

March Course Report 2021

1 Year on...

Global pandemics aside, it has been a wonderful first 12 months as your Head Greenkeeper. Time, on one hand has flown by, these reports for instance seem to come around weekly! On the other hand, time has stood still. I look back and I feel a sense of astonishment of how slowly this last 12 months ticked by. I am guessing the abnormality of the year allowed a new- found pace to life which has only enhanced my feelings and memories of my debut year.

Course update

Lockdown projects

Due to the lockdown being different this time around in terms of staff numbers, the unknown duration, and the poor weather, we decided to take on small bite-sized projects. This enabled us to finish a project within a week just in case we had to turn our attention back to course set up for the return of golf.



The Gorse near the 9th tee has been pruned to different heights and in some cases left untouched. This is to start a continued programme of maintenance. The different levels allow homes for different types of animals which use it, but at the same time keeping the gorse under control.



We have continued the clearing work around tees and greens.

Course renovations underway





The cores taken from renovations will be used where we can. In these pictures you can see they are being used to cover over some worn areas on the 13th carry.



As I type this on the 2nd of March, the course has dried up immensely. 7 days ago, we would have been borderline closed. The wet weather was relentless, and I must admit feeling a little relieved not having to close the course for being too wet for golf.

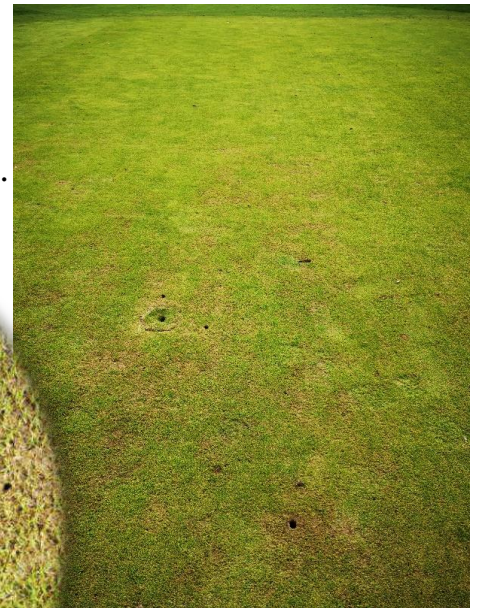
2nd of March, exactly 3 years ago, CLOSED due to snow! - pic. courtesy of Robert Brown, Chair of course.



4th Green

We have had localised thatch issues across the course but none more so than the front two thirds of the 4th green. You may have noticed before lockdown, the putting surface was wet, pongy underfoot. This area on the green is still soft. We have only just managed to get a machine across it to hollow core. Hollow coring does not remove as much of the thatch as the deep scarifying. However, I hypothesise that for the 4th green, the small grooves left after the deep scarifier, may have channelled the water into the bowl shape of the green from both directions. The wet conditions promote thatch thus causing a downward spiral of surface quality.

Hollow coring will still remove thatch but crucially, hollow coring allows us to apply significantly more top dressing. This will deliver sand straight into the rootzone to firm up surfaces, improve drainage and dilute the thatch.



Mehlich 3 Soil analysis

I have found a company who use the Mehlich 3 method of extracting the soil test results. This is important as we can now compare with the MLSN guidelines (Minimal Level Sustainable Nutrition). With this test and ourselves in charge of taking the samples we will now be able to get some consistency.

Before, we had little to go by, just recommendations from (you've guessed it) the fertiliser company!

| | | RCGC Results | | |
|--------------------|----------------|--------------|------------|------------|
| | MLSN Guideline | 4th Green | 11th Green | 15th Green |
| pH | >5.5 | 6.4 | 6.7 | 6.7 |
| Phosphorus (P ppm) | 21 | 52 | 49 | 51 |
| Potassium (K ppm) | 37 | 203 | 164 | 263 |
| Calcium (Ca ppm) | 331 | 798 | 757 | 815 |
| Magnesium (Mg ppm) | 47 | 47 | 51 | 52 |
| Sulphur (S ppm) | 7 | 31 | 16 | 21 |



With the MLSN guide, we can judge how much fertiliser we need and when. This new information will hopefully save time and resources going forward.



A leaf sample was taken too so we can see if the plant is using the nutrients from the soil successfully.





Approaches

With efficiencies made on other areas of the course we decided to increase the size of the approaches and green collar.

We are hoping for some improvements in -

1. Aesthetics and variation to each hole
2. Speed of play
3. Increased putting opportunity



Return Date

The course renovations have been carried out earlier than normal. We took the opportunity now, rather than attempt anything soon after members return and disrupting play. Although we had this good start, it is important to understand that the course will still reflect the time of year when you return.

This means surfaces will not improve dramatically until the ground temperatures increase, which will promote the desired growth.

The renovations are necessary for the long-term benefits of the course. We need to avoid what has happened on parts of the 4th green, and make sure the ground is in the best possible position to utilize the warm growing conditions once they arrive in spring.

On-going work

- Top Dressing putting surfaces, tees and drainage areas
- Deep aerating
- Spraying surfactant (wetting agent) on all playing surfaces
- Remove tree stumps and repair ground
- Commission irrigation system
- Audit irrigation system
- Continue re shaping tees
- Renovate bunkers
- Cut and present the golf course for March the 29th!



Kevin Hensman,
Head Greenkeeper.