

Course Manager Blog – May 2025

After an incredibly wet January & February, we have had just 36mm of rain since the 27th of February (until 23rd May), so much so that we are currently experiencing the driest Spring since WW2.

It's at times like these we are very fortunate to have a full course irrigation system.

Aside from wanting 'a drop' of rain the course is presenting very well, it has really turned a corner in the last few weeks – with just a few areas remaining to fill in.

Summer heights of cut (HOC) were achieved quickly (it usually takes a gradual decline in height reduction, in moist conditions), thanks to the dry conditions – our diamond patterns have been embedded on tees and fairways.

Greens have a good firmness and pace to them – our little and often approach to cultural practices work well for us.

The dry spell highlighted, and caused, some issues with the irrigation system as we put increased demand on it - from a substantial leak on the left-hand side of the 16th fairway to a few individual heads not operating as they should.



The team, and with assistance from our irrigation technicians, PSI, have fixed most of the faults to ensure the system is working as efficiently as possible – just in time for the showers!

During the dry period we spent quite a bit of time utilising water by hand watering, where necessary, in localised dry spots (not usually an April / May task).

Hand watering enables us to 'dose' dryer areas with a higher concentration of wetting agent, via tablet form. Wetting agents help break down surface tension, caused by drying out, thus making water available and able to be taken in by the plant.

Tees

Recovery on tees has been fantastic since they were renovated – a double pass with the overseeder, aeration, a controlled release fertiliser and of course 2 very successful divot evenings in April enabled this.

It is now quite difficult to remember how worn from play some of our tees were after a long winter of play!

In May tees had their first application of growth regulator which was combined with and foliar feed to help keep them healthy and dense – we will continue with foliar applications throughout the summer months.

The 10th tee – one of our most worn tees from play during the winter



Fertilising

We applied a granular fertiliser to all approach's, green surrounds and bunker surrounds – it is our aim to intensify and increase the management of the wider areas of greens this summer.

We used a 4-to-5-month slow-release fertiliser on these areas, the fertiliser contained Calcium and Magnesium, as well as NP&K – the Calcium and Magnesium provide an instant 'colour up' whilst the NP&K element breaks down over time maintaining a steady nutritional input.

We will apply a growth regulator to these areas every 3 to 4 weeks during the summer.

We will intensify management of green surrounds and aim to maintain strong grass coverage for fairer lies.

We received feedback surrounding some of our green surrounds last summer, we have taken on board these comments and are working to improve these areas – it's important to mention that some areas will always be a challenge due to their location, foot traffic, tree roots/canopies and drying out (South facing / no shade).

Rest assured, we are working hard in this area.

9th Green surround



Heights of cut

As mentioned earlier in the blog, due to the lovely dry weather we managed to achieve summer HOC quicker than usual – it is usually quite a process.

Greens are at a mowing height of 2.5mm – we have, in the last 2 springs that we have had to go lower than is desirable sooner to combat the indifferent growth levels due to the varied grass species, this due to the warm days and cold nights - 18 or 19 degrees by day, with frosts at night, well into May.

I hope you received our email providing a little more detail on this; we wished to provide some background as to why from a playing perspective greens seem to go backwards when the weather improves (during the day)!

It isn't ideal for turf as lower heights of cut create more stress to the plant and in turn require more nutrition, water, care and intervention (fungicides).

Tees and approaches are down at 9mm, and fairways are down to 15mm. We will be lowering our fairways again soon to 14mm – we held off a little while to bring down fairways to summer height allowing them to recover that bit longer from winter play – 1mm makes a big difference.

This also helped whilst it was so dry, keeping that little bit more moisture in the plant.

To help combat the Rye grass (the coarse longer grass) in our greens collars we have a dedicated mower set at 7mm and have been mowing collars following a brush in the opposite direction.

The brush stands the leaf upright and enables the mower to achieve a tighter cut.

Weekly dressings

We have carried out 3 light dressings on greens since course maintenance week.

During this process we apply approximately 5 tonnes of Mansfield Medium 35 sand. We start by mowing the green as normal, then we apply the sand using our mounted top dresser.

This is followed by our sweep and fill brush which pushes the sand into the profile. After brushing, the green is rolled, a new hole is cut and some irrigation water applied to help bed the sand in.

We have found that the greens perform better after this process rolling truer and faster. We will be carrying out this process weekly for as long as possible during the year.

3rd Green – a dusting of sand



Divot evenings

We had our 2 divot evenings on the 7th and 14th of April. Both evenings were incredibly successful with fantastic turn outs on both dates.

We do appreciate help from members, and it certainly puts the tees and fairways in a better position moving into the season.

We have noticed that our divot tree and divot boxes on par 3's are being used less and less as time goes on – these are in situ to help look after your course, it is appreciated when members back fill their divots – every little helps.

Tee edging and complex's

We completed a couple of last-minute projects before the summer season really got under way – we installed sleepers along the side of the tees on the 12th and 13th to provide a nice clean edge and tee surround presentation.

A vast improvement to both areas, we will install more on tees 3, 8, and 11 over time – and probably more, watch this space.

The new ball washer consoles have been installed on holes 8, 12 and 16 with 3 more due to be delivered in June – these ball washer consoles combined with the new sleeper edged tees really elevate the look of the tee complexes.

We will be replacing the old benches on holes 8 and 15 imminently.

13th tee edge – Before and after



New compound

We moved into our new compound on the 23rd of April – a very exciting new chapter for the team and really sets Sand Martins apart in terms of greenkeeping facilities – the lifeblood to every golf course maintenance team.

We are extremely grateful for our owner's personal investment enabling this.

With everything in its new home, fully operational, and with our new storage bays in use, we took multiple deliveries of divot mix, top dressing sand, bunker sand and path topping material.

Path topping was the first aggregate to be used on the course; 90 tonnes of red pave was applied to the paths using a belt dresser. Paths had suffered during the wet conditions and was long overdue, making an instant improvement.

We have begun topping up bunkers, concentrating on greenside and high traffic splash bunkers. We complete a full rotation of sand every fortnight during our presentation days (Flymo & strim).

An area that really benefits bunkers is when members rake bunkers in a way that helps the next player and sand levels.

We made a video on best practice for this a couple of years ago – please take a moment to view this again [How To Correctly Rake A Golf Bunker!](#)

Our wash pad was put straight to use as we began to give the fleet a deep clean, something that we were unable to do properly since November last year.

All rotary mowers have had their blades sharpened as we endeavour for a nice crisp finish. Winter servicing was complete and regular regrinds of our cylinder mowers keep the cut sharp and consistent - A clean cut is a healthy cut.

Matt will be arranging a couple of dates for members to join him in a tour of the new facility and provide details of what works have been completed within Phase 1 & 2 –

keep an eye out for the next Newsletter, details of how you can join one of the tours will be provided within the Newsletter.

Pitch Marks

Our aim is to have some of the best greens in the area – to achieve this we need to take a collective responsibility, it is an area that could be improved. It can only be helped if on course etiquette is maintained by one and all.

We made a video on best practice for this a couple of years ago – please take a moment to view this again [How To Correctly Repair A Pitch Mark!](#)

Bunker Tops

We are aware of the dry tops to some of our bunkers, even those that were re-turfed recently. These don't look great, and we are disappointed with some of the presentation.

We are looking into solutions and asking the industry to see what they have done to combat this, for bunkers that have the same design and build specification as ours. We don't have a cast iron plan yet but are certainly working on it in the background.

What we do know is that we don't plan to alter or rebuild the bunkers after many years of investment, we are happy as the solution to our bigger issue (poor drainage, stone contamination and fox damage) in years gone by has been resolved with this construction method.

Our issue is keeping the turf vibrant on the very top edge – we don't want to be in this position every year.

We will keep you informed on progress and plans, most likely, any work will begin this winter and the solution may not be fixed overnight (completing every bunker).

Coming up

Over the coming months we will continue to focus on recovery and the thickening of the greens surrounds, mowing regimes will intensify as we move through the season.

We shall continue our weekly dressings to ensure firm and smooth greens.

A pass over the greens with our pedestrian aerator, with pencil tines, will take place soon – this will help alleviate any compaction and will assist the flow of moisture through the profile. Greens will be rolled following the process.

Fortnightly foliar feeds and monthly applications of moisture management products will help with plant health on the greens.

Anthrachnose (turf disease) is a concern around June / July as the greens will be under stress from constant mowing and rolling - a granular feed will be applied late June (after championships) to help minimise the chance of being affected by this turf disease.

We will be applying a herbicide to remove weeds from playing areas and long rough very soon – we are waiting for a little rain to take the stress off the plant (grass) as a herbicide is quite a hot product for turf – turf manager speak there.

Long may this lovely weather continue – tough for turf but fantastic for golf. I will be updating you all with the plans for our August renovation week in the next blog.

Please look at our Instagram feed on [smgc_greens](#) for regular updates on the course

Many thanks for reading.

Stuart Job
Golf Course Manager

