



## RINGWOOD BOWLING CLUB

### REPORT FROM OUR GREENKEEPER, PAUL WRIGHT

**B**eing appointed as your greenkeeper cemented my decision to retire from full time greenkeeping. So, to confirm, I am no longer the greenkeeper for any other bowling clubs than Ringwood BC. Nevertheless I will be carrying out limited contracting services, if required, to bowls clubs. i.e. spraying, rolling, aeration, etc... but rest assured my main focus will be on your green.

Within the area most Councils have now given the maintenance of the bowling greens to the clubs. This has led to the majority of greens improving, but some have lagged behind. This is usually due to both a lack of experience and a tight budget.

Lawn Bowls generally has become a game enjoyed by retired folk in the main, and with the introduction of all year round indoor bowling available, the demands of members is for quicker, truer greens to give members an enjoyable experience that is an improvement of bowling indoors all year round. So the outdoor clubs are in

competition with the indoor facilities. Now I agree that bowling out doors on a good quick, true green on a nice sunny warm day is a great experience and definitely part of our UK heritage! But conversely going away for a bowl on a heavy green, full of humps and bumps and runs, on a miserable damp, rainy day is not my idea of a fun day out!

So my point of this ramble is just to say that I have been known to take part in bowls; I do know what is required by bowls clubs members with respect to the greens, and I have started work on your green with those aims.

I started my work in September and my first task was to assess the green and to put together a strategy for the late summer and autumn work. The thatch levels in the green and much less than most greens in the area, which is great. My main concerns are the inconsistency of the surface across the green. This leads to unpredictable bowls and makes it very difficult for the members and guests.

As the grass was growing well it enabled me to start scarifying straight away. Whilst the season was coming to an end, I managed four passes with the verticutter real, which took out two large grab bags of thatch. This was balanced with a very light application of a mix of fertiliser, seaweed, liquid O2, some calcium and other liquid soil conditioners.

As soon as the season came to an end your green was spiked and had air injected to a depth of 12 ins; was spiked with half inch times to a depth of 3 ins; was scarified to a depth of 5 mm in four directions and again to a depth of 10mm. This scarifying took its toll of some of the areas which seem to have been taken over by the creeping bents. This is a grass species that is desirable of greens, but in moderation. What has happened is that they have spread and rooted into the thatch layer, and to keep these patches relatively green they have been over fed and over watered. This is very common and not necessary a bad thing, but

one that I will try to correct. When scarifying some patches of these bents just lifted and were removed, leaving patches of bare root zone. These have been seeded and hopefully will be strong enough for next season. Then the green was over seeded with a fescue mix; fertilised with a granular low nitrogen organic fertiliser. The green was then left to react and I just mowed at just under 10mm once a week.

The very mild open autumn has meant that I have been taking off a least one full box of clippings weekly, and that has continued now passed Guy Fawkes Day! To encourage this slow growth I have continued with applications every two to three weeks of liquid seaweed, an organic carbohydrate, amino acid, minerals, etc mix.

I am no fan of so called wetting agents, but your green has received the two doses of a penetrant to make sure there is no dry patch, and I will follow up with another wetting agent which will help drainage / water retention over the winter period.

So from Christmas onwards I am going to try to use at least 90% of my treatments will be

organic. Why? Well organics are more expensive, slower to react, sometimes less effective, but I am happier and hopefully healthier using organics, and hopefully you the members and your guests will be to! And then there is the question of saving the planet, etc... and I will not be asking a certain Mr Trump for his comments!!

I will try to find something to ramble about on a monthly basis, but hopefully at least 6 times a year. But for now I am enjoying my time at Ringwood BC and am looking forward to see how the coming season works out.

### Some of the products that I am using:

**Onyx liquid sugar plus:** This is a carbohydrate based soil conditioner that I am trialling this year. It is a new product to the market and also contains amino acids, minerals, trace elements, etc. The theory is that the natural organic sugars will boost the sugar content within the grass plants and help protect from frost and freezing, a sort of natural anti freeze, If this works it should result in stronger, healthier grass plant that will grow away earlier in the spring and be generally stronger.

**Purity soil conditioner:** This is a well known product that I have been using for a few years now. Applied in the autumn and again in the spring this organic granule is an active soil conditioner helping feed the root zone and has a side effect of helping to control casting worms.

**Maxwell Turf Food Bionix:** an organic 3 -3-25 granular fertiliser that is made by Viano in Belgium. I have visited the factory where it is made and believe me it is state of the art! This facility is largely solar powered and turns out hundreds of tonnes of organic fertiliser every day will just 7 full time employees on site at any one time. Very impressive set up and I really like the products.

**Johnsons J Fescue Grass Seed:** formulated using the most recent research methods, is 100% fine Fescue blend, ideal for the sustainable management programs & links greens. Fescues are the grasses with the finest leaves,. This means that within an area more plants will grow so plant density improves. A higher plant density means that the bowl will travel on the top of the grass sward rather than sinking in, so more fescues = improved green speed.

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