



Course Report. October '23 – April '24.

By Robin Little

General.

The UK Met office data shows England has experienced its wettest 18 months since records began in 1836. Trying to maintain a golf course since the end of the summer last year has been very difficult. Many Links courses around the country have been closed for weeks at a time which normally is totally unheard of, so a parkland course on the edge of the lake district like Penrith doesn't stand much of a chance at all.

If the course has been closed or if buggies are not permitted then please respect our decision, we are protecting the course for the benefit of everyone and trying to manage a very difficult situation the best we can.

Every golf course in the country has faced levels of rainfall which are totally unprecedented. Our aim has always been to focus on work which removes water from the course to keep it open and playable for the benefit of members and to maintain income. Drainage issues are always being monitored and plans for drainage work going forward are constantly being assessed, discussed and costed.

At the end of last season, we took on 2 new members of staff, Dan Simpson who has replaced David Strong, and Evie Black to increase staff numbers. Following an STRI report last year, an increase of staffing levels was recommended to maintain the standards that are expected here, so as a result of that, Evie has joined us as an apprentice. Both have fitted in very well. and are studying sports turf management at Myerscough college whilst working with us.

Greens.

Early season growth is likely to be very slow due to the stress on the grass plant from such wet conditions. Considering the weather grass coverage isn't too bad, we put this down to our fertiliser program of feeding right through the winter and using temporary greens when the conditions are particularly bad. Disease has been minimal, which is good considering the wet weather. We haven't been able to verti - drain as much as we normally would during the winter months, we have been reluctant to put the weight of the tractor over the greens with such soft ground. As soon as the weather allows (the greens need to be firm enough to take the weight of the tractor) we will verti drain all greens to improve water infiltration.

Following recommendations from the STRI report last year, we have invested in 2 pieces of equipment for greens. A disc seeder and a Sarrel roller. Having our own seeder means that we can overseed with bent grass regularly, easily and efficiently. Bent seed is currently around £500 per bag so we need to guarantee good sowing and germination with no wastage. The more bent grass coverage we can maintain, the better the putting surfaces will be. The Sarrel roller, with a brush, is a piece of equipment to aerate the top 50mm of turf without disturbance, and brush to refine the surface and brush in top dressing.

Maintenance week.

Annual Greens maintenance which had to be postponed from the end of July last year was scheduled for the first week of April this year, sadly due to the wet weather it has had to be postponed again. **PLEASE NOTE. This work still needs to be carried out ASAP. It will happen as soon as weather allows. We will give as much notice as possible but this may only be a few days. Late April and early May is most likely at the moment please understand and appreciate that we have to do what is best for the course.**

As a minimum we will be hollow coring, top dressing and micro tining followed up by double rolling to put the surface back down and iron out the bumps. Fertiliser will be applied before and afterwards to ensure recovery is as quick as possible. During this period temporary greens will be in use on and off to accommodate greenkeepers work. This is essential work so please be patient and allow us to get on and have the work finished as soon as possible.

Tees.

Summer tees are now back in play, divotting will be carried out on weekly basis (twice a week for par 3's). 9 7 7 Fertiliser was put down last week of March to kick start growth now that summer tees are back in use.

Fairways.

Following the STRI report, a recommendation was made to purchase a Sisis Veemo scarifier, which we have done. This can be used on fairways, greens and aprons and will help reduce thatch, improve water infiltration and encourage new growth. Scarifying fairways will be carried out as soon as possible when the weather allows.

Grass growth on fairways on holes 11 and 12 is usually quite poor and they have quite a lot of moss in them. Last year we sprayed them with wetting agent to help keep them hydrated, iron to blacken the moss and a little fertiliser to encourage growth. This made a quite a significant difference so we will be doing the same this year, and including the 17th fairway which also has quite a lot of moss in it.

Irrigation.

The electrical side of the irrigation system has been commissioned and tested, at the moment there are no major faults - this is very good news as usually this time of year we have a lot of issues. There are a few small issues with the wet side of the system that we currently know about but nothing big or too expensive - a bit of pipe work in the pump house and a pump sensor. The valve set has been replaced at the 18th green which had many issues.

Machinery.

All winter servicing and sharpening of machinery has been completed, and everything is ready to cut grass should it ever stop raining and allow the ground to dry out

Winter Project Work.

- A herringbone drainage system has been installed to the front half of the 3rd green – this has been a problem area for a few years but the amount of rain we have had since July last year made it a priority.
- A herringbone drainage system has been installed to the back of the 13th green. This area was especially wet at the back right of the green, it was completely unusable and the grass was dying off as a result. It's pleasing to see that in April the grass has almost fully recovered even in the worst area.
- A full herringbone drainage system has been installed to the 17th green. Although grass coverage wasn't too bad on this green, had we not drained it this winter then the whole green would have been in very poor condition this season.
- Another drain has been installed from the 2nd apron, down the left hand side of the green leading to an existing manhole. We believed that an old drain had collapsed or was blocked and is causing this problem. When we installed this we came across a pipe full of water coming from the top area on the fairway, this was connected into our new drain to help the situation on the 2nd fairway a bit more.
- New steps are being built on the 11th tee from composite wood, if these work out well and members are happy with them, we will re do other steps on the course in the same way going forward.
- Considering the extremely wet weather that we have had since the end of last summer I would like to thank all of the green staff for their efforts in completing as much winter work in house as they have done. It is not easy to keep 500+ members all happy, and I'd also like to thanks the greens committee for their support – I'm well aware that its not an easy task.

Bunkers

Ideally, we would have liked to have given much more time over the winter months to bunker work as we know quite a few of them haven't been in good condition for some time, however the wet weather limited what was actually possible.

- The 2 Cross bunkers on the 18th fairway have been turned into mounds these will be seeded with a heathland grass seed mixture and eventually we will try to establish heather and gorse on them. As a result of doing this we have created a new bunker further back on the fairway to maintain the rating for this hole and make it a more realistic par 5.
- Fairway bunker on 11th, has been rebuilt and had a liner installed. Previously this had no liner and was sitting on top of bed rock. As a result, there were always stones coming to the surface, which is not acceptable so it had to be done.
- Right hand green side bunker on 13th has also been rebuilt as the face had collapsed. As per the fairway one on the 11th a liner has been installed as previously it didn't have one.
- Greenside bunker on 12 and the biggest one in the middle of the 10th are being repaired where the faces / edges were in very poor condition.
- We are currently edging bunkers and will get as many done as possible.

Tree Work.

Trees between fairways 5, 6, 7 & 8 have all had lower branches removed to make mowing easier and to allow a better swing.

The area of trees to the right of the 8th tee have had all of their lower branches removed to such a height that the 7th green can be viewed from the top 8th tee.

Two trees have been removed to the right of the 8th main tee, so that the fairway bunkers on 8 are more visible from the back tee.

Another big tree was taken out close to the 7th green to allow more sunlight into the area which will improve grass growth and therefore lies in what is a heavily trafficked area.