stumps on the steep section of the tee bank will be ground down. The turf and surface debris has been dug off and piled up and will be removed when ground conditions improve. The area will now be rotavated, looted and seeded with the Germinal's WFG2 wildflower and fescue mix that was so successful on the 3<sup>rd</sup> last year. The tee is now getting full sun which will benefit the sward and should help with reducing worm casting issues. The tee will now need levelling and draining when resources allow.

The fairway bunker on the 2<sup>nd</sup> has been filled in utilising spoil from the new greenside bunker and turfed with what we could salvage from the stripping of the 11<sup>th</sup> tee. The new greenside bunker has been constructed using the completely sealed Durabunker method, this is vital on our golf course as it is extremely stony below the topsoil which would contaminate the sand very quickly. The bunker is completed, and the overhanging turf will be trimmed up as soon as it has rooted. The reason for leaving it overhanging is to prevent any shrinkage before it has a chance to root.

Work has started on the 1<sup>st</sup> approach project. The turf was stripped and stored on pallets by the compost pile behind the 2<sup>nd</sup> tee. The two bunkers have been dug out and shaped with a large section of the right-hand side bunker being filled in. The approach has been re-contoured removing the large hump on the right, pulling it down to fill the low spot in front of the green. The two bunkers were drained into a central sump under the approach using 100mm land drain, 10-20mm gravel and topped with Aquadyne panels as we have done in previous bunkers with impressive results. This work has opened the green from the fairway and will improve the ease of maintenance of the green and surrounds. The fairway turf has been re-laid. Both bunkers have now been constructed using the Durabunker method and we are just awaiting a small turf delivery to complete the project.

The pathway between the ponds has been scraped off, the end nearest to the 16<sup>th</sup> fairway extended. A large dead alder was removed next to the pond near the 14<sup>th</sup> Tee and the path and steps excavated up to the 14<sup>th</sup> tee. This section has been stoned up and compacted. The slate topping is on site ready to be installed but due to staffing levels being down to two recently we have not been able to complete this work. I am away on annual leave myself next week and this is a job I have the team to complete.

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I also researched into installing the H-Flex Safe Steps system ([www.htncontracting.co.uk](http://www.htncontracting.co.uk)) on this project if we can afford it, self-Install comes to £890 + vat or £1890 installed.

The trees lining the riverbank from the dogleg on the 8<sup>th</sup> have been cut back and some problematic ones removed to prevent any potential issues that might hinder the flow of the river. The stretch from the 8<sup>th</sup> tee to the dogleg is still to be completed. An arborist was brought in to remove some large trees that had fell across the river. He has also removed all overhanging branches from the mature Oak trees behind the 8<sup>th</sup> tee with permission from Old Padeswood G.C.

The 11<sup>th</sup> Tee has been stripped, what turf could be saved was used filling in the 2<sup>nd</sup> fairway bunker and around the edge of the new greenside bunker. The surface was a complete mesh of tree roots across the entire surface which was the cause of it settling on the left-hand side and why the turf was struggling constantly. We borrowed a large rotavator and turned the surface over hand pulling the roots out. The loose soil was then pulled around with the tractor mounted loot. The remaining high spots were rotavated and looted again to finalise the levels. I have been waiting for the Arborist to come in to take the large Ash tree on the left down from the top to prevent these issues reoccurring but as of, yet he has not had time. 150m<sup>2</sup> of an extremely hard wearing and drought tolerant Creeping Rye turf has been laid, whilst not ideal to conduct the tree work post turfing, most of the weight is on the opposite side of the tree and we will rope any branches that could cause potential damage to the teeing area.

### Course Maintenance

We again tinkered with our IPM this autumn/winter to further reduce our fungicide usage. Headland's 20-20-30 plus mantle mix was applied monthly between September – January with a soluble sulphate of iron applied 2 weeks after to harden the plant up and maintain plant health. Only two fungicides were applied in the last 12 months down from 7-8 historically. The greens stayed clean right up until the Christmas break, but a strange weather pattern of 16-degree days, humid wet nights and high rainfall led to an outbreak affecting Greens 1,10,14,18 P/G. The greens have been maintained at a height of cut of 5mm all winter with the Toro GR1000 hand mowers. A recent application of Rigby Taylors granular 3-0-12 + 8% Fe was made at 25g/m<sup>2</sup> as the extremely wet February had left the surfaces washed out and hungry. This was followed by a spray application of Flowsmart at 10l/ha mixed with 50l Boost to help move the water down from the surface quicker. As the surfaces dry, we will be conducting routine aeration, verti-cutting, and starting our top-dressing programme.

The Tees have had a granular application of Rigby Taylors 11-5-5+9%Fe Cold Start at 35g/m<sup>2</sup> to initiate recovery from the winter play. Planned works now will include a 19mm Verti-Drain, Overseed 50kg/ha Dwarf Rye & Fescue, 20t Sand Dressing & Full Divot Using Re-Root and Dwarf Rye mix.

Fairways have been slit with the Sisis mega slit this winter. Tees and Carries on 8,9 and 16 have been Shock-Waved with a machine I managed to borrow from Campey Turfcare.

Staff levels have been down with one member of the team being off ill since before Christmas with no return date currently known. Annual leave entitlements being taken before the end of March cut off have left numbers down to two at times which has slowed progress on the course.

**Stuart Mason**  
**Head Greenkeeper**