

# INTERNATIONAL GREENKEEPERS GAZETTE

July 2024 Issue #9

## MEET THE MEMBERS

**BEN SWIDENBANK AND  
ADAM WITCHELL**

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## INTEGRATED WEED MANAGEMENT GUIDE

**WITH KERSTEN UK**

How Kersten UK's new Integrated Weed Management (IWM) guide and how it supports effective weed management while reducing environmental impact.  
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## NAVIGATING TRANSFORMATIVE TIMES: GMA

How the GMA is strategically adapting to challenges in pay equity, embracing social media, and navigating industry shifts.  
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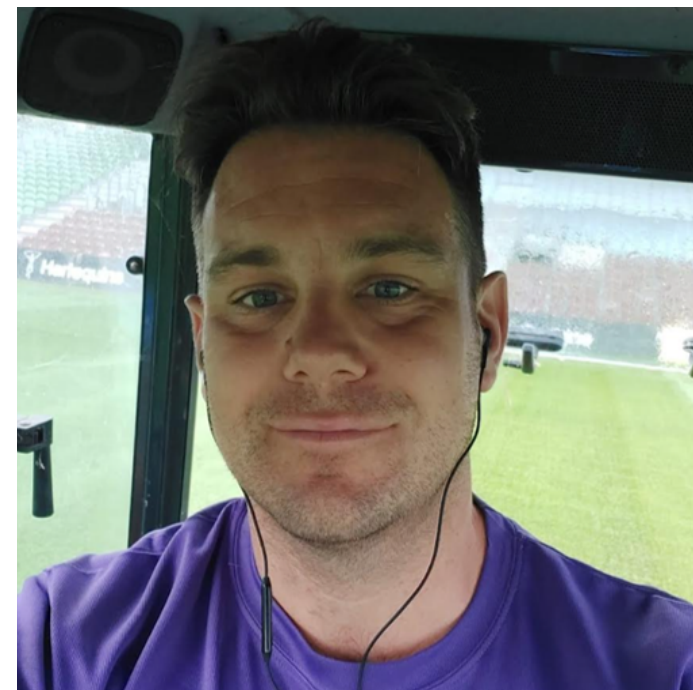
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# EDITOR'S WORD



We put countless hours into growing International Greenkeepers, many of which most will never see, whether we're holding meetings, helping members find work, or creating our free educational content.

We never signed up for this to become millionaires. International Greenkeepers was built to help others, just like those who have helped me along the way, sharing knowledge, skills, and opportunities along the way.

It's great to see the feedback we get from our members, positive and constructive. Quite possibly the best moment of this quarter was May 1st, when we found out that one of our long-time members, Albert Oberholzer, has

now received his permanent residency in New Zealand! We're delighted to say the least. If you'd like to read about Albert's story we have an article on the website, and he's featured in the 5th Edition of the magazine. It's moments like this with Albert that make it all worthwhile, knowing that we have helped to change somebody's life.

For us, we continue to move in the right direction. Some time has been spent on improving the [TurfMarket.co.uk](http://TurfMarket.co.uk) and its features. We've also been working on creating a lot more educational content recently mainly in the form of cards and videos.

We're looking forward to the next few months. Groundsfest and Saltex will soon be here, but for now, let's enjoy the UK summer!

*Bradley Tennant*

Bradley Tennant

Founding Member of International Greenkeepers for Hire & Editor  
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## INTERNATIONAL GREENKEEPERS FOR HIRE

### ABOUT US

The International hub for greenkeepers, groundstaff and volunteers. To unite greenkeepers, promote the industry, and help share the art of greenkeeping with others. The organisation is made by greenkeepers, for greenkeepers.

EMAIL: [Internationalgreenkeepers@gmail.com](mailto:Internationalgreenkeepers@gmail.com)

### CAREERS IN OUR INDUSTRY

- Greenkeeper/Groundstaff
- Tree surgeon/surveyor
- Pitch and course construction
- Sales representatives
- Turf farms
- Lecturer or Trainer
- Manufacturer
- Environment management
- Spray technician

- Mechanic
- Research and Development
- Irrigation technician
- Consultant
- Operations/facilities manager
- Golf, cricket, football, rugby, lawn bowls, horse racing, polo, baseball, tennis and more



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# Meet the Member: *Ben Swidenbank*

Ben Swidenbank is the first of our featured members in this issue. Ben's passion for sports turf has seen him take his career into some of the most renowned UK sporting venues, including Wimbledon, Wembley Stadium, Arsenal Football Club, and the Oval Cricket Ground. He currently teaches as an Adult Skills Tutor in Pesticide application and Horticultural machinery at Myerscough College, Liverpool Campus.

## How did you first hear about International Greenkeepers For Hire?

I was trying to recruit groundspeople for the summer of 2020 when I was working at The Oval. I was trying to connect with as many industry contacts as I could and came across IGFH online.

Daryl and Brad were like-minded people to myself. We want to help people in the industry and show people what a great industry it is. What it has grown into since then is an amazing achievement by them both.

## What inspired you to pursue a career in turf?

I loved sport growing up. I was never going to make it as a professional, but I still wanted to do something in sport. I was also interested in farming as a child. So becoming a groundsman seemed a good fit, with it being involved with sport, while working outdoors and with machinery.

## How did you end up working in education?

I had worked as a groundsman within different sports and had some amazing experiences. So I decided I would like to encourage others to join our industry and enjoy similar experiences to what I have.

## Is there a big difference between working in education and 'on the tools'?

My level of fitness is certainly a lot worse off! As a groundsman in non-managerial positions, your day starts and ends at work. For any teacher, there are always different things on your mind—have I got

everything I need for the day? What emails do I need to reply to? What support will my learners need? What courses do I have coming up? When can I do prep? The list goes on.

## You've worked at some major venues. How did you find working at places like Arsenal, Wimbledon, Wembley, and The Kia Oval?

I've lived a privileged life! The places I've worked have always had the resources to maintain surfaces to a very high level. Having the resources is half the battle.

At such workplaces, you're fortunate to see the latest developments, in the field, in action. You also get to meet so many different people within the industry and gain contacts that can help you with your next steps. Obviously, these venues are seen by worldwide audiences, so the pressure is there, but the satisfaction comes with that too. And a little bonus is you get to see, and sometimes interact with, some of the best sportspeople in the world.

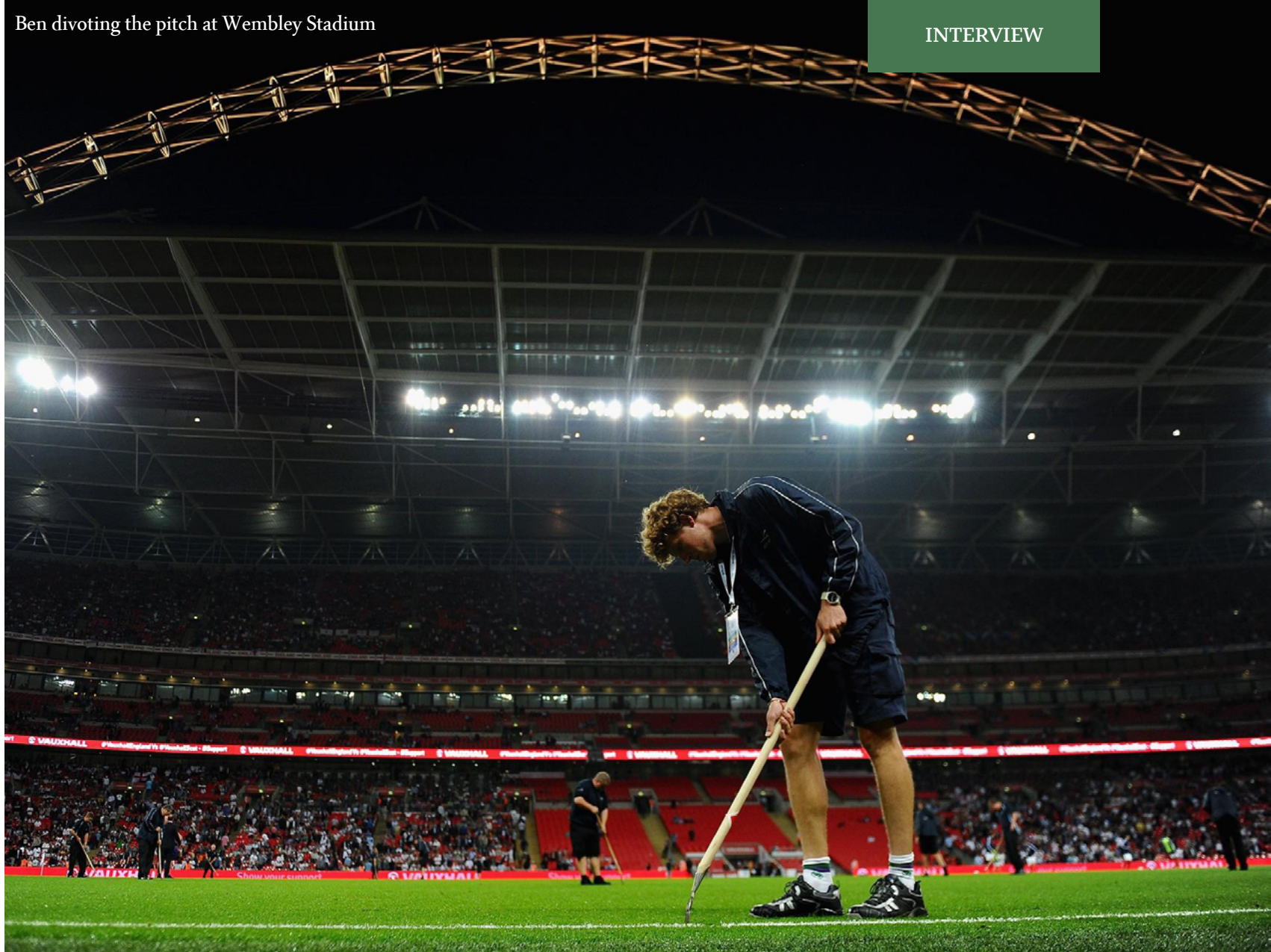
## Are there any unique situations that you've encountered while working at Myerscough, and did they pose any challenges to your job?

As a teacher, every day is different, especially with short courses—you never know what that day's group is going to be like. And like in a groundskeeping role, the weather can have an adverse effect on how a day and course is going to go.

## If you could switch roles with any other member of a grounds/greenkeeping team for a day, whose job would you want to try and why?

Morecambe (FC) Head Groundsman. I might need

Ben divoting the pitch at Wembley Stadium



INTERVIEW

longer than a day though! It's a job that has come up recently and everyone is saying, "You should go for it!" It would be good to trial it to see what the pressures are, the challenges of working with a restricted budget (and team), and with a surface that's a good construction but not top-level.

## How do you see the future of greenkeeping evolving, especially in the context of international collaboration and exchange?

Greenkeeping is always evolving due to people always striving for better ways of doing things.

Unfortunately, respect for the industry and pay doesn't evolve as quickly. The opportunities are there for working abroad and have been for a long time.

People just need to put themselves out there and be fully committed to the idea of working somewhere else. I come across people who think, "Yeah, that sounds fun," but then aren't 100% committed when there are challenges with moving,



Tutoring planning for Myerscough College students





Marking out Center Court at Wimbledon-



Line marking at Wimbledon - London 2012 Olympics

poor pay, etc. Just take the plunge; sacrifices may have to be made but you will be better for the experience.

**Who has had the biggest impact on you in your current job role and why?**

In my job now it would be those around me. In teaching, you have to always be adapting and learning how to get the best out of students. I have the knowledge for the courses but it's how you can get that knowledge into people's brains and get it to stick there.

**What inspiring words would you say to young**

**greenkeepers?**

You've got to be prepared to work hard. When discussing seasonal staff with fellow groundspeople, we opt for work ethic over qualifications every time.

People with the right mindset, willing to learn, willing to work hard and get stuck in are the ones who are most respected at the end of a season.

The hours may be long and unsociable and the pay may not be great but the experiences are brilliant. Why wouldn't someone want to do a season at Wimbledon, St Andrews, Lords, The Oval? The opportunities are there every year, you've just got to commit 100% to the experience.

*"The hours may be long and unsociable and the pay may not be great but the experiences are brilliant."*

**What keeps you in the industry?**

It's my industry, it's what I do, it's what I love. It has given me some of the greatest experiences of my life. I want to keep on doing it and get others to live it too.

**IGFH Members, We'd Love to Hear From You!**

Interested in being interviewed for our Meet the Members feature? We interview turf professionals based all over the world, with a special interest in those who have travelled overseas for work.

Email Laura at [editor@internationalgreenkeepers.com](mailto:editor@internationalgreenkeepers.com) with a brief introduction to yourself, your experience, and your current job role.

Mowing at Kia Oval





# Wiltshire College Turf Students Learn from the Pros at AFC Bournemouth

On 13 May this year, students studying Sports Turf, Horticulture, and Landscaping at Wiltshire College & University Centre took a trip to AFC Bournemouth to gain hands-on experience and insight into the topics that they have recently covered in class.

Ian Lucas, Head of Grounds, did an excellent job of hosting the day and taking the students on a tour of the stadium.

The students were able to see an example of how turf management practices are employed in an elite environment.

This included turf reinforcement, establishing grass from seed, mowing, machinery maintenance, and soil profiles and structures.

Students also had the opportunity to witness a sports turf renovation in action with a glimpse



This image: A photo of all the students at A.F.C Bournemouth

into the current renovations of the first team training ground attached to the back of the Vitality Stadium.

The pitch had been seeded, aerated, and top-dressed, and students were able to watch stadium employees lay out growth sheets and discuss seed germination with a live demonstration. The tour and demonstrations linked in well with the students' KSBs (Knowledge Skills and Behaviours), and it was great to see the students' engagement.

Many had never had the opportunity to toufootball stadium before, and being given behind the scenes access to quality sports turf, with the opportunity to take photos and ask questions, is an experience that will be remembered by these aspiring professionals for years to come.

IGFH's Bradley Tennant, Sports Turf Lecturer at the college, reflected on the trip:

"This visit to AFC Bournemouth provided our students with invaluable real-world insight into the ins and outs of sports turf management.

Experiencing firsthand how professional groundskeepers maintain an elite-level pitch reinforced the theoretical knowledge gained in the classroom and inspired many of our students to aim

high in their future careers."

He added: "We're incredibly grateful to Ian Lucas and his team for this opportunity."



The students in the home dressing room



This image: Wiltshire College Students gather arounds at the Vitality Stadium  
Above: Ian Lucas - Head Groundsman at A.F.C Bournemouth





Sports line marking for grass, synthetic & hard surfaces

# SUCCESSFUL TURNOUT AT BCU GROUNDS MAINTENANCE ROADSHOW

Despite the inclement weather on April 9th, 2024, the Grounds Maintenance Roadshow successfully unfolded at Birmingham City University's Pavilion, Moor Lane.

**Over 20 companies attended the event to present their latest products and services. Such gatherings serve as vital platforms for the industry, spotlighting innovations and fostering crucial networking opportunities.**

The adverse weather failed to deter a significant turnout of visitors, persisting throughout the morning and afternoon. Despite the persistent rain, attendees braved the elements to engage with exhibitors.

The Pavilion proved an ideal venue, with ample indoor space for coffee breaks and lunches, alongside a secure outdoor area for demonstrations and exhibits.

We had the chance to catch up with Iain Courage - Sales director of Fleet Line Markers and organiser of the event, who said on LinkedIn:

'The weather didn't stop a good number of visitors coming along throughout the morning and into the afternoon. Although there was no break in the rain and wind (& cold!) most visitors ventured outside to look at what was on offer.

'Heartfelt thanks to all the exhibitors, the visitors, and the staff at BCU who were all extremely helpful during the setup and on the

day! Also special thanks to Sean! The BCU visitors, and the staff at BCU who were all extremely helpful during the setup and on the day!

'Also special thanks to Sean! The BCU logo looked fantastic on the bank and resisted the downpours really well! Next time we'll be sure to tick the box for good weather, looking forward to doing it again at Moor Lane, what a great venue! Love it!'

Regardless of the weather challenges, the event provided an excellent occasion to connect with both familiar faces and new acquaintances, including our close friends

from Fleet, Kersten UK, and Howardson Group. It underscored the indispensable value of in-person networking, highlighting the limitations of virtual interactions.

Overall, the event was impeccably organized, and we eagerly anticipate the next installment.

We'd like to extend our gratitude to Iain and Fleet Line Markers for extending the invitation to exhibit at the event and orchestrating a memorable day.

Events like these help us spread the word about our mission and extend our resources to support as many professionals as we can.



# NAVIGATING TRANSFORMATIVE TIMES WITH THE GMA

In our last issue, we reached out to BIGGA to see how the association is strategically adapting to challenges in pay equity, embracing social media, and navigating industry shifts. This time, we've asked the same questions to the GMA—and you're in for an enlightening read.

**Q:** What do you see as the most significant challenges currently facing the greenkeeping and grounds industry?

Climate change and environmental sustainability are pressing issues. With the wet weather continuing to play havoc this year which saw the cricket season delayed by two weeks, we have seen an increase in demand for advice and guidance from our 16 strong team of Regional Pitch advisors and Key Account Managers regarding flooding. The industry must adapt to changing weather patterns, conserve water, and reduce the use of chemicals while maintaining high-quality turf.

Additionally, keeping up with the latest technology for turf management and equipment can be challenging. There is a need to invest in new technologies that improve efficiency and effectiveness. The GMA's annual trade show SALTEX – Europe's premier grounds management show - enables visitors and exhibitors to source and discover innovative products and solutions

to cultivate world-class sports pitches, parks and landscapes, as well as hear from industry experts in our three learning LIVE theatres.



Recruitment continues to be a major issue for the grounds management industry with over 40% of the workforce over the age of 50. Attracting and retaining qualified grounds staff is essential for the industry's success. The GMA recently launched its NextGen initiative – formerly known as GMA Young Board of Directors – who represent the grounds management industry whilst acting as ambassadors for the GMA, with the aim of encouraging

more young people into grounds management through targeted activity such as 'Schools into Stadia' and other networking activities.

Budget restrictions can limit the ability to invest in new equipment, staff training, and research into sustainable practices. The GMA provides its members with the latest information, advice and guidance tools to help shape this via the GMA's Toolkit. The GMA's Grounds Management Framework also provides both employers and employees with a structure that identifies the skills, knowledge and behaviours required by groundstaff and the investment required to reach the desired pitch quality.

Finally, there is a need to enhance the public's under-

standing of the importance of grounds maintenance, which is often undervalued. We at the GMA, continue to raise awareness of the industry and shine a spotlight on the incredible work that grounds staff do with annual campaigns such as #GroundsWeek, the GMA Industry Awards and the SALTEX Exhibition.

These provide a platform for the industry to show off the wide range of areas and elements that go together to deliver sports pitches and make sport possible. SALTEX alone attracts over 7K people each year, alongside key stakeholders, such as National Governing Bodies and Government departments such as the Department for Culture Media and Sport and Sport England.

**Q:** How has the closure of forums, like the recently closed Pitchcare forum, impacted the industry's information-sharing landscape? Do you think there is still a need for forums?

The grounds industry is a great example of sharing information and knowledge. Professionals and volunteers will happily, and regularly, share techniques and knowledge for the betterment of the industry. The Grounds Management Association supports knowledge sharing through:

- **Pitch Advisory Service (PAS) Awareness Sessions:** These sessions provide networking opportunities and workshops across the country, compensating for the loss of forums by facilitating face-to-face interactions.

- **The Hive & Other Community Platforms:** Alternative platforms like The Hive, Honda Rugby Grounds Connected and WhatsApp groups offer new avenues for discussions, ensuring that the conversation continues online.
- **Events & Training:** Events like SALTEX and training courses offer physical venues for sharing best practices and further networking, which are crucial for industry growth.
- **Community Expansion:** The GMA's efforts to expand the community with new membership offerings launching later this year, and an improved engagement strategy indicate a proactive approach to fostering industry connections.
- **GMA Toolkit:** Tools provided by GMA can help fill the gap left by forums including the GMA's Toolkit and 'Ask the Expert' service, offering valuable resources and guidance for grounds staff.

**Q:** In light of the increasing use of social media, how is your association leveraging online platforms to connect with members and share valuable information?

The Grounds Management Association is strategically expanding its digital presence to foster stronger connections with its members and the broader community.

By establishing a dedicated communications and marketing team, led by Jennifer Carter, the GMA is poised to enhance its outreach and engagement efforts.



GMA Schools into Stadia event





Outdoor training

The upcoming launch of its new website reflects the GMA's commitment to providing an accessible and informative online hub for its members with thousands of free resources available. This initiative, coupled with a renewed social media strategy, signifies a proactive approach to embracing the digital landscape.

**Q:** How are you adapting to social media groups being formed that provide new spaces for ground staff to post job listings for free, connect with other ground staff, and share their experiences in different job roles?

The GMA is embracing the evolution of social media as a valuable resource for ground staff. We work with several social media groups through the NGB's and the Pitch Advisory Service, curating content, sharing advice and guidance and offering ground staff a platform to share their experiences. We are also launching a new jobs board which will not only list industry-relevant vacancies but provide free, useful content to those who may be looking for a job in the grounds care industry such as 'how to' guides, interview advice and guidance, as well as engaging career content from the GMA's Grounds Management magazine.

Overall, we aim to provide a 'one-stop-shop' for our members, which enables easier access to the needs of Grounds Managers, offering consistent and information, advice and guidance to the industry.

**Q:** With the evolving demands in the industry, how is your association addressing concerns related to pay and compensation for greenkeepers and grounds professionals?

When it comes to reward and recognition for the grounds management sector, it has been difficult previously to attribute a 'one-size fits all approach' due to the variance in job titles, roles, and salaries. For example, in grounds management across sport, two people can have the same title of 'Head Grounds Manager,' but one might be at a top-six Premier League club and the other might be at a grassroots facility.

One could manage a single pitch with one member of staff, or they might oversee a site of twenty pitches with a team of half a dozen. Equally, there are many other factors to consider when it comes to salaries, from performance to CPD (Continuing Professional Development).

To assist with simplifying and consolidating this, the GMA launched the Grounds Management Framework (GMF) – a groundbreaking framework which sets out the national standards for natural turf across sports including Football, Cricket and both codes of Rugby. The GMF aims to legitimize and professionalise the industry. For the first time it sets out a clearly defined pathway and progression in the sector, whilst providing clear development and lifelong learning opportunities for those already employed or volunteering within grounds management.

Additionally, the GMF combines benchmarking qualities, skills and knowledge, and resources required to maintain natural turf sports surfaces into one easy-to-use framework. By grading the standard of a playing surface, from basic to elite, grounds staff, employers, and key stakeholders will be able to understand the level of expertise required for the pitch's maintenance.

The next stage of the GMF is aligning salary bands with each level of the framework so that grounds staff and their employers can understand what the appropriate salary would be in recognition of their professional expertise.

Working with the NGBs, our aim is to embed the GMF into the sports standards so that it becomes a key reference point which aligns pitch quality, experience, skills required and ultimately the associated salary for those maintaining that standard of pitch.

By launching the GMF, we are inspiring the next generation and futureproofing the industry by beginning to address the current recruitment crisis in the industry and closing the gap in an aging workforce.



Saltex

SALTEX, the GMA's annual trade show

**Q:** Are there ongoing initiatives to advocate for fair wages and benefits within the industry?

In addition to the GMA's Grounds Management Framework, we regularly engage with NGBs, Sport England, the Department of Culture Media and Sport to lobby for fair wages and benefits across the industry.

**Q:** Given the reported staffing shortages in the industry, how is your association working to help organizations attract and retain skilled professionals?

We acknowledge the staffing shortages in the industry and are actively working to address this issue through several strategic initiatives:

- **Workforce Development:** We have placed workforce development at the heart of our strategy. This includes attracting new talent and accelerating the growth of a

diverse workforce. We are focusing on creating pathways for young people to enter the profession and providing training and development opportunities for existing staff.

- **People and Culture:** We are working to improve the culture within the industry by promoting diversity and inclusion. This involves addressing the underrepresentation of women and minorities in grounds management roles. We recently delivered a 'Women in Grounds' showcase in partnership with the WSL, Women in Football and Arsenal FC which saw 13 trailblazing women become the first all-female grounds team in football to prepare and maintain the iconic Emirates pitch.
- **Services and Support:** We offer a range of services and support to our members and broader industry including access to training, resources, and networking



opportunities. This helps organisations to develop their staff and improve retention rates.

- **Industry Representation:** We are actively representing the interests of the grounds management industry at a national level with NGBs and Government. This includes advocating for better funding and investment in the sector, as well as raising awareness of the important role that grounds staff play in maintaining sports facilities and green spaces. Funding and
- **Investment:** We advocate for increased funding and investment in the grounds management sector. This includes securing funding for training and development programs, as well as for the procurement of necessary equipment through the Pitch Advisory Programme and Pitch Power.

**Q: Are there specific programs or strategies in place to address the recruitment challenges faced by the industry?**

The aforementioned Grounds Management Framework – skills knowledge and behaviors required to attain a certain level or quality of playing surface, alongside this Workforce Development forms one of the six pillars within the GMAs latest strategy. We have been engaging with the National Governing Bodies of sport to not only identify the gaps but to provide initiatives and programmes, especially at grassroots level.

Land-based colleges and apprenticeships are also vital to the provision of the next generation of Grounds Managers and the GMAs NextGen initiative will engage within these areas to improve the shortage of ground staff and talent coming through.

**Q: How has your association adapted its training and education programs to align with the changing needs and advancements in the grounds industry?**

In response to the evolving demands and technological progress in the greenkeeping and grounds industry, The GMA has taken proactive steps to ensure our training and education programs remain at the forefront of the field. We are committed to fostering excellence in grounds management by providing our members with the necessary knowledge, resources, and networking opportunities to thrive.

Our approach includes:

- **Developed a new learning management system (LMS):** This allows enhanced accessibility providing 24/7 access to training materials, allowing members

to learn at their own pace and convenience. All training materials, resources, and updates are housed in one platform, making it easier for members to find and utilize the information they need. The LMS can track progress and performance, providing valuable insights into the effectiveness of training programs and identifying areas for improvement. The development of such technology futureproofs the GMA's training and learning offering, allowing us to use the latest technology in this area to enhance learners experience and engagement. By adapting our programs in these ways, we align with the changing needs and advancements in the industry.

- **Continuous Review and Updates:** We ensure that our professional development qualifications and training courses are regularly assessed and refined. This guarantees that our offerings are not only current but also adhere to the highest standards.
- **Recognition of Excellence:** Our programs are recognised by the matrix Standard, a benchmark of the Department of Education, which signifies our commitment to maintaining quality in education and training.

**‘We are committed to providing our members with the necessary knowledge, resources, and networking opportunities to thrive.’**

- **Skill Development:** We cater to the development of both technical skills and ‘soft’ skills, ensuring a well-rounded educational experience for all members, from professionals to volunteers.

- **Inclusive Learning:**

Our association believes in inclusivity, providing opportunities for learning and growth to both seasoned professionals and dedicated volunteers.

- **Independent Support:** We offer reliable and independent information, advice, and guidance (IAG) to all our members, empowering them to make informed decisions and advance in their careers.

**Q: Are there new certifications or training modules introduced to enhance the skill set of industry professionals?**

We continually update our unique range of online training courses, face-to-face courses, and our suite of Professional Development qualifications. This year alone some 1900 individuals have undertaken GMA training courses and qualifications. This unique suite of training courses and qualifications is instrumental in advancing the knowledge and skills of grounds professionals and volunteers, fostering a culture of excellence within the industry.

We have also developed courses including hybrid pitch maintenance and those which focus on specialist subjects such as warm season grasses, fertilisers, etc.

**Q: How do you envisage the future of the greenkeeping and grounds industry, and what role does your association play in shaping that future?**

We accept that we face a challenge to improve professional recognition. It will take time to address these changes; however, we are making good progress. The Grounds Management Association celebrates its 90 th anniversary this year, demonstrating the association's value in assisting and supporting its members and the broader industry over the last nine decades.

The value of industry should not be underestimated; currently the industry employs over 37,000 people with 45,000 volunteers, supports over 5,000 businesses, and holds an approximate economic value of £1 billion. This is a huge achievement.

Industry representation and workforce development are core pillars within the GMA's strategy – we hope that through the delivery of our five-year strategy that the grounds management industry will have a viable pipeline of skilled talent for generations to come.

At the GMA, an organisation that was founded by grounds staff, for grounds staff, we'll continue to build on positive developments such as the Grounds Management Framework, our work with the sporting National Governing Bodies, and efforts to improve resources available to members and the wider industry so that, as an industry, we can face these challenges head on.

Our increasingly close partnerships with the sporting National Governing Bodies (NGBs), including ECB, RFU, RFL, FA, Football Foundation, provide us with more influence in gaining support for the grounds care community.

By continuing to highlight the importance of grounds staff, as well as the struggles faced, we're working to identify solutions with the NGBs so that the role of ground staff is embedded in the wider sporting operation.

**Q: How does your association gather feedback from members regarding their needs, concerns, and suggestions?**

The GMA conducts annual surveys with all its members to better understand their needs and concerns. This is vital for us to gather all the information we need and help shape any future activities relevant to the industry. In addition to our survey, we work closely with a charity called Perennial who conduct a bi-yearly wellbeing survey for individuals involved in horticulture.

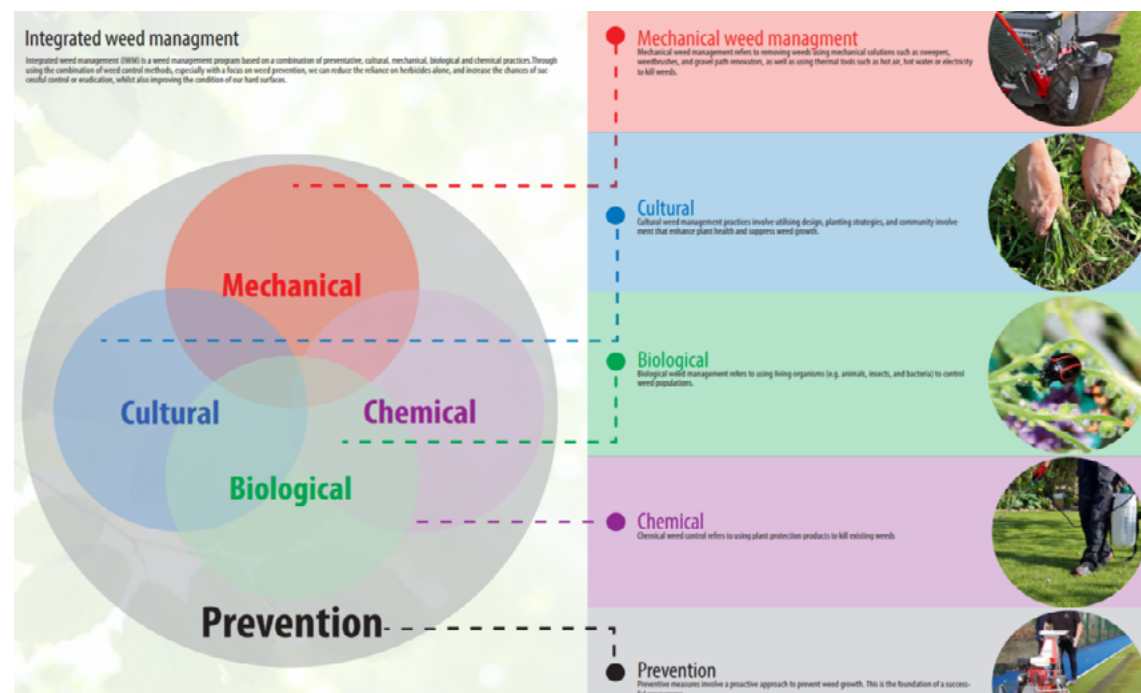
Individuals who complete our training courses will also be asked to provide feedback from their course which, again, enables us to stay relevant and ensures we are providing the best possible training for the industry.

Big thanks to the GMA for contributing to this article. You can read the full article on our website and learn more about how the GMA supports groundstaff by visiting [www.thegma.org.uk](http://www.thegma.org.uk).



The GMA Industry Awards





## Guide to creating an integrated weed management plan: Kersten UK

Sustainability is currently at the forefront for most companies, and rightly so. Without sustainable practices, processes will simply end at the first bottleneck. By definition, sustainability means the ability to maintain or support a process over time. My favorite definition is: "To meet the needs of today without compromising the needs of tomorrow".

In the groundcare and sports turf industry, it's no secret that we use far more glyphosates and chemical weed treatments than necessary. This is why Kersten UK's launch of its Integrated Weed Management (IWM) guide caught my attention. As an industry, we recognise that chemical weed treatments won't just stop tomorrow for two main reasons:

1. **Cost:** In most cases, it has been cheaper and quicker to use chemical applications to treat weeds rather than removing built-up detritus from curb edges and fence lines. Pre-germination chemicals can last up to six months, but this approach merely "kicks the can down the road." The detritus remains, and once seeds start to gather, we return to square one, with weeds growing in curb edges and fence lines.

2. **Education:** This links closely with cost. Companies often perceive chemical treatments as quick and easy fixes. However, if you add up the time spent using these treatments versus removing the material where weeds are forming, the overall time and cost are similar. More importantly, manual removal looks significantly more presentable and reduces our chemical usage. Chemicals eventually make their way into our watercourses and food, which should be a significant concern.

It's crucial that everyone in these environments works towards the same goal. Grounds teams should

use sustainable weed management practices, and management should prioritise long-term solutions over short-term cost savings. Battery-powered equipment, is fantastic, offering great range, minimal hand-arm vibrations, and, most importantly, not using fossil fuels.

Understanding where and why weeds grow is essential, including the soil cycle. Removing the build-up of detritus and planning to prevent organic material accumulation in certain areas are effective strategies.

This brings us to the differences between reactive and preventative weed management approaches. The IWM triangle highlights chemical, biological, mechanical, and cultural methods. Often, the most important prevention method is not acknowledged: not having the seedbed in the first place is surely better than having to remove it at all.

I encourage you to read Kersten UK's Guide to Integrated Weed Management booklet. It's a fantastic resource covering the topics I've mentioned and more, such as how communities can engage to help reduce chemical usage in decision-making processes.

My favorite part of the guide is the detailed information on which mechanical practices and surfaces are best suited to their machinery. Raising awareness is one thing; providing solutions is another. - *Bradley Tennant*

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## SURFACE GROOMING

Turf surface grooming is a maintenance practice to improve the appearance, playability, and health of sports surfaces like golf courses, playing fields, and tennis courts. It involves using specialised equipment to break up debris and worm casts, remove dew, and fix minor surface irregularities.

### How Often is Surface Grooming Necessary?

The ideal frequency of turf surface grooming depends on a few factors, including the turfgrass species, soil type, climate, and usage patterns, as well as the presence of pests. Ideally, sports pitches should be groomed at least once a month, but, depending on the desired outcome, some may require daily grooming.

### Timing of Turf Surface Grooming

The type of surface that needs grooming, the specific grooming tasks it requires, and the specific use case affect the timing of the grooming practices. For instance, sports turf might need dew removed every day during autumn and spring when disease pressure is at its highest.

### SISIS Flexibrush

The SISIS Flexibrush is an example of an efficient surface grooming solution for large areas like golf fairways and sports grounds. It's tractor-mounted and can be used to brush in top dressings, disperse dew, and lift grass before cutting.

[www.internationalgreenkeepers.com](http://www.internationalgreenkeepers.com)  
[internationalgreenkeepers@gmail.com](mailto:internationalgreenkeepers@gmail.com)

SISIS Flexibrush



SISIS Flexibrush folded

**sisis**  
Expert Surfaces



## MEET THE MEMBER:

## Adam Witchell

Adam Witchell is our second featured member in this issue. Adam has had a busy career, starting as a greenkeeper at Aberdovey Golf Club and going on to secure Head Groundsman roles at Forest Green Rovers Football Club and Calne Town FC. He's recently moved on from his Head Groundsman role at Harlequins Rugby Club to become a Sports Turf Consultant. Here, Adam shares how an injury while training for the Royal Marines led him into green-keeping, his thoughts on working overseas, and which songs would feature in his ultimate work playlist.

### What inspired you to pursue a career in turf?

After suffering an injury whilst training to become a Royal Marine Commando, I started to work at my local golf club, Aberdovey, on the greens. I quickly discovered I loved being outside and working as part of a team—I've never looked back.

### How did you find your current job at Harlequins?

I love it! The people at the club are such a fantastic bunch and Nurture (The Nurture Landscapes Group, Adam's employer) have been good and very supportive, although the 2-hour commute each way can be testing at times.

Being the only natural construction left in the Premiership it has its struggles. The scrums damage at the beginning was hard to take.

But I have worked hard on recording and collating all the data from testing the pitch, especially before games, to see where the sweet spot is as regards to surface hardness and soil moisture. I have a guide now to work to and we have

seen a reduction in the amount of damage from scrummaging.

### How do you rate apprenticeships as a pathway into turf maintenance?

I think the pathways are becoming

well and I can see a great future for him in this industry.

### Would you ever consider working overseas?

Yes, although having a young family I think I would struggle, but I do wish I did it when I was younger. I've read a lot about Bermuda grass and clubs abroad carrying out a transition to rye during the season, (which is) fascinating and something I would like to be involved in help out—especially seeing the results.

### What's the most surprising thing you've learned about yourself since starting your groundskeeping journey?

I have learned how adaptable I can be and also how calm I can be in a crisis.

### If you could create the perfect playlist for a day on the job, what songs would be on it?

Hmm, I think I would have some summer tunes, maybe Summertime by Will Smith, and some upbeat motivational music when you start an early cut: Blow by Ed Sheeran, Yeah! by Usher, Lil Jon, and Ludacris, and

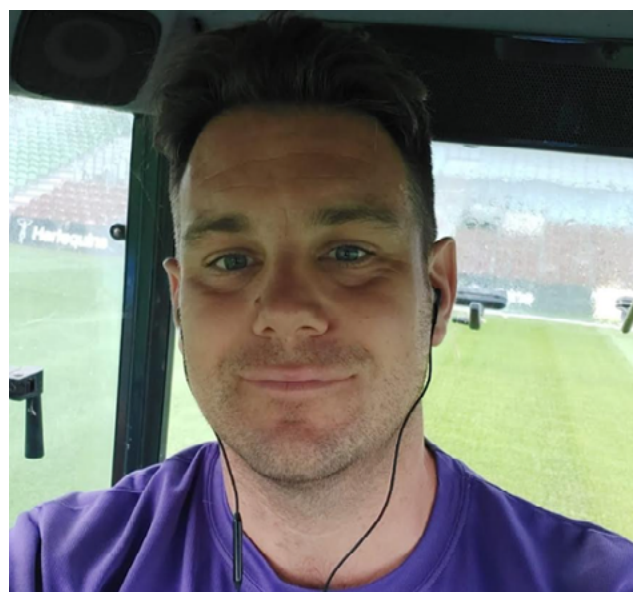
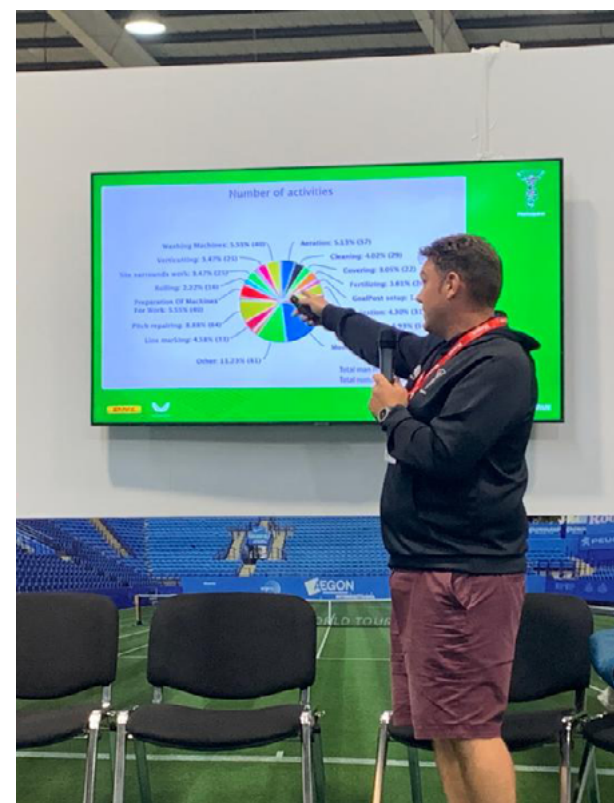


IMAGE: Adam Witchell of Harlequins Rugby Club

clearer and we're seeing a way for younger students to start off on a career in Sports Turf. I see a lot more courses online as well as colleges offering courses too.

### Do you have an apprentice?

Yes, Tyler. He's developing very



Left Image: Adam presents at Groundsfest

Survivor's Eye of the Tiger is always a winner when you're doing match prep.

### What's one piece of equipment you couldn't live without?

We have a Dennis 34R rotary and that does an incredible job at

### 'Sometimes the hardest thing to do is to do nothing on a pitch, especially in the harsh months of winter, but also that is the best thing to do.'

cleaning up after a match, but also, the quality of cut is impressive. We still use a couple of Hondas to clean up after matches, but for women's matches, it's only me. I use the 34R—carrying out a Honda on your own, I would never get home.



Right Image: The Stoop (Harlequins Stadium)

### What's the most challenging weather condition you've faced while working in the stadium, and how did you handle it?

About 60 minutes before kick-off against Sale Sharks, we had about 40 millimeters of heavy rain in 20 minutes, which was not forecast.

Luckily, the white lines held out, but we had a lot of standing water along the sides of the pitch and in front of the tunnel. I raced around with the Bowdry and had other helpers forking behind me, squeegeeing the water off while I soaked it up with the Bowdry. We got the game on, but that was a mess after the full-time whistle as the pitch has poor infiltration.

### What goals and aspirations do you have for your career in turf for

### the long term?

I generally just want to be a better Turf Manager next year than I am this year and eventually keep chasing the Turf Manager that I want to be in 10 years, always improving. I also want to help as many people along the way as I can.

### What keeps you in the industry?

The work, the incredible people in this industry, and always learning new things and better techniques.

### What inspiring words would you say to young greenkeepers?

Sometimes the hardest thing to do is to do nothing on a pitch, especially in the harsh months of winter, but also that is the best thing to do. That was the hardest lesson I learned as I always wanted to fix everything, but it just put more stress on myself and the surface and eventually just made things worse!

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Stuart Chalmers, Head Groundsman at Merchiston Castle School in Edinburgh, has recently elevated his maintenance procedures with the addition of the SISIS Litamina 1200.

# A Sweeping Success with SISIS at Merchiston Castle School

This innovative tractor-mounted sweeper is helping to enhance the upkeep of Scotland's only all-boys independent boarding school.

Merchiston Castle School boasts a rich tapestry of sporting facilities, including rugby, football, hockey, cricket, tennis, and a golf academy. Spanning just under 100 acres, the school's grounds present a diverse array of maintenance challenges throughout the year.

Stuart, who has climbed the ranks since joining the

school in 2012, understands the importance of using robust equipment to meet these challenges.

"As a school, we've long relied on SISIS equipment," remarks Stuart. "Their machines were here when I first started, and they've proven their longevity over the years. We're constantly striving to make improvements, and SISIS equipment aligns perfectly with our ethos."

The Litamina 1200, a highly popular model in the SISIS range, has earned Stuart's praise.



The Dennis Litamina Brush

"We had an older Litamina 1200 that served us well for over 10 years," he explains. When the time came to replace it, there was no question—we opted for the same machine. It's simply that good."

With its spiral-designed brush and galvanised collection hopper, the Litamina 1200 excels in collecting a wide range of debris while delicately following ground contours.

Stuart highlights the modernised features of the new model, including stands for convenient storage and enhanced practicality and ease of use.

"The Litamina 1200 has become indispensable in our maintenance routine," says Stuart.

"Primarily used on our rugby and football pitches, it not only cleans the surface but also helps rejuvenate the grass, allowing for better air circulation and preparing the turf for our mowing programme."

Stuart outlines the meticulous scheduling of maintenance tasks, which often includes alternating the use of the Litamina 1200 with other SISIS equipment such as the Maxislit, a tractor-mounted deep slitting lawn aerator.

"We utilise the Litamina for leaf collection as well, demonstrating its versatility and efficiency," he adds.

Ewen Wilson, Sales Manager for Scotland at SISIS, also receives praise from Stuart for his excellent service.

"The support we receive from Ewen is first-class. It's reassuring to know that we have a reliable partner in SISIS."

**As Merchiston Castle School prepares for exciting expansions, including a new nursery school and junior school, Stuart remains committed to maintaining pristine grounds.**

**With the SISIS Litamina 1200 at his disposal, Stuart and his team continue to raise the bar, ensuring that the school's sporting facilities remain a source of pride for years to come.**

For further information or a no obligation demonstration, please contact SISIS on 01332 824 777 or visit [www.sisis.com](http://www.sisis.com)

For more news, reviews and insightful views, you can follow SISIS on Twitter or Instagram @SISISMachinery and like the company's Facebook page: [www.facebook.com/SISISMachinery](http://www.facebook.com/SISISMachinery). You can also view the latest SISIS videos by visiting [www.youtube.com/SISISMachinery](http://www.youtube.com/SISISMachinery)



Stuart Chalmers, Head Groundsman at Merchiston Castle School in Edinburgh, has recently elevated his maintenance procedures with the addition of the SISIS Litamina 1200.



# A Rainy Yet Enlightening Bowling Green Maintenance Day

IGFH's Bradley Tennant reflects on Dennis and SISIS' Bowling Green Maintenance Day held at Knypersley Bowling Club on May 22 this year.

I've always been a huge supporter of free educational events, especially when they are open for all. I have had the pleasure to attend quite a few now over the years, and I still walk away with new knowledge and contacts.

This event was different from the rest—I've attended cricket, football, rugby, golf, in fact, most sports for these seminar days across the world—however, this was the first in bowls, a sport I tried my hand at out in Australia but never really put much thought into the maintenance. Sure, bowls greens are actually very similar to golf greens, but I never really appreciated the efforts of the teams that maintain them; unlike a golf course, most bowling clubs are run by volunteers or members during their spare time.

What also struck me as interesting was that members of these teams are sometimes paying between £30 and £100 per year to play, which I think is incredible, I've personally paid £30 a month to play football, and bowls looks like a bargain in comparison. This, however, does have quite a knock-on effect; lower memberships typically mean lower budgets, and as I'll get onto soon, that's having a huge impact on the playability of some bowls surfaces. The funds for initiative or new equipment and materials are just not available.

The weather wasn't so favourable on the Wednesday of the event. In fact, it was awful, and rained for the entirety of the day—a shame because there were 'On the Green' demonstrations planned before the lunch break, but to save the club's green, these demonstrations didn't go ahead. Instead, the faithful Andy Walker came to fruit and provided a hands-on workshop (I'll get onto that soon).

Andy Walker, SISIS Field Support Manager, or Mr. SISIS as I like to call him, opened the event with the standard welcomes and introductions, talking about the history of SISIS and his career.

Andy then passed the microphone over to Stuart Yarwood, who many of you may know as the Amenity Technical Manager for DLF/Johnsons Seeds. Stuart presented a fantastic talk on greens maintenance, during, before, and post-season works. He emphasised

Andy Walker's Mower Maintenance Workshop



the importance of aeration and managing budgets to allow for timely applications of fertiliser, seed, and wetting agents.

I have attended a few of Stuart's talks before, and I do enjoy them. This is largely because I appreciate his approach to the presentations; rather than a three-hour sales pitch; Stuart's talks are often based on questions and answers, which allows for good audience engagement. Despite the fact that he works within seed sales, you're never pushed to buy from him.

Stuart then moved on to a presentation based around seed selection, varieties, poor and good quality seeds, and why the local DIY store sells the same seed at half the price. This was another talk I enjoyed, and, having spoken to several seed producers, the information all adds up.

After the lunch buffet that was provided, Andy Walker

moved on to his workshop session: 'How to get the best performance from your mower'. This included the usual pre-start checks, setting cuts, heights of cut, and a demonstration on backlapping.

A keynote was Andy's mention of ensuring you only use water-based backlapping paste, since oil-based pastes tend to stick around after machines have been washed, removing the edge you've spent the last 20 minutes sharpening when the unit starts to cut grass. This is a topic we're looking to cover more of in the future; let us know if you're interested to learn more.

Ben Lloyd from the Howardson Group then did a quick talk on funding, highlighting what was available and how the clubs could access more information.

The day finished with a 'Turf Clinic' session, where Andy and Stuart took questions from the packed room

**'If you see any of these events pop up near you or would like to host one, I do recommend you get in contact or attend.'**

of 40+ guests. Nothing was left unanswered, from the usual 'What's happened in this photo?' to 'Whats the difference between the battery and petrol-powered machinery?'

Thanks to Alison Pickering, Marketing & Events Co-ordinator at the Howardson Group, who is the brains behind the organisation of

these fantastic events, and Knypersley Bowls Club for hosting the event.

If you see any of these events pop up near you or would like to host one, I do recommend you get in contact or attend. Even if they aren't within your chosen sport, I'm sure you'll take some valuable information away from them.

You can reach Howardson Group's Alison Pickering at [alison.pickering@howardsongroup.com](mailto:alison.pickering@howardsongroup.com) or contact Bradley Tennant at [bradley@internationalgreenkeepers.com](mailto:bradley@internationalgreenkeepers.com)



The Bowls crowd await Stuart presentation on grass seed selection



With over a decade of experience nurturing the hallowed grounds of the Scottish Gas Murrayfield Stadium campus (SGM), Jim Dawson has recently embraced a significant change: the adoption of electric turf maintenance equipment, specifically the Dennis ES-860 cylinder mower, marking a shift away from traditional petrol-powered machinery.

Reflecting on his time at the iconic stadium, Head Groundsman Jim says: "I've been working here for 13 years now. I've thoroughly enjoyed my time and it's a great experience to be part of the national team." Over the years, Jim has witnessed pivotal transformations in pitch maintenance, notably the transition to a hybrid pitch, a decision made a decade ago to combat nematode issues that plagued the turf. "This new pitch was an absolute game-changer," he adds.

The introduction of the Dennis ES-860 mowers represents a milestone in Murrayfield's sustainability journey. Jim, a long-time advocate of Dennis Mowers, explains the rationale behind the switch: "Petrol costs have gone up, and there are obviously the environmental aspects to consider – we had to weigh up the pros and cons of going down the electric route." After thorough demonstrations and evaluations, the ES-860's robust features, including extended battery life and compatibility with existing G860 mower cassettes, emerged as compelling factors for Jim.

The Dennis ES-860, a 34 battery-powered turf management system, epitomises versatility and efficiency. Offering a range of 13 interchangeable cassette options for tasks such as cutting, scarifying, brushing, and verticutting, it ensures optimal performance for day-to-day maintenance needs. Powered by a 48V battery, the ES-860 boasts a quick 120-minute recharge time, eliminating concerns of range anxiety during prolonged use.

Jim highlights the integration of the ES-860 into Murrayfield's operations: "The battery life is great – we can get the whole pitch cut on a single charge

with no problem at all." Leveraging the versatility of the machine, Jim utilises various cassettes tailored to specific maintenance requirements. "Predominantly we use the cylinders for cutting," he explains. "The brush cassettes come in handy during the winter to remove debris from the pitch to keep it clean and we've also got the verticutting cassette."

One of the standout features of the ES-860 is its ultra-quiet operation, a big advantage for Murrayfield's busy matchday preparations.

Jim notes, "Because we have a lot of press and media still working and 'on air' a couple of hours after the full time whistle, they are always asking for us to turn the petrol mowers off! However, we can now carry on working with the ES-860's, because they are so quiet in operation."

This not only enhances efficiency but also creates a more favourable working environment for the groundskeeping team. "I love how quiet the machines are – we can talk over them, and we don't find ourselves shouting from one end of the pitch to another," adds Jim.

Moreover, Jim commends Dennis Mowers for their exceptional service and expertise, particularly highlighting Ewen Wilson, Sales Manager for Scotland. "I receive an outstanding service from Dennis Mowers," he states. "Ewen has helped me a lot over the years and his knowledge of the equipment is fantastic."

As Scottish Gas Murrayfield Stadium continues its sustainability journey, Jim says there will be more electric equipment on the way, affirming, "Battery-power is the way forward."

With market-leading turf maintenance equipment like the Dennis ES-860, Jim Dawson and his team are certainly ensuring that Scotland's rugby legacy thrives for generations to come.

For further information or a no obligation demonstration, please contact Dennis by calling 01332 824 777 or visit Dennis' website at [www.dennisuk.com](http://www.dennisuk.com)

# A Sustainable Change

Dennis Signals Eco-Conscious Evolution at Murrayfield



# VERTICAL INTEGRATION KEY TO SUCCESS AT MVS

Born out of a co-op in the heart of the Mid-Willamette Valley, Mountain View Seeds has emerged as a top player in the global grass seed market, providing high-quality turf-grass, forage, and cover crops with a focus on environmental sustainability.



Mountain View Seeds headquarters in Oregon

Today, the company contracts with more than 200 growers across the Pacific Northwest and sells anywhere from 60-80 million pounds of seed every year.

Species include cool-season grasses like kentucky bluegrass, fescue, ryegrass, bentgrass, Bermuda, wildflowers, legumes, brassicas and much more used in lawns, parks, landscaped areas, golf courses, sports fields, and sod farms around the world.

Being vertically integrated also allows Mountain View Seeds to have a hand in every step of the process — from being involved in developing varieties, seed processing, and shipping.

This offers more guidance and quality assurance from start to finish. Tony Ramirez, accounts manager for the company, said this is what gives Mountain View Seeds a strong foundation.

It just makes our turnaround time quicker and

more efficient,” Ramirez said. “We’re able to work closely with our growers to ensure quality and performance standards are met. With our highly efficient automated seed blenders, we are able to ship products in a timely manner”.

## Rooted in Oregon

Mountain View Seeds is part of Pratum Co-op, established in 1946 by a group of local farmers cultivating premium grass seed east of Salem. In 1998, Troy Kuenzi and Todd Bond started Mountain View Seeds to handle the rising demand for Pratum’s private varieties.

Though the scope of the business is now global, Ramirez said the company remains dedicated to serving Oregon agriculture.

Mountain View Seeds is a supporter of several industry groups, including the Oregon Seed Growers League, Tall Fescue

Commission, Fine Fescue Commission, and Annual Ryegrass Growers Association. The company also donates to the annual annual Oregon Ag Fest, as well as local FFA chapters.

As members of the Oregon Seed Association, Ramirez said the company benefits by being able to exchange insights that strengthens the entire seed industry. “We’re all competitors in the room, but we have common goals,” he said. “It’s a good place to gain knowledge of what’s happening, especially in a diverse industry such as ours. There are so many different things that go on.”

## Fighting for Grass

One of the biggest challenges facing the seed industry, Ramirez said, is fighting against the perception that grass lawns are bad for the environment. In addition to grass’ ability to sequester carbon, improve air quality, and

prevent erosion, Mountain View Seeds is constantly working to develop more sustainable varieties that use less water, fertilizer, and pesticides while maintaining quality.

To do this, Ramirez said the company utilizes the Alliance for Low Input Sustainable Turf (ALIST), multiple universities, and other research partners.

“The biggest thing is we do a lot of research and trials to figure out which varieties can have reduced inputs, more heat tolerance, and decreased water use,” Ramirez said.

“A lot of it ties into the environment, but it’s also about cost savings in a way where you have fewer inputs, and you’re also doing better by the Earth.”

You can learn more about Mountain View Seeds, its growing processes, and its products on the company website: <https://www.mtviewseeds.com/>

# SIMON MOORE HONORED FOR INDUSTRY EXCELLENCE WITH HIGH SHERIFF AWARD

**Congratulations to Simon Moore who received an award in recognition of his great and valuable services to the community.**

Awarded by Pradeep Bhardwaj at a great venue, Monkton Combe School. This is a fantastic achievement and recognition for all his hard work within the industry.

Nominated by Victoria Fiannder, the assessor in Horticulture at Wiltshire College for his outstanding contributions to the industry. Simon has gone above and beyond to help the students down at Wiltshire College, supporting local events and clubs along the way.

Boss Iain Courage took the time out of his busy schedule to support Simon while he collected his award.

Congratulations, Simon, on behalf everyone on the IGFH team.



Simon accepting his award



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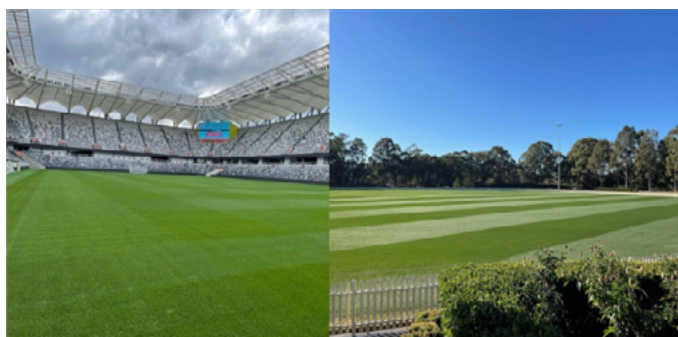


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