



'Ben on the Course'



**Welcome to my
Autumn 2026 Update**



My most challenging year yet !

'Ben on the Course'



Welcome to my Autumn 2026 update. As the clocks go back into Autumn and Winter this weekend, I'm reflecting on what has been a very good, but very challenging year.

Following a very wet January and February, a non-existent Spring, and then one of the driest, hottest summers for 50 years ! **The effect on many golf courses around the southern part of the UK has, in some places, been very serious.**

Fortunately for us, we have an extensive irrigation system and a decent supply of irrigation water. But even with those two huge benefits we have been put under lots of pressure throughout the last few months of summer. **Put plainly we now need rain, and lots of it** because our reservoir is depleted, as you would expect, and we need the winter rains to provide irrigation water for 2027.

On a very positive note, I'm very pleased with the way the course has played this year, and we continue to get good comments and on-line reviews. **In a recent Golf Monthly and Today's Golfer rankings, Ingrebourne Links was placed at No.3 in the County – more about that later.**

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It is a pleasure to see that following on from Rory McIlroy's Augusta win and Ryan Fox's Open Victory the **GB&I Walker Cup** team claimed victory over the US Team at Lahinch in Ireland.

During September, the **European team** regained the **Solheim Cup** in the Netherlands.

For the first time for many years both British and European Golf is dominating the the world golf scene and many of our courses are being showcased.

This year we hosted the **Clutch Tour** championships in mid August which once again showcased Ingrebourne Links on the national and international stage.





2026 Weather Statistics – A very wet January and February followed by a prolonged hot and dry period with a 50% shortfall of usual rainfall.

July's average daytime maximum was approximately **27.7°C**, followed by **25.6°C** in August. The estimated highest temperature was **35.4°C on 13 August**.

Approximately **21 days reached 30°C or above** between January and 19 October. Estimated rainfall from January to 19 October totalled **449 mm**.

194 mm of rainfall fell in January and February, accounting for approximately **43% of the total**. April received approximately **6 mm**, while July received just **2 mm**. June provided a wetter interruption, with approximately **96 mm**; **1–19 October received approximately 25 mm**.

Rainham received approximately **1,706 hours of sunshine from January to September**, around **23% above the 1991–2020 average**. In July **304 sunshine hours**, approximately **47% above average**. June–August together recorded **791 sunshine hours**.

The East Anglian region received approximately **152 mm of rainfall from April to September**, only **50% of its usual rainfall** for those months.

Looking towards the future...things I and the greenkeeping fraternity are considering.

We need to plan for a different pattern of weather. Hotter, drier summers and warmer, wetter winters will place greater demands on both irrigation and drainage. Individual years will still vary. metoffice.gov.uk

Water security will shape the future of our courses. Investment in irrigation needs to begin with understanding how much water will reliably be available when demand is greatest. randa.org

Winter rainfall deserves a second look. Where practical, collecting and storing surplus water could help us bridge the gap between winter abundance and summer shortage.

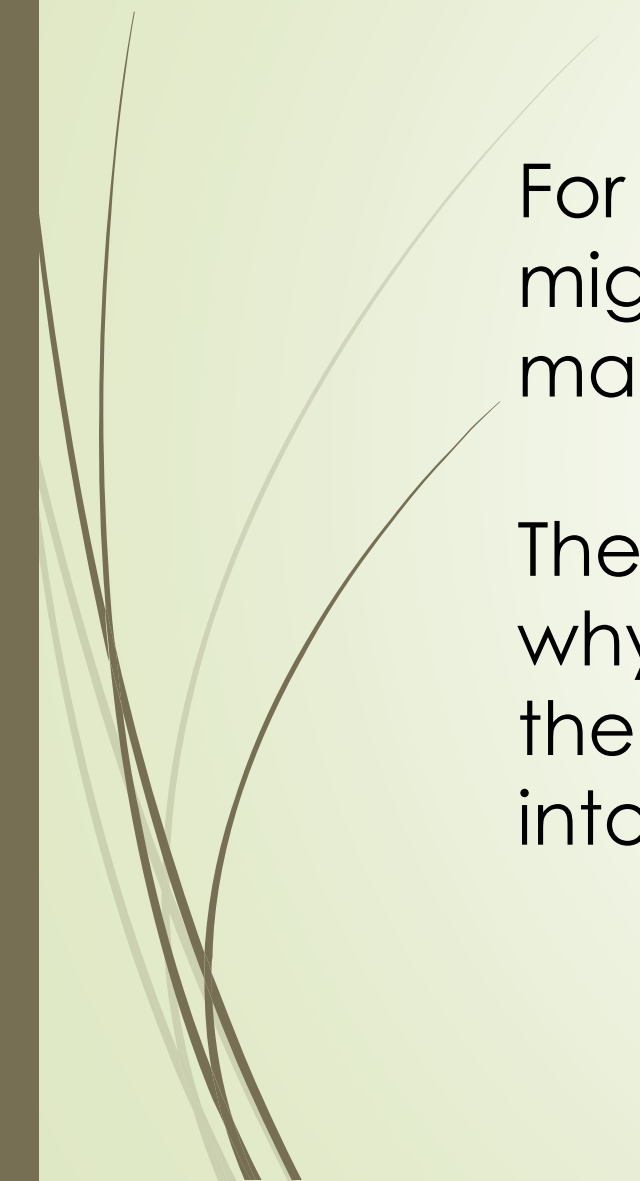
Every litre will need to work harder. My view is that accurate watering, sound soils and grasses suited to the site will become increasingly important.

Our expectations may need to change. Firm, seasonally brown fairways can provide excellent golf. Protecting healthy turf and good playing surfaces should guide our use of water.

The decisions we make today will outlast the next dry summer. Irrigation, storage, drainage and course design should be considered together, with the coming decades in mind.



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For the first time in these updates, I thought you might like a closer look at the technical side of managing the course.

The next few slides highlight our approach and why the work we carry out now is important to the quality of your golf throughout the winter and into next season.

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As we approach the coming period our focus is on the following:

GREENS — HEALTH, FIRMNESS & CONSISTENCY

Dew Removal: We are now prioritising daily dew switching to reduce leaf-wetness which can cause disease.

Mowing: During the coming months we maintain sensible mowing heights of cut and will slightly raise cutting heights as grass growth declines.

Rolling: We continue to maintain pace and smoothness without excessive mowing adding stress to the plant.

Moisture: We continue to record regular moisture readings together with our temperature probing. Throughout the coming months we continue to monitor green surface moisture and the conditions deeper within the rootzone.

Disease Prevention: Monitor **Fusarium Patch** (Microdochium) closely, particularly on our greens. We continue our disease-management programmes and use only currently authorised disease products as and when needed.

Playing Quality: We strive for consistency, firmness and smoothness rather than chasing excessive green speed at this time of year and for the coming months.



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Just to confirm that our full greens renovations, which include hollow coring, overseeding and topdressing will commence on **Monday 26th October and last until Wednesday 29th October – 3 full days in total.**

Please refer to the e-mail that has already been sent to you regarding hole closures etc.

This operation will be a full renovation as we postponed this operation in March due to poor weather conditions. Fortunately, at that time our soil samples were strong enough to cope with the upcoming season.

At a later stage we will be renovating the tees as well in readiness for the winter period.

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- **TEES & APPROACHES**

Continue divotting and localised recovery where growth permits – a big thanks to our marshalling team that have a daily rota for divotting. Their efforts are tremendous and really take the strain of the day-to-day course presentation.

Although greens are the areas most vulnerable to disease we still closely monitor approaches for the following diseases that can attack at any time:

Fusarium Patch

- **Dollar Spot**
- **Anthracnose**
- **Leaf Spot**
- **Take-All Patch**

We will be also roping off golf traffic areas to reduce unnecessary wear on weakened or newly established turf.

- Our pathway program will continue this autumn-winter addressing areas where new pathways will reduce wear and allow hedgehog trolley wheels to continue being used.

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FAIRWAYS

We will be prioritising the following activities to assist with:

Drainage

Infiltration

Surface Firmness

Traffic Management

Turf Health

We have planned specific deep verti-draining and more general shatterquake programs for all fairways during November.

Over the past years these programs have assisted our course drainage and playing surfaces. These programs open up the soil to allow air and water to get through the upper soil levels to reach the mid levels of the soil profile through to the drainage pipes.

During normal rainfall winters our course is renowned for its decent playing conditions and that is something we want to continue with.

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Aeration is the KEY :

AERATION & CULTURAL MANAGEMENT PROGRAM

We use **all of** the following processes:

Pencil Tining: Useful on our greens where and when conditions permit

Solid Tining: Appropriate on walk-off areas, fairways and any compacted areas.

Hollow Coring: To our green surfaces – generally twice per year but subject to soil samples this operation can be adjusted.

Verticutting: To remove thatch build up on the greens – subject to soil sample results.

Topdressing: We continue to use light applications during suitable dry windows

Greens brushing: High priority at this time of year.

Dew Removal: An even higher priority !

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Presentation is one of our key objectives.

We strive to present the course at its very best, whatever the time of year.

Definition is important to us as shown by the Image of the 9th green at the end of September this year.

There are five separate cutting heights required to deliver this type of playing experience.





The Clutch Tour was a great event with Ben Hutchinson winning the playoff against Jon Hopkins. Both Players shot – 10 over the 54 holes.

40 players were under par for the Event which shows the level of play.

The event enjoyed warm and calm weather conditions, hence, the Scoring was good.

Almost all the players enjoyed the course and many great reviews were posted on social media.



Ben Hutchinson takes the winners cheque with scores of 67, 69 & 70

Dominic, Ben and myself at the prize presentation



As always, I want to thank our superb course marshals, headed up by Ronnie, who not only manage the daily tee sheet but fill divots, pick up course rubbish, repair pitch marks, monitor speed of play and generally make the course enjoyable to play.

We are fortunate to have such a great team and visitors regularly express good feedback about them.

A BIG THANK YOU GUYS !

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We are still busy at the club even though the season is coming to an end. September and October have seen lots of golf being played but this weekend should start to see the slowdown into the winter months.

Our team is fully occupied with daily responsibilities and tasks to make the golf course a special place to play. We have many winter projects to keep us busy during the coming months, with a focus on pathways and a couple of bunker renovations.

Back in our Maintenance Area we spend considerable time servicing our equipment after a busy season and getting prepared for 2027. We need rain – but not to the amount that affects golf !.

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Golf Monthly and Today’s Golfer have recently published their course rankings for ESSEX.

Please to report that for these two main publications Ingrebourne Links has been rated 3rd in the County.

Our last ranking by Top100 was 5th so we are trending in the right direction.

A new course just barely five years of age is in the top three ! Incredible.

Essex

Much-changed and extensively expanded from our original Essex ranking, with modern courses mixing with more established courses – including right at the top.

1 THORNDON PARK
A superb Harry Colt design through mature parkland, with excellent bunkering, variety and memorable greens. Remains the Essex benchmark.

2 CHIGWELL
A brilliant strategic course where positioning matters far more than length. Fred Hawtree and JH Taylor created a layout full of character.

3 INGREBOURNE LINKS
Essex's most distinctive modern course. Alan Walker's dramatic inland links-style design is visually spectacular, seriously challenging and has enormous potential.

4 ORSETT
James Braid's heathland combines strategy, demanding approaches and excellent bunkering, rewarding good ball-striking throughout.

5 CHELMSFORD
A really accomplished course with plenty of strategy and character. Strong green complexes and consistently interesting holes.

6 THORPE HALL
Traditional, mature and consistently impressive, with a strong collection of individual holes.

7 ABRIDGE
A championship-style course that provides a serious examination. Strong conditioning.

8 COLCHESTER
An excellent, mature course that impresses with a design that offers you options.

9 STOKE BY NAYLAND (GAINSBOROUGH)
A strong, varied layout where positioning from the tee becomes increasingly important.

10 SAFFRON WALDEN
A traditional course with history, character and well-presented. The thinking golfer's golf course.

11 ROMFORD
Modest yardage but an under-rated traditional course with character and a clever design.

12 WEST ESSEX
An established layout with natural character and elevation change producing memorable views and holes.

13 TOOT HILL
Modern course that combines excellent presentation with water-influenced risk-and-reward opportunities.

14 UPMINSTER
A consistently strong parkland that rewards accuracy and is interesting throughout.

15 STOKE BY NAYLAND (CONSTABLE)
Another demanding layout, offering a strong test from the tee. Good complement to the Gainsborough.

16 BRAINTREE
Parkland that relocated to its site in the 1970s. Good across the 18 even if the nines have different character, with the back nine more spacious.

17 THE WARREN
An attractive, mature course in an established landscape that offers a season parkland experience.

18 BOYCE HILL
Elevation change makes this James Braid design visually impressive and creates some really interesting tee shots.

19 CLACTON-ON-SEA
A coastal-influenced strategic course, where exposure to the elements adds another dimension.

20 CANONS BROOK
A championship-length examination that punishes mistakes. Strong driving essential.

21 HERON CC (HERON & HAWK)
An enjoyable combination (the Vixen is also a strong nine) with plenty of attractive holes.

22 CRONDON PARK
Excellent greens the standout here. Water, small targets and a demanding finish.

23 WANSTEAD
A modern club with a mature parkland that rewards thoughtful course management.

24 BENTLEY
A solid modern course with good conditioning and enough challenge to keep you occupied.

25 RAYLEIGH CLUB (SOUTH)
South A substantial layout with length, variety and strong individual holes.

Stoke by Nayland.



Top 25 courses in Essex 2026





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May I once again respectfully remind all golfers to repair their pitch marks on the greens. Especially as we now approach the autumn as conditions start to soften up.

Despite repeated requests, some continue to overlook this simple yet essential courtesy, even, regrettably, some of our own members.

Please play your part in helping us maintain the highest standard of putting surfaces by repairing your own pitch marks and any others you may come across – It only takes a few seconds to do.

I would also urge everyone to replace their own divots. This small act not only greatly aids the condition of the course but also upholds the etiquette and spirit of the game. Thank you."

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As I am sure you are aware our policy for golf trolleys during the winter months (1st Nov onwards) is Hedgehog Wheels.

These are compulsory for all golfers and now is the time to fit these to your golf trolley.



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Closing thoughts:

Carrying your clubs in winter really helps protect the course by reducing trolley wear when the course conditions soften.

If you can carry your clubs during this non-competitive time of the year it would be much appreciated.





**RESPECT
IN GOLF**

'Ben on the Course'



Thank you for taking the time to read the **2026 autumn edition** of my '**Ben on the Course**' communication - It is always much appreciated.

Special thanks go to my Deputy Course Manager, Joe, and our outstanding greenkeeping team, whose dedication ensures the course is presented in the best possible condition day after day – give them a wave when you're next on the course and a thumbs up will be gratefully received.

And finally, I hope that every time you walk onto the first tee you can see the pride our team takes in presenting Ingrebourne Links. We are now officially rated as one of the top three golf courses in our County.

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