

SPEEDCUT NEWS

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Celebrating 30 years in sportsturf



Foxhills Golf Club and Resort: Speedcut's Mastenbroek 10/12D in action on one of the fairways

WHILE achieving 30 years of successful sportsturf contracting, Speedcut Contractors Ltd has developed an enviable reputation.

From a few council contracts in Oxfordshire in 1977, the company has grown to a fleet of sportsturf drainage vehicles with many long-serving staff and prestigious clients such as Chepstow Racecourse, Foxhills Golf Club and Highclere Castle, plus cricket, football and golf clubs across the UK.

"We've come a long way since those early days," says founder and director Dick Franklin. "We have so many contracts in the course of a year that the weather, like last year, can play havoc with the schedules.

"But we met the challenges and caught up with contracts despite one of the wettest summers on record."

The company's reputation for sportsturf excellence reaches far and wide. One of the longest hauls for Dick was to Guernsey to drain two football pitches. A trencher, hopper

and low-loader went by ferry while tractors and trailers were hired locally.

"We have done quite a few long-distance contracts but that was a real challenge," says Dick.

Contracts manager Kevin Smith joined Speedcut eight years ago, bringing with him vast experience of sportsturf drainage and construction work.

"Speedcut is a family-run company



Kevin Smith: "Quality paramount"

and the commitment to quality and service is paramount," he says. "We work hard to ensure all clients' requirements are met from initial survey to completed project."

Speedcut run the very latest Mastenbroek 10/12D laser-guided trenchers and pipe-layers, together with AFT Whizwheels, purpose-built back-filling units, Massey Ferguson tractors and a low-loader for transporting their own machinery.

As well as drainage on golf courses in 2007, including Haverhill in Suffolk and Broome Manor in Swindon, Speedcut constructed sports pitches in Kent and on the Isle of Wight while carrying out contracts on football pitches including Portsmouth FC, Aldershot FC and Windsor and Eaton FC.

As for the future, Dick Franklin says: "We look forward to dealing with many of our past and present clients and to meeting the needs of new ones."

Aldershot FC at the top of their game

ALDERSHOT Football Club's pitch was given some drastic extra renovation treatment by Speedcut Contractors last year following the heavy rain of the winter months.

"We had some areas of the pitch that had suffered quite a bit during the course of about 80 games," said head groundsman and former player Andy Nunn.

"We decided that as part of the end-of-season renovations we would carry out extra sandbanding – between the two six-yard lines in front of the South Stand and also in front of the North Stand. We also put in an extra main drain behind the East Bank goal."

Speedcut carried out the extra tasks on top of their regular renovation work, which includes scarifying, vertidrainage and heavy topdressing with Kingsley Sand before overseeding with an R14 ryegrass seed mix.

In place of the annual scarifying it was decided to fraise mow using the Koro Field Topmaker, taking off five to eight millimetres of the surface before sandslitting and sandbanding.

"We had a very tight schedule between the end of May and early June, when we did the renovations, and mid-July, when the first game was played," says Andy.

The 80-odd games at Aldershot include the first team matches, Chelsea Reserves games and the Youth Team fixtures.



Speedcut's Andy Milln with Andy Nunn

**Speedcut Contractors are specialists in sportsturf construction, drainage and renovation. The company was established in 1977 and has a long record of major projects in every type of sporting venue, including golf, football, rugby, cricket and racecourses. Clients include local authorities, schools and colleges. The company has close links with the IOG and BIGGA and is a member of the LDCA, SAPCA and Constructionline.*

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Foxhills given chance to beat rain



FOXHILLS Golf Club and Resort at Ottershaw in Surrey called on Speedcut Contractors to carry out further drainage work on greens at the magnificent 440-acre course.

The ferociously wet summer brought drainage problems to a head on several badly-draining greens, said course manager David Wyborn.

Speedcut contracts manager Kevin Smith said: "We carried out sandblitting on two greens in October, having done one in March, and the heavy rain during the summer showed the full extent of the problems."

Earlier in the year Speedcut used their two brand new laser-guided Mastenbroek 10/12Ds on six fairways at Foxhills, cutting trenches, removing spoil and laying pipeline.

"The torrential rain in July, up to two inches in a day on two occasions, would have been a real problem on the Longcross course but Speedcut had sandbanded fairways one, two and three and they drained fantastically," said David. "Speedcut also did three fairways on the Bernard Hunt course."

David Wyborn has been at Foxhills for 23 years, having previously been at Sunningdale (with Jack Macmillan) and the New Zealand Golf Club at Woodham, Surrey.

"This has been the second wettest year on record, and certainly the wettest summer," says David. "Our drainage programme has become



Sandblitting greens (top and above) at Foxhills in October



Extensive drainage work carried on the Longcross course at Foxhills in late spring before the heavy rain

increasingly pressing. During the summer we were hit by dreadful rain in July, which followed a terrible winter.

"The rainfall between the beginning of October and the end of February was a record 18 inches," says David. "This summer has really hit everybody, but we were lucky because Speedcut had done such a good job."

Six of the fairways at Foxhills had been suffered the previous winter and had to be closed for short periods, not only because of water not draining but because of slippery surfaces in some areas becoming a health and safety issue for players.

Speedcut drained three fairways on the Longcross course and three on the Bernard Hunt course.

Windsor stays pitch perfect

WINDSOR and Eaton FC's Pitch was extensively drained last year by Speedcut Contractors, with excellent results.

As our pictures show, one taken after sandbanding in June and the other in mid August, the pitch settled in well following installation of new drains.

The STRI was engaged by the club to prepare a specification and over see the installation of the drainage scheme.

A primary drainage system was installed with 80mm lateral drains at five metre centres, running to a new main drain which connected to an existing outfall chamber.

Sandbanding was installed at 250mm centres and 150mm

depth, and then the entire pitch was overseeded with BAR 7 dwarf perennial ryegrass seed mix and topdressed with an approved sportsturf sand.

"This was a new contract for us," says Speedcut contracts manager Kevin Smith. "We worked closely with club representative Kevin Scott, and with the aid of the existing irrigation system we were able to have the pitch established for the start of the season."

The drainage has made a big difference to the club and they are delighted with the results.



BEFORE: Final topdressing after sandbanding in June



AFTER: The Windsor pitch ready for action in August

Nizels Golf Club calls in the Speedcut team



ADAM LENFIELD (above) has been course manager at Nizels Golf and Country Club in Kent since April last year – giving him time to assess drainage on the Wealden clay course during the heavy summer rains.

He and his deputy Mark Ugo decided to carry out drainage on six fairways and called in Speedcut Contractors, having seen their work on previous courses.

Speedcut moved in during the good autumn weather at the end of October and installed mains and lateral drainage on holes two, nine, 10, 11, 12 and 17.

"The break in the weather came at the right time for us," says Adam. "Speedcut were very efficient, using detection equipment to find water pipes and laser-driven technology to ensure total accuracy.

"Mark and I decided on the areas to be drained with the regional heads of The Club Company, owners of Nizels, Alan Hollis and Chris Brooks."

Adam, who hails from Australia, has previously worked at The Belfry and St Mellion, having started his greenkeeping career at home in Canberra and on the Gold Coast.

At Nizels Golf Club, now 15 years old, he has a staff of seven. They run Jacobsen mowers, John Deere Gators and have an Iseki

tractor for haulage work. Irrigation on fairways, greens and tees is partly computer-controlled from Adam's office.

"Being on Wealden clay we obviously experience some drainage problems," says Adam, "but last year brought those areas into focus which needed the most attention. This is a very challenging course, with plenty of trees and water features in superb surroundings."

Nizels was built in 1992 and is based around a Georgian mansion, currently undergoing renovation. Last year the club was host to the tenth Sir Henry Cooper Junior Masters tournament, with an international entry of 72 players under the age of 18.

The typically English parkland course has a thriving health and fitness club with an 18-hole par 72 course of 6,279 yards covering 145 acres. It is described as a "tough challenge" for players.



Taking laser readings at Nizels

Chepstow Racecourse right on track

HEAVY storms which left neighbouring areas under water caused delays to major drainage work at Chepstow Racecourse last summer.

But Speedcut Contractors worked during the gaps in the weather to complete the job by early August.

“We decided to put in gravel and sand slits from the last fence to the road crossing,” said Tim Long, clerk of the course at both Chepstow and Bath Racecourses.

“Being close to the River Severn, heavy rain during the winter months is quite normal. And this summer we have had the same rainfall that has hit the whole region.

“But we pride ourselves on keeping the tracks up to scratch with a constant programme of



Speedcut Contractors at work on Chepstow Racecourse in August

maintenance,” says Tim.

Chepstow is a busy jump and flat racecourse with 14 fixtures from May to September and 16 from October to the end of April. The superb racing conditions are down to head groundsman Robert Mottram – who has been at Chepstow for 25 years - and his five full-time groundstaff.

“The course is on clay loam and we have been doing drainage work over the past 18 months,” says Tim. “From the end of December to March is usually very wet here and we have our work cut out keeping the course drained.

“We do have our own small verti-drainer, something racecourses would

not have done years ago – but we can only do surface remedial work.

“For major drainage work we rely on experts with the experience of Speedcut and they have coped well with the weather conditions we have had to contend with over the summer.

“They had to call a halt several times over the last few weeks of July because of the appalling weather but pulled out all the stops as soon as there was a break in the rain.”

Kevin Smith, contracts manager for Speedcut, said: “Chepstow is a magnificent racecourse and we have been delighted to help keep the course operating at its usual busy level with this essential drainage work.”

Sittingbourne Community College expands sports facilities

A MAJOR sports surface development project for Sittingbourne Community College was carried out last year by Speedcut Contractors.

The greenfield site consists of four football pitches, two junior-size pitches and a cricket square, adjacent to artificial surfaces for tennis and hockey. It is part of a £1.75million development adding to the existing 30 acres of playing fields.

Speedcut began work on the site in October the previous year when the sloping fields were laser-levelled and drained and left for the winter months.

For almost three weeks in April a

team from Speedcut worked round the clock preparing seedbeds by stone-burying and grading, finally sowing an A20 Ryesport mixture from British Seed Houses (30 per cent Cadix, 20 per cent Danio, 30 per cent Gator and 20 per cent Vesuvius).

“This was a challenging project which we were delighted to be involved with,” said Speedcut contracts manager Kevin Smith.

Speedcut’s Paul Francis said: “Because the weather was so dry and hot in April we decided to stay on site and take advantage of the conditions to get the surface right.”

The Sittingbourne project is part of a major expansion programme which has included, during the last

three years, two complete blocks of buildings with four new buildings currently under construction.



Final pass of the seeder at Sittingbourne