



Course Newsletter Spring 2008

As we are sure you will have noticed this winter has been extremely busy for construction on the golf course. Firstly the 18th tee has been re-aligned and raised by almost one meter, three feet in old money. The 17th tee has also been raised by 50cm, two feet. This gives an overall rise of one and half meters, almost five feet. This extra height will not only improve the view of the green on the 17th but also increase safety between the two tees. After completion of these tees we then constructed new ladies tees on both the 8th and 16th holes. All the tees have been constructed in the same manner with a flight (slope) on the tee in line with modern techniques, and have had new irrigation installed. We also used a quality root zone, topsoil, in the top four inches to provide good growing conditions therefore encouraging healthy growth and optimum recovery time. It is hoped these tees will

set the standard and deliver quality level playing surfaces. To give the new turf as much bedding in time as possible and also to give the greenstaff some growing in time it is not planned to open the tees before the Spring Open.

The other major construction of the winter has been the building of mounding around the 15th green. These have followed plans provided by our course architect, which were displayed in the clubhouse last year, with the main intention of providing some perspective to the green when playing in and removing the steep straight right hand side and back corner. Although constructed later it is hoped that these areas will be in play earlier than the tees mainly due to the reduced wear that they will suffer.

General winter maintenance has continued with aeration of all sports turf surfaces including verti-draining of

fairways. Now the winter course has been removed all worn and bare areas will be aerated, seeded and fertilised to encourage quick recovery.

At last the problem of the steepness of the path down to the 7th hole has hopefully been put to bed. We are sure you will agree it is a much safer walk and when the area to the right of the path and bank grow back it will blend into the natural surroundings, much better than that which preceded it. All done at a fraction of the cost of the many schemes looked at before.

Recently we have had our annual visit from the tree surgeon Marcus Goose. Marcus has worked at Stoke for over ten years and it is without doubt that the policy set out by the club and his knowledge and skill has meant that many trees are still standing and have not been blown over. Although some of the pruning looks harsh it is

carried out for the health of the tree and the safety of those who pass by it. The work is carried out following a long-term plan, which will take ten to fifteen years before a tree is re-visited, presuming it is in good health. Part of this plan also includes the under planting of trees which are considered strategic to the game of golf. Twenty-five Beech trees have been planted this year near to existing copse or individual trees. The intention is that when these fantastic old trees finally give up there will be some semi-mature trees to take their place and the way in which a hole may be played will not be as greatly affected. Likewise we do not want to change the open parkland feel of Stoke Rochford for the next generation so trees will be planted only when required.

Vermin control has continued through the year with some success. Since our last report we have removed almost one hundred and fifty rabbits and ninety moles. As always this is ongoing work through the year with greenstaff continuing with rabbit trapping until the summer months and mole traps placed out whenever a new site is spotted. The vermin fence around the course continues to use any spare hours with hole repair and wire replacement where necessary.

Now in April we are looking forward to the spring and a new season. Some of our spring preparation work has begun with aeration of greens and tees and some fertiliser applications to give the grass as good a start as possible. Most of the greens have a better grass coverage than normal for this time of year and this will hopefully give us a good healthy start to the year but as we all know from last year cold, dry and windy conditions through April can set things back.

This summer will see the introduction of a new flag system, as passed at the A.G.M, for denoting the position of the hole.

Red flag front third of green, Yellow flag middle third of green and a white flag showing the hole is located in the back third of the green. We are awaiting delivery of yellow flags and once these have arrived the system will be started.

Another change for this year will be the lowering of the height of cut for the mown rough. As mentioned in our autumn newsletter last year saw the purchase of a new rough mower allowing more flexibility between heights of cut. For many years the rough has been mown at 100mm mainly because this was the only defence the course had with no meadow rough and few bunkers. Obviously

over the past few years we have grown meadows and therefore the wayward shot is punished, however the shot just of the fairway also has a fairly severe punishment. It is hoped that by reducing the height of rough to 75mm balls just of the fairway will be less severely punished and also a little easier to find.

Once the warmer days arrive we will bring out the fairway divoting trolley. This has had a huge impact on the condition of our fairways improving recovery time and providing a better playing surface all year round so many thanks to all of you who have supported this scheme.

As part of our conservation policy you may have noticed that four Barn Owl boxes have been installed around the course. These have been sited in places recommended by the local Barn Owl expert Bob Sheppard, who was very impressed with the natural habitats we have around the course. The four nest boxes have been donated by last years Lady Captain Sue Bellingall, we thank her for her generosity.

G Morley Greens Chairman

G Austin Head Greenkeeper