

THE GOLF BUSINESS

Issue 27 • June 2019

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general manager of The North Berwick Golf Club

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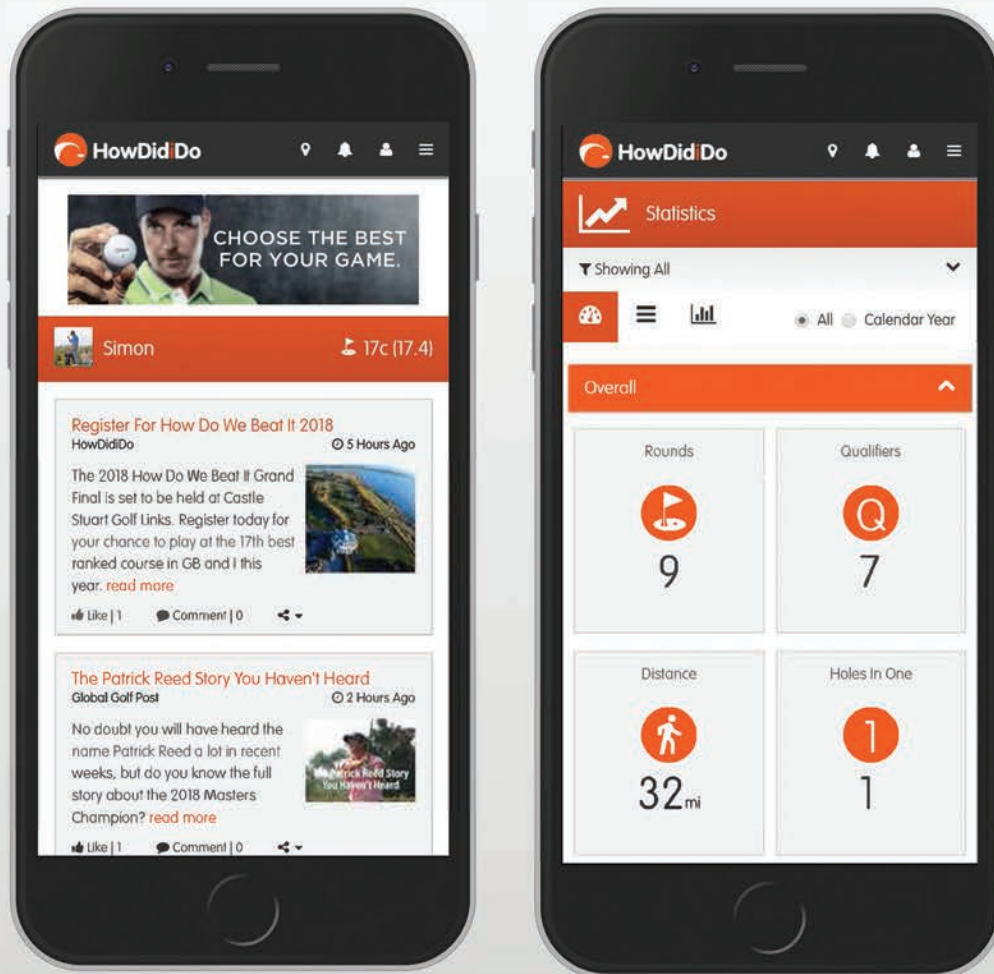
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ere's three major issues from the last month that are all covered in the following pages:

Social media needs to be better regulated to protect golf clubs

Fake news is not usually a phrase that's associated with the golf industry, but two golf clubs in England were recently hit by attacks, one physical the other online, due to misunderstandings that became heavily amplified because of social media, in the space of a few days of each other.

Firstly one club had its course dug up and signage defaced because a picture on Facebook suggested it was trapping badgers – when it was simply renovating its course, and then a club became the victim of a hate campaign because another venue in Australia with the same name was planning to cull animals – and social media users didn't realise they were two separate golf facilities.

As the manager of one of the clubs told us: "Keep a very tight check on what is being said about your club on social media."

One in ten golf clubs now offer GolfSixes

The GolfSixes League, a junior inter-club, six-hole tournament where children play against each other wearing branded clothing, was only launched last year and already there are 56 leagues, with 250 golf clubs and more than 3,000 children taking part.

The rapid growth can be partly explained by the fact that more than a third of the 102 golf clubs that participated in it last year said

it led to an increase in their memberships.

How many closed golf clubs could reopen as nine-hole venues?

In just the last few months, we've reported on the closures of Redhill and Reigate, Brunston Castle, Potters Bar, Carrick Knowe, Sandilands, Fishwick Hall, Raglan Parc, Canwick Park, Southwood, North Luffenham, Maywood, The Eastwood and The Brow golf clubs.

But how many could reopen as nine-hole venues?

Earlier this year, we also reported on Oadby Golf Club, which closed down in 2012 but has now reopened as The Leicester Golf Centre but with nine holes instead of 18. And now, Mount Ober Golf Club, which closed in 2015, is also planning to reopen as a nine-hole venue.

These smaller facilities cost less to maintain and offer a round of golf in about two hours – a potential way to market the game to a new demographic of golfer?



Alistair Dunsmuir, Editor

THE GOLF BUSINESS

Website: www.thegolfbusiness.co.uk

The Golf Business is published by Union Press, Wigglesworth House, Fourth Floor, 69 Southwark Bridge Road, London, SE1 9HH
Tel: 020 7803 2420
Email: golf@unionpress.co.uk

[linkedin.com/company/thegolfbusiness](https://www.linkedin.com/company/thegolfbusiness)

[@thegolfbusiness](https://twitter.com/thegolfbusiness)

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Annual subscription:
United Kingdom £97.00
Europe: £126.00
Rest of the world: £153.00
Email: subs@unionpress.co.uk

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Printed by Buxton Press, Winner, Print Week 'Printing Company of the Year' 2015, 2016 and 2017



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Sparkling Innovation



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Two golf clubs attacked due to social media errors

Two golf clubs in south-west England have been attacked within a few days of each other – and in both cases they were not guilty of what they were being accused of.

In the first case, a Facebook user posted images of what was described as dumped piles of rubble on top of badger setts at Royal North Devon Golf Club, and stated that the badgers were being blocked in.

The rubble had, in fact, been deposited during recent works on the course, and no badger setts were damaged.

However, the post was seen by local activists who visited the club and dug up clumps of earth on a putting green and spray-painted the word 'killers' on the club's signs – an action that was condemned even by the original Facebook poster.

A spokesman for the golf club said: "We were the victim to a number of acts of vandalism, prompted by incorrect claims that the club had caused damage to a badger sett.

"Our green staff are aware of where the key wildlife habitats are on our course, and always avoid causing any damage or disruption to these areas.

"We can confirm that no badger setts were damaged by any rubble the club had deposited during its recent works on the course, and our club would be happy to invite in any concerned or interested local groups to discuss how we operate a busy golf course whilst also protecting and being sensitive to the natural ecosystem on Northam Burrows.

"We are working closely with the Badger Conservation Society and take our responsibility for local wildlife seriously.

"It is a shame that in this instance there were acts of unnecessary vandalism on our premises before any conversation with the concerned group could take place."



Just days later, Launceston Golf Club in Cornwall received a barrage of social media abuse following a news story about a golf club that had been granted a permit to cull animals that had defecated on the golf course, including ducks, hens and ... possums and wallabies.

What many of the social media activists didn't realise was that the story, covered by *ABC News* in Australia, was about Launceston Golf Club in Tasmania.

The two golf clubs have nothing in common bar the same name – but the English club has a much bigger online presence, which is probably why it was wrongly targeted.

"I woke on Saturday morning to be inundated with a storm of messages on Facebook and Twitter accusing us of being murderers and wanting to kill for our elitist sport," explained Alan Creber, club secretary at Launceston GC in the UK. "To be honest these were the polite comments! One person went back through every post we had made on Facebook over the last few months and posted hateful comments."

The club immediately posted a statement explaining that this was the wrong golf club and asked users to remove abusive posts.

Creber said this did not stop the messages outright and he spent the whole of the weekend and the following Bank Holiday Monday dealing with more harmful messages.

"We have a very positive attitude towards managing our course, having worked to virtually eliminate the use of chemicals and recently embarked on our own compost manufacture; we have in the past won awards from England Golf for our policies," he added.

"We have a very rich animal population on and around our course and we do everything we can to look after them and the environment we care for.

"This negative side of social media is a concern but we will continue to use it for the benefits we can see.

"I would advise club officials and managers who use social media as a tool to keep a very tight check on what is being said about them; the three days were bad enough constantly fire fighting posts but could have been even worse had I not been awake early on Saturday!"

‘Hip surgery will not stop you golfing’

A member of the Open Championship medical team who's also an orthopaedic surgeon has said the initial results from a major survey into joint replacement operations suggests they don't stop people playing golf.

Peter Hughes sent the questions to more than 470,000 club golfers in the UK and Ireland via HowDidiDo.

He explained: "I particularly enjoy treating golfers. Before their surgery, these patients always want to know what impact a joint replacement will have on their golf game and how it will change. They usually have similar questions like: 'will I play again?' or 'what will I have to go through to get there?'"

"There isn't a huge amount of

data on returning to play golf after a joint replacement. So I came up with the idea of a questionnaire for golfers who have managed to return to play after either a knee, hip or shoulder replacement. The difficulty, previously, has been in accessing a sufficient number of these patients to get meaningful results.

"Currently, it is our hypothesis that golfers who play again after a replacement have higher physical and mental-health scores than their age-matched peers – they are happier and fitter because they have managed to get back to playing golf.

"The response to this survey is encouraging and brief initial analysis suggests surgery really shouldn't hold people back, which is fabulous news."



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The Brow Golf Club closes down

The Brow in Shropshire has closed down following the untimely death of its co-owner – and a decision has not yet been made on whether this will be permanent or not.

The club closed just weeks after Alan Strange sadly passed away.

Alan was just 59 years old and was a very popular figure in the golf industry. His wife, Catherine, said she doesn't know if the club, which was established in 1995 by Alan and his father, Alf, will reopen.

Meanwhile, The Eastwood Golf Club near Glasgow, which has experienced a decline in membership numbers in recent years, has closed after a planned buyout fell through.

An administrator was appointed after the 126-year-old club effectively ran out of money to keep it in existence, reports *The Scotsman*.

"Things have taken a turn for the worse," said a source.

Club shows off development plan

Dunbar Golf Club in Scotland has revealed major new proposals, including a new clubhouse, hotel and about 70 new homes, at a public exhibition.

The plans also include a new driving range, a nine-hole golf course, a golf academy and practice facilities.

Original plans received planning approval more than three years ago and a new planning application is now necessary.

Spokesman Tony Thomas said: "The first houses would be 2021 and then the clubhouse built by 2022 for the clubhouse to open its doors in 2023.

"The last houses would be 12 months on from that."

The changes will mean a slight alteration to the layout of the 18-hole course.

Details regarding the size of the hotel are still being worked out but historically the proposal was for a building with between 40 and 60 rooms.

The development will not include affordable housing as it is part of an enabling development.

However, Thomas stressed more than £500,000 would go to East Lothian Council in education contributions.

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Pro criticised over relaxed dress code

A golf coach has hit out at golf club officials who are 'stuck in the 19th century' after being criticised on social media for allowing his students to play in tracksuit bottoms and hoodies.

Thomas Devine, director of Oulton Hall's FUEL golf (FUTURE ELite) programme, posted a picture on Twitter of some of his young students

practising their putting, with the words 'You let children play in hoodies and tracksuit bottoms? Yeah, we do. It's the playing that's important'.

The coach was amazed by the response it received, with nearly 400,000 views and many comments – but not all in favour.

He did, however, gain support on the social media site from former Ladies European Tour star-turned-TV presenter Henni Zuel, who retweeted the picture and added: 'This! I fully support this and am a firm believer in



getting rid of dress codes. Fullstop. Not an amendment or softening, just no dress code.'

Devine came under fire from some traditionalists for ignoring the sport's dress code but he maintains there is a need to make young children feel at ease when teaching them.

He said: "It's important when these youngsters are six, seven, eight, that any barriers to them feeling interested in or enthused about golf are removed – and that involves the way they dress. If they feel comfortable in trainers and a hoodie

then that's the way we should allow them to dress.

"We still teach them manners and the etiquette of the game. What's more, I believe we should remove the barrier of cost by allowing children to wear their everyday clothing. We are coaching 21st-century children – we are not stuck in the 19th century and only accepting the offspring of the privileged classes.

"As they get older they, inevitably, want to dress as their idols, so they end up buying what McIlroy or Fowler wears. But when they start out the priority is enjoyment, not conformity. We teach them the things they want to be taught.

"The irony of these people using a 21st century technology to criticise those who are moving with the times and embracing change appears lost on them."

Stroke survivor project rolled out

A programme that sees stroke survivors use golf as part of their recovery is to be rolled out across Wales following a successful pilot project.

The Wales Golf pilot, run in partnership with the Stroke Association, was held at Parc Golf Club and involved 10 groups of stroke survivors learning and playing golf together.

"The results of feedback from the pilot scheme show there were health gains in every area for those who took part, with the greatest gains being confidence in golfing ability, fitness and health," said a spokesman for Wales Golf.

"Analysis of participants from some of the groups shows the sessions have helped 92 per cent feel more confident, 100 per cent met new people, 88 per cent felt less stressed, 88 per cent felt less alone and 100 per cent said it helped them to get out more.

"Participants rated the programme highly, no aspect was rated as 'poor' or 'very poor' by those taking part.

Indeed, the main 'criticism' was that there could be more of the sessions.

"At the start of the scheme fewer than half of the participants were confident about their golfing ability.

By the end, everyone was confident in every area. Two of those involved have since joined a golf club or golf academy.

"The most popular aspects of the scheme were meeting people, learning something new, coaching and being outside."

"We ran the scheme for 10 groups and around two thirds are continuing to play or get coaching at their clubs, added Wales Golf director of development Hannah McAllister. "The health improvements shown by the scheme mean that links have been made with GP referral to develop projects in Newport.

"The programme will continue and grow in 2019."



GolfSixes League 2019 tees off

The GolfSixes League 2019, featuring 250 golf clubs in England, Scotland and Wales and involving more than 3,000 boys and girls and their families, has teed off.



The junior inter-club, six-hole team format event started at Golf at Goodwood in Sussex and is set to be a hit with kids, families and golf clubs.

Rising Ladies European Tour (LET) star Meghan MacLaren (pictured, image by Sam Stephenson) was guest of honour to help launch GolfSixes League. Which, this year, will be about twice the size of the 2018 project.

The GolfSixes League, in which squads of 12 boys and girls practice together with their PGA coaches before the weekend fixtures, reached 102 golf clubs in 2018, in 24 regional leagues, involving 1,160 juniors. All matches are six holes, players wear coloured team shirts with GolfSixes League branding and every child taking part in a GolfSixes League receives three Titleist golf balls.

There was a 34 per cent increase in membership at the clubs involved. For 2019, of the now 56 leagues, 38 will be in England, three pilot leagues will be staged in Wales and 15 in Scotland.

A GolfSixes League final is planned to take place at Gleneagles at the time of September's Solheim Cup.

Carnoustie reopens free course

Carnoustie Golf Links has redesigned and reopened its fourth golf course – and has kept it open and free to play for everyone.

The decision by the host to last year's 147th Open to



continue offering The Nestie for free is particularly so it can attract children, families and golf beginners.

Carnoustie's greenkeeping team spent the winter months converting the former six-hole course into a more exciting and diverse course with five holes of varying lengths between 45 and 116 yards. Work carried out includes the rebuilding of the tees and greens and the addition of two bunkers to the course.

PGA professional Keir McNicoll said: "It's great to have the course open again. The new layout will make the course more appealing to everyone in the community and it's pretty cool to think that it will be the starting place for so many golfing journeys.

"Golf can sometimes be an intimidating game when you first pick up a club, so having a course like The Nestie will allow people to play with no fear."

"The Nestie is free to play and is open to everyone," said a spokesman for the club. "It's one of the many facilities that we have on offer at Carnoustie. We are playing an active role in breaking down barriers into the sport."

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Pro golfer launches mental health campaign

The assistant professional at North Wales Golf Club is launching a mental health campaign for young adults, after the sport helped him turn his life around from depression.

Tom Bowen is set to work with young adults, aged 18 to 24, through mental health charity MIND and Nant Y Glyn health resource centre in Colwyn Bay, to offer step-by-step opportunities to use golf to help them through.

"It is certainly something I have a passion for, I want to help people to turn their lives around too," said Bowen.

"Golf is a very social sport, very inclusive and ability does not matter because you can have fun whatever your level."

Bowen's own story involved him not



wanting to leave the house – he later returned to North Wales Golf Club to play a hole or two, before building up to 18 holes and then qualifying to take his PGA professional qualifications and working as an assistant pro.

He believes the unique qualities of golf played a crucial role in his recovery and it

is an opportunity he wants to spread as widely as possible.

"We have managed to secure funding from HSBC Golf Roots for a scheme to help young adults suffering from mental health conditions," he explained.

"We are going to be working with the local mental health centre, Nant-y-Glyn, where I was myself a patient, Motiv8 and MIND. We will be giving the young adults access to private one-to-one 30 minute lessons followed by 15 to 20 minutes to sit and chat after each session. Socialisation is just as important as the golf, they can relax having a coffee or tea.

"The goal is allowing them to get out onto the golf course in the sun, and maybe eventually move onto membership."

Closed golf club could reopen as 9-hole venue

The venue of a Northern Irish golf course that closed down four years ago could be turned into a new golf facility in a sign of the strength of the golf industry in 2019.

According to *The Irish News*, the former Mount Ober GC's course in Belfast could be converted into a new nine-hole course with a clubhouse and state-of-the-art driving range.

The proposals, being brought forward by development company, Johncorp, 'aim to provide an enhanced golf venue specifically tailored for modern users who no longer have time for a full 18 holes of golf', states the paper.

"We are very excited by our plans for the redeveloped golf course because it will deliver a high quality sports facility that can benefit the wider neighbourhood. We understand from recent discussions that there has been a

demand in the area for improved leisure amenities and this scheme will make a significant contribution to achieving that," said a Johncorp spokesperson.

"The proposed new clubhouse will have a restaurant, function room and ancillary facilities, providing a new social space for the community to enjoy.

"The plans will relocate the existing driving range, and secure existing jobs in a modern facility that complements the long established use. This fresh investment in the area will create additional jobs throughout the construction phase and during operation, and will ultimately deliver an excellent facility for the community."

The new plans for the site would result in the reconfiguration of the existing course into a nine-hole parkland challenge, he added.

Spokesman Philip Stinson added: "This proposal reflects Johncorp's ongoing commitment to making a positive contribution to the area. We will look to build upon our previous engagement with nearby residents, and the planned consultation process will enable us to listen to feedback, which will ultimately help us deliver a better scheme."

in their own words

Robert Maxfield

chief executive of The Professional Golfers' Association

W

orking to develop junior golfers whilst not easy, can be very rewarding – now and in future years. The PGA, in partnership with the Golf Foundation, is supporting its members and their golf clubs in this important area on which the future of the game relies.

Whilst the challenge of recruiting new people into the game remains uppermost in the industry's minds, it is sometimes easy to forget that the good work continues. I often refer to PGA members being at the 'coal face'. Working day in and day out to deliver on the aspirations of the industry, whether it's helping golf clubs to better succeed as a business, recruiting more women, or most importantly, encouraging children to try the game.

I say most important because as every industry will tell you, the earlier you catch the imagination and interest of a child, the easier it becomes to instil a life-long relationship with whatever the activity. This has been proven to be the case in golf time and time again. Former juniors coming back to the game in later lives after they have raised families, their work commitments are less demanding and they have more time, quickly become golf club members, rediscover the enjoyment and play well into their 'golden' years.

Working with children is not easy. Golf clubs can struggle with seeing the value of a junior section which can be hard to recruit and then time consuming to maintain. They often bemoan the

fact that a youngster quickly loses interest and by 18 has disappeared into the wide world and golf is forgotten. But each one that tries the game – they are an investment in golf's future. Not all will reap dividends but the greater

I often refer to PGA members being at the 'coal face'. Working day in and day out to deliver on the aspirations of the industry, whether it's helping golf clubs to better succeed as a business, recruiting more women, or most importantly, encouraging children to try the game



Robert Maxfield presents a £50,000 cheque to Ali Jodiyawalla, a member of the England Young Ambassadors group

number we encourage at an early age, the greater the potential reward now and in later years.

The PGA remains a committed supporter to our partner in junior development, the Golf Foundation. They are doing some fantastic work and through their various programmes have now more than 50,000 youngsters trying golf in schools. We meet on a regular basis and remain a financial supporter of their development work.

But they can only act as the facilitator, encouraging schools to take part. Once they have agreed then it is the local PGA professionals who become the face of those programmes and take on the responsibility of giving youngsters their first experience of the game and hopefully instilling an interest to take it up. This first experience is all important and one that golf clubs have a responsibility to support. It's a joint effort with PGA professionals, golf clubs and organisations like the Golf Foundation each playing its part. TGB

To find out more about The PGA and how our thousands of PGA members across the UK, Ireland and overseas can benefit your golf club, visit www.pga.info

the Open

A numbers game

The economy of Northern Ireland is set to benefit hugely from next month's 148th Open at Royal Portrush, if the 147th at Carnoustie is anything to go by. That one generated a £120 million benefit to Scotland.

The 2018 Open attracted 172,000 fans and delivered an economic impact of £69 million according to the study by Sheffield Hallam University's Sport Industry Research Centre. Scotland also benefited from £51 million in destination marketing

activity thanks to The Open being broadcast on television to more than 600 million households in 193 countries worldwide.

The study, commissioned by The R&A, VisitScotland and Angus Council, concluded that the Angus area alone received a £21 million injection of new money.

Almost half of the spectators who

attended travelled from outwith Scotland, while the overwhelming majority of Scottish fans came from outside Angus. The research found 62 per cent of non-Angus residents indicated they would return to the region for a break within 12 months.



Next month's Open Championship promises to be more than a feast of great golf – as Angus Council can testify from last year, the economic benefits to the local area are huge. Tania Longmire reports

Martin Slumbers, chief executive of The R&A, said, "The Open has a proven track record of generating substantial economic benefit for the host country in which it is staged thanks to the tens of thousands of spectators who attend each year."

David Fairweather, leader of Angus Council, added: "The event attracted global interest as well as immediate and long-lasting economic benefits to local and regional communities." TGB



The 147th Open, won by Francesco Molinari, who finished ahead of Tiger Woods, delivered £120m of economic benefit to Scotland

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the Open

Last year's Open Championship in Scotland saw a record number of attendees and this year's one in Northern Ireland saw all additional championship day tickets sell out within 72 hours of going on sale. Unsurprisingly, golf clubs located near to the 2020 venue in England are already using the event to market themselves, due to this unprecedented demand, writes Tania Longmire

Image by Andy Hiseman

Heaven Kent

Canterbury Golf Club is gearing up for the staging of the Open Championship in 2020 at nearby Royal St George's by linking up with a number of golf clubs in Kent to market offers to tourists, by joining Golf in Kent (www.golfinkent.co.uk).

Located on the outskirts of Kent's medieval cathedral city, Canterbury GC was founded in 1927 on 160 acres of land leased from the War Office and today is considered to be one of the finest examples of Harry Colt design in England.

Though first laid out as a downland course, the gradual introduction of oaks and silver birches along the fairways have altered the nature of the layout that now has more of a parkland feel, though a little gorse and broom can be found on some holes. Set on undulating terrain, the par 71, 6,272-yard layout (off the whites) provides a challenging round of golf with its mix of open par fives, tight par fours and challenging par threes.

Canterbury joins an illustrious group of golf courses that

comprise Golf in Kent, including the championship links at Royal St George's, home of the Open Championship in 2020, neighbouring Prince's and Royal Cinque Ports as well as Littlestone near Romney Marsh.

The partnership also features the clifftop courses at North Foreland and Walmer & Kingsdown and the inland layouts at London Golf Club, which boasts two courses by Jack Nicklaus Design, and parkland courses Hever Castle, which features 27 holes, and the nine-hole course around the moat at Leeds Castle.

With the hosting of the Open Championship at Sandwich, the Seniors Amateur Championship at Royal Cinque Ports, the Junior Open at Littlestone and the World One-Armed Golf Championships at Walmer & Kingsdown next year, the eyes of the golfing world will be firmly on Kent and its golf offering.

Through its Golf in Kent membership, Canterbury can look forward to raising its profile amongst golfers from all over the world as the county hosts this collection of prestigious competitions in 2020.

TGB

Viessmann

www.viessman.co.uk

The Belfry Hotel & Resort has selected an environmentally-friendly heating solution from Viessmann to provide energy efficient hot water to its customers.

The four-time host of the Ryder Cup has installed two Viessmann Vitodens 200-W gas-condensing boilers during a recent renovation of a plant room that serves one of the hotel's three 16-bedroom 'pod' accommodation wings, which stand separately from the main building.

To instantaneously meet hot water demand, the pair of wall-hung, cascaded 49 kW boilers feeds a Vitotrans 222 80 kW plate heat exchanger, which heats a 500-litre Vitocell 100-L DHW cylinder.

The pod's low temperature hot water system provides space heating for radiators spanning two wings of the building via two individual Divicons, which have a mixer valve and pump packaged in to achieve variable flow temperatures for each zone.

The lead contractor for The Belfry pod plant room renovation was Braywhite & Co of Birmingham, with the boilers installed by F and P Plumbing of Halesowen.

Gavin Fereday, senior multi-



skilled engineer at Braywhite, said: "We've gone from a system with undersized pumps, over complicated pipe layouts, poor flue performance and other inefficiencies from using domestic boilers for commercial operation, to one that is more powerful, more responsive to end-user demand and much more energy efficient. We have been astounded at the speed in which the Vitocell cylinder reaches the temperature set point, before coming out of DHWS priority mode and heating up each Divicon."

Mick Goodreid (pictured), chief engineer at The Belfry, said, "The Belfry Hotel & Resort is committed to ensuring guests have a comfortable stay. We will therefore continue to invest in state-of-the-art equipment and work to combine luxurious comfort without forgetting our environmental responsibility; Viessmann products were recommended and achieve both. The Belfry is conscious that all future heating system developments are compatible with renewable technology."

Eagle

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Elaine McBride

is the general manager of the prestigious The North Berwick GC. She talks to *The Golf Business* about a career including the army, police force and turning around a community golf club, the perception of golf within society and how that relates to being a general manager, overcoming some of the unique issues at The North Berwick and why she is a huge fan of NLP

The North Berwick's West Links is one of the oldest, and greatest, golf courses in the world. Can you tell us a bit about the course and its history? The club was founded in 1832 and is the 13th oldest golf club in the world, with only St Andrews hosting a club, which has played continuously over the same piece of land for longer.

In 2017 *Golf Digest* said we were the most underrated course in the world, over the last five to 10 years we have steadily climbed up the golf rankings and are now ranked as the 25th best course in the world, which is a great accolade to have. The course is very much a true links in every sense in so much as it is straight out for nine holes and straight back on the second nine holes. It is one of the few links courses whereby you can see the sea from every hole.

Our 15th hole, which is called Redan is the most copied hole in golf. Redan is a term meaning fortification or a fortress. The Russian army used redans in the battle of Borodino against Napoleon and a redan hole will typically have a green which slopes downwards and away from the point of entrance, typically the front right portion of the green, which very much is the design feature of a redan.

The North Berwick's West Links is one of the few links courses whereby you can see the sea from every hole



Elaine McBride

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We also have a couple of unusual holes and I found them very quirky the first time I played them. The 13th hole is called The Pit and has a dyke surrounding the green.

It was where the shepherds used to congregate the sheep so they would shelter in that particular area behind the back of the sand dune. We also have a very famous two-tiered green on the 16th which is a very unusual green because of the way it is designed.

If there is a Scottish Open or an Open event nearby a lot of the professional golfers want to come and practice on that particular green because it is very unusual.

North Berwick is a fantastic course and has something for everybody and it is very unique. I think because of its uniqueness we are very much on people's bucket list or wish list to play.

Do you have a particular favourite hole on the course or one you find most challenging?

The second is a great hole and it can be very challenging depending on which way the wind is blowing! I don't get the chance to play as much these days and I haven't played competitive golf for about six years due to ongoing back problems.

The 4th green and 14th fairway at
The North Berwick GC



profile

What is your career path to managing a club as prestigious as this?

Golf has been a big part of my life and it has been very kind to me over the years. My dad Brian first introduced me to the game when I was six years of age with a chopped down five iron.

He used to drop golf balls when he was playing and I hit a few shots and that's really how I got into golf. I was very lucky to represent the army at golf when I was in the Intelligence Corps and also Tri-Service during my time in the forces. When I left the army, I continued to play amateur golf at a good level when I was working in the private security industry. I then joined Wiltshire Constabulary, working within their Learning and Development department, and continued to play golf.

At the time I was working with the police I had always wanted to pursue a career in golf and decided to emigrate to Spain whereby I got the opportunity to teach golf. I had a scratch handicap at the time and I did some courses with the PGA and the Spanish Golf Federation.

I was lucky enough to teach golf at Hacienda del Alamo Golf Resort in Murcia for five years.

I moved back to the UK after six years in Spain and decided to move into golf management, due to an ongoing back injury, which was preventing me from teaching and playing. It was really difficult because at one stage I practically couldn't move for three months. I

was constantly in a horizontal position having regular work by an osteopath alongside regular consultations with a surgeon in Spain who offered surgery but I didn't want to have surgery as I was only in my early 30s at the time.

I carried on with the osteopath and did some gym work to try and strengthen my core but it became a habitual cycle whereby I would get to the stage where I was fit enough to practice golf again and then the base of my spine would misalign. I had to make some tough decisions that I couldn't play golf to the standard that I used to. (I can still get the ball around the golf course but I still cannot play golf the way I used to.)

So, I made the decision not to play anymore completely

for a time. When I go home and visit my dad in Stranraer, who is in his 70s and still playing golf, I go out with him and play nine holes, but I can't play 18 holes of golf pain free.

Back in the UK I got the opportunity to cut my teeth in a managerial role at a little nine-hole course near Castleford in Yorkshire. It was situated in an area of very high

deprivation and it was previously managed by the council and a charitable organisation called Groundwork took over the lease. They had some really good, innovative ideas about engaging with the local community and getting families and kids involved with sport to use it as a diversionary activity from anti-social behaviour.

The course was hemorrhaging money when I first arrived. We improved the condition of the course, we improved the facilities and we engaged with the local community. We did a lot of initiatives and engaged with teaching professionals to develop junior golf. After a year we turned it around. That was my first journey in golf management and after a year I felt I had taken it to the point I could take it.

From there I got offered a role at Glen Gorse Golf Club in Leicestershire, which was a private members' club. They recruited me based on making a number of changes to the golf environment and the operation of Glen Gorse. I spent two years there and during that time we went through a governance review, franchised the catering operation and made a number of staff changes. Again, from a financial perspective, we were able to turn things around; ensuring the club was in a healthier position when I left it than when I arrived.

I do relish a challenge, I love change but I don't believe in change for the sake of change. I can normally see areas for improvement – it is all about the learning process and what we take from various situations. I then got an opportunity at Northamptonshire County Golf Club, which for me was another step up the career ladder at a club that has a great reputation, great heathland course and a great environment. I was there just under three years.

Communication was lacking when I first arrived at County, and we did various things to ensure that communication was transparent and the



I love change but I don't believe in change for the sake of change

members felt involved. It sounds quite insignificant, but it was very important and hopefully I created an environment of empowerment for the team. I am all for heads of department having the empowerment and the confidence to make decisions. With empowerment comes accountability and that is how we learn at the end of the day.

Training the team is very important. I am a big advocate of NLP (Neuro Linguistic Programming) training which is a massive topic. All too often in the golf industry we become very focused on people having skillsets from a technical capacity or a competence, for example they know how to read a budget or complete a course assessment, use a portable sprayer and so on. However, for me, it's more of a focus around peoples' actions, their behaviours, their thoughts and feelings. It is about how they act and behave, their beliefs, communication, ability to build rapport, perceptual positioning, how we act and behave differently. Understanding their personality characteristics, are they dog like or are they cat like?

Transactional analysis is fascinating. If somebody is an adult ego state or a matching parent state or if they are in a child ego state. I am all about understanding, I think these are fantastic things for managers to be able to understand and learn and bring back to the workplace. I rolled out that training at County and it had a real positive effect on the heads of department and I



have gone through a similar process at North Berwick with the team and heads of department and they have all got something from it. To help with the training we enlisted the services of Vivienne Joy, who is the owner of EnjoyNLP.

I became very engaged with NLP. It doesn't just help you in a professional capacity; it can help you in a personal capacity as well. It can help you to understand when to manage and when to lead. They are both very different things and sometimes we can be too bogged down in managing rather than leading and you have to get your



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team to come on a journey with you. I think that is really key and sometimes just because you can doesn't mean to say that you should. I think it is about really understanding your interactions with other people, be it members of staff, members and visitors, it is such a wide, diverse topic but I think very impactful.

I think there are a lot of golf club committees who would also benefit from NLP training. Committee members also have a part to play within golf clubs and they too need to develop their beliefs and behaviours in order to better develop relationships with the professional teams employed at clubs and of course the membership in general.

How you do one thing is how you do everything. I find the interactions that you have with members or with people fascinating. We can all be guilty of playing the victim or maybe going into a child ego state where you get a bit petulant and you can read the signs straight away. It is about how you adapt your ego state to manage the situation, it is a great tool kit for me and the team at North Berwick. The team have been very engaged, very open and fully committed to the NLP training that they have done and I can certainly see the benefits in them and the changes in them.

The training is conducted by a qualified NLP master practitioner. I believe in it and I think it is a missed focus in this environment. The golf industry has got so much better at education and offering support for different people in different roles but I think soft skills training / behavioural training is something that is equally important, if not more important.

When you mention the term NLP a lot of people don't know what it means so I think here at North Berwick we are quite ahead in that particular aspect, possibly leading the way to be 'best in class'.

I became general manager at North Berwick in May 2018. When I heard about the position I threw my hat in the ring because opportunities like North Berwick don't come up very often. I got the job and the rest is history as they say.

Women are still very unrepresented but I think in relation to perception, the golf industry is working to break down barriers

Within the sector itself how unusual is it to have a general manager who is a woman?

I think now there are more women in managerial posts within the golf industry but I think if you were to compare the two genders through playing golf from a participation perspective, through women who are volunteering and women who are managing or working in golf environments, it would still be very low.

You would probably find that less than 15 to 20 per cent of people employed in the golf industry will be female. We are still very unrepresented but I think in relation to perception, the golf industry is working to break down barriers and make it more accessible to women and give more opportunities to women. At the end of the day it needs a blend of skills from all different people, from all different backgrounds and hopefully in time women can be more represented in every element of golf.



The 13th green and, above, Elaine with Catriona Matthew and Jim Robertson, captain of The North Berwick GC, and the Solheim Cup



You've been involved in the golf industry, and golf club management in particular, for a number of years now, how has it changed during your time?

The game of golf has not fundamentally changed in hundreds of years but the social and economic map of the world has changed a great deal, which has directly created the various challenges that many golf clubs now face. A lot of people don't simply have time to play 18 holes of golf because of various work or family pressures and I think the perception of golf is still very poor.

As an industry we are not very good at selling the concept of golf, people's perceptions are quite strong and their perception is their reality, so that's a very powerful image that many people carry with them about golf.

I think there is so much choice, there are so many options open to golfers in the UK. The tradition of being a member of a golf club has somewhat evolved and there is now such a high number of transient or nomadic golfers in the UK. If they can have a round of golf at a relatively good price or a price that they perceive as value for money, then a lot of people are going to gravitate towards that rather than committing and being a member and having to pay an annual subscription, which may include a joining fee. People want value for money.

I think so many other sports have grown in the last five to 10 years, such as cycling and I don't think there has

We have reinstated rock armouring, replaced sleepers and rebuilt sand dunes. This coastal erosion project cost more than £500,000

been relatively as much growth in the game of golf. I think the fact that golf is no longer on terrestrial television and is not as accessible or visible in households or people's living rooms, can also have an impact in relation to visibility.

It is still not a mainstream sport or offered as part of many schools' curriculums. In Scotland it is more accessible but there will be a lot of children that will come through school having never touched golf unless a parent or a grandparent is actually involved in the game.

There have been some positive changes. The R&A have changed quite a few of the rules, which rolled out this year, to try and improve slow play with some of the changes they have implemented and that will have a positive impact. It is difficult, perception is still very much key. A lot of people perceive golf as not to be welcoming, to be quite stuffy and have lots of rules, lots of can't dos or mustn't dos. I think it is about how we can engage more, it is all about visibility, likability and credibility and I think the industry as a whole does need to work on certain aspects within those three areas.

What do you find are the biggest challenges managing North Berwick today?

We are a little unusual in that we have three clubs who have access to the West Links so it can be very challenging to try and meet the needs of three golf clubs; Tantallon, a male-only club, Bass Rock and The North Berwick, providing fair access to the course.

When we include The North Berwick Golf Club ladies' section we have to run four competitions, four club championships and so on. The biggest challenge is managing the expectations of a private members' golf club and the rapid commercial growth of The North Berwick, because it is very much a golfing destination of choice.

We accommodate over 11,000 visitors a year so I think sometimes the members can have a perception that they don't always have adequate access to the first tee. So it is trying to balance the commercial element of the club and ensuring that we are still providing a true member environment for our members to enjoy. We want our members to feel it is an authentic members'

club and it is their club for them. The fact we have three clubs means the internal processes and accounting procedures can be a little complex and challenging at times.

How does The North Berwick fit in with its local community?

Like St Andrews, the course merges into the town and as such we do face a number of challenges with dog walkers, pedestrians and anyone wishing to access the beach via the course. I think over the years we have managed that relationship very well, we have to co-exist with all of our neighbours so it is

profile

really important we do that we continue to do that.

In relation to the town itself we work closely with local companies, with suppliers and I think The North Berwick does benefit from the fact that we are here, given 11,000 visitors come to play the course each year and may stay in local hotels and B&Bs and use the High Street. When we look at our full seasonal operation we are probably one of the largest employers in the local area as we employ a team of approximately 55 staff during the summer months.

In 2016 the club gained the GEO certification for environmental best practice. Can you detail what the club does for its environment?

For us, it is important that the club integrates well with the surrounding landscape character and we work with the typography and vegetation to ensure the views, the vistas and the quality of the playing experience is maximised. There are many projects we are working on or have already completed so we can protect and enhance the natural habitat and contribute to the wildlife conservation in and around the course.

There are processes and procedures around managing natural and protected areas on the course, looking at habitat and species' surveys, how we manage the grassland areas, minimising the application of chemicals and adapting to the challenges of new approaches in relation to agronomy.

Alongside this we are trying to maximise renewable sources in relation to energy, sustainable procurement of products and services, how we handle and dispose of waste and reducing the risk of pollution. Really raising the awareness of the club's environmental programme with staff, members and visitors so they also have an understanding of what we are trying to achieve.

The club is a links course and there have been worrying predictions from various bodies in recent years that some Scottish links venues are at risk from encroaching sea levels. Is The North Berwick concerned about coastal erosion and, if so, is it doing anything about it?

All three clubs have been very proactive with this issue



The 13th green

I think there are a lot of golf club committees who would benefit from NLP training

and recognised that they needed to enhance the provisions of coastal erosion defences in order to protect the course. We had two main areas of concern; the 2nd and the 11th holes.

The club started this particular journey back in 2016 working in conjunction with STRI (Sports Turf Research Institute) and Professor George Fleming to look at how we could best protect the course from coastal erosion. From there we employed EnviroCentre as our consultant and in April this year we completed our coastal erosion project.

The project, which has taken over

three years, has allowed us to reinstate the rock armouring on the second hole. We replaced a number of sleepers and then we reinforced with rock armour. We also rebuilt the sand dunes adjacent to the 11th green in order to protect it and used over 1,200 tonnes of sand; we used geotextile sand filled bags overlaid with sand, which were overplanted with marram grasses.

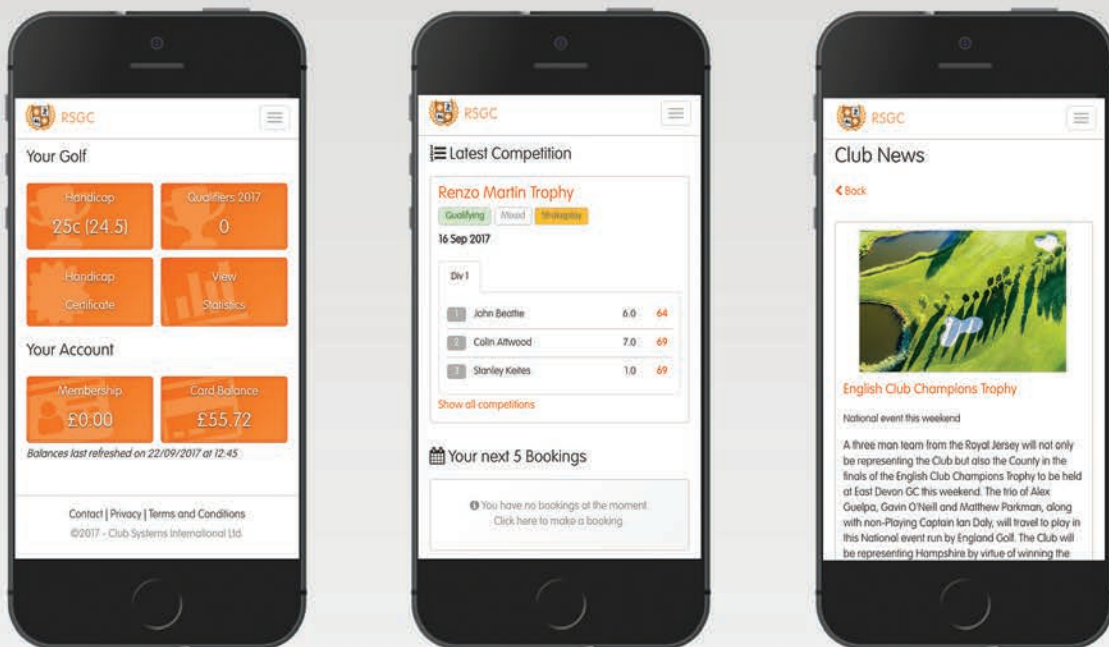
During the whole coastal erosion project we planted over 30,000 marram grasses and the overall project costs exceeded £500,000 – it was a big project.

The club was one of the first in the UK to sign up to The R&A's Women in Golf Charter and it has Europe's 2019 Solheim Cup captain Catriona Matthew as an honorary member. What is the club's approach to promoting the game to women and girls?

We are trying to implement a number of recruitment initiatives to target getting women and girls into golf. We



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have our Get into Golf scheme which is really centred on beginners, creating the right environment for them to learn golf and feel comfortable and confident, within a golf environment.

It is basically a structured programme whereby they start with coaching from our professional team. They have access to our Wee course, a nine-hole, par three course and that really acts as a vehicle to give them the opportunity to develop their golf game in a 'safe' learning environment. That aligns itself as a programme to full membership at The North Berwick.

We have also committed to increasing female membership within our membership recruitment process. We are also supporting Solheim Cup activities to support Catriona. The club will have provided buses each day of the event to take members, friends and family up to the Solheim Cup and I think we are working quite hard to change the perception of women's golf.

It is very important to try and look at any under-represented group and try and understand why it is under-represented, and

what we can do differently, to address the imbalance.

Fundamentally it is harder to get girls into golf than it is boys, most boys and most adult males can probably converse about something but I think it is much harder for a 14-year-old girl to have a conversation with a 65-year-old woman. It can be a challenge to engage and try and get the right people involved to mentor and develop young girls.

The Wee Course (formerly known as the Children's Course), is more than 130 years old – and Catriona Matthew learnt to play on it. What does this course offer and how does the club try to attract juniors to the facility?

We are very lucky to have this amazing nine-hole, par three facility. We recently gained planning approval in order to enhance the starters' lodge to provide better facilities for those who are going to be using the course.

We also have our own junior club called The West Links Juniors.

**After committee meetings I send out an update so that
the members know the rationale for certain decisions.
This has gone down really well**



profile

It has its own constitution, its own committee and own set of annual accounts.

Within the West Links Juniors we have split the juniors down into two very distinctive groups. We've got our pre-course membership called the Puffins, whereby the smaller or younger kids get a number of coaching sessions from the professional staff who provide coaching sessions on the practice ground, on the Wee Course and a variety of benefits for being part of that membership.

As they develop, improve and have the capacity to play more holes and be out on the course longer, we would move them up into full course membership, which we named the 'Gannets'.

These juniors are slightly older, who may have been playing golf longer, and they have access to the West Links. They also get coaching through the professional team, benefits include discount on clothing in the pro shop and they get to play in competitions.

What is the club doing to enhance the profitability of its food and beverage operation?

I am sure this can be a challenge for many clubs and it can often be difficult to get the balance of providing a service to members and managing your food and beverage operation in a more businesslike manner. For us the service we provide to members and visitors is paramount as it impacts the overall experience we are trying to achieve at the club. For us it is not necessarily about profitability, that's not our key objective.

Our key objective is to offer service excellence in everything we do and be 'best in class'. It is really important for us not to be complacent and as such staff behaviours and training are very important along with ensuring that we are engaged with the right suppliers or buying the best possible products and buying smarter. We are constantly building relationships and rapport with our members and visitors. Our aim is to provide the best possible environment for our members and visitors to enjoy their time at the West Links.

We did a number of member surveys to make sure that we were providing the right social environment through the club's facilities

As manager of Northamptonshire County Golf Club you put in a long-term strategy for membership retention and recruitment. Can you tell us about that?

I don't think anyone had sat back and looked at the demographic of the membership.

When I arrived I did an exercise looking at membership demographic in relation to age, where they lived and really tried to complete an analysis on their habits and behaviours, which hopefully provided a very clear map of the world for Northants County.

It was quite alarming to see that just under 40 per cent of our members were over the age of 65 and at the time we weren't bringing a lot of new members. So over a period of time, if no action was taken, it was going to erode the membership at the club, particularly the ladies' section who

had a higher age average than the gents. It was important that we created a call to action and a lot of that centred on engagement with members, how we managed the membership process and how we recruited new members. How





to offer the right environment for members.

That involved looking at trends in behaviours. If a member hadn't been to the club for a period of time, it was about engagement to see if there was a specific reason for it.

We also brought in membership officers to look after new members during their first few months at the club.

Often when you join a new club it can be very daunting to navigate your way around. Who to play golf with, what roll-up groups are available and how you can join them, and so on.

Membership officers effectively met with new members, introduced them into the club and looked after them for the first three or four months, very much with a view that not every member needs the same level of care but we managed that in a very effective way.

We also introduced a member 'get member' scheme whereby if an existing member introduced a new member they would get a number of kickbacks. It was also really important for us to look after our existing members. Sometimes the focus can be very much channelled to bringing in new members without actually looking after your existing members.

We did a number of member surveys to make sure that we were providing the right social environment through the club's facilities and also providing the right playing environment looking at whether there were enough competitions, was there enough variety, did they want to play social or competitive golf?

We asked the question very much with the view 'don't ask the question if you can't handle the response'. We got some really positive feedback and some very constructive feedback that we were able to implement and change for the better.

How do you communicate with existing members at The North Berwick and what is the club's approach to marketing?

When I arrived at the club we didn't have a marketing and PR strategy. We've now implemented a robust strategy that provides an internal and external focus for the club and the level of communication and transparency of the communication that we provide to members has received a lot of positive feedback.

We engage with members on a weekly basis through something called The Weekly Connect, which gives them here and now information.

After committee meetings I send them out a committee update so that they know what has been discussed and debated by committee and the rationale for certain decisions or changes and any projects we have agreed. I think this has gone down really well and it brings the committee closer to the membership as well.

We have our marketing and PR strategy and are doing a lot of work on social media, all in conjunction with Rocket Creative. Our presence on our three social media platforms has improved and we are getting good results there. I am really keen for all of the heads of departments and all of the teams to be engaged with social media so it becomes more of a holistic approach and everyone makes a contribution.

We also produce a quarterly newsletter for members to keep them up to date, which is more of a strategic look at what we have achieved and what we are working on for the future. I think we have created visibility, likability and credibility through how we communicate now and I don't think that was necessarily there before.

We've now got a consistent look and feel about everything we do through the work we have done with Rocket. Everything now has a look and feel connected to our branding, which is very important.

What is the club's approach to customer service?

For us it is all about what we say and what we deliver so we are congruent in everything we do. We strive to deliver customer excellence in every aspect of our operation from the initial welcome provided by the door attendants to the quality of the playing surfaces on the course, to the interactions that members or visitors will have with the course rangers, the professional team working in the professional shop, all the way back into the golf club through the food and beverage offering.

During my first few months I caddied a couple of times to get a feel for our caddy operation and how it has an impact on the visitor experience at The North Berwick. Nearly everybody I have spoken to, including golfers that have



The creation of the strap line 'Scotland's Golfing Coast' has been an ingenious marketing vehicle for the area of East Lothian

played at some of the best courses in the world, and have enjoyed Muirfield or St Andrews, because these are courses they feel they should play, has said they have had the best experience at The North Berwick. That is something I don't necessarily think you can teach or bottle. We provide a very real and authentic experience here and the visitors really appreciate it. It is a testament to what has been created at the club over the years, through the culture of the staff and how the club has been managed, and I hope we can continue to do that and improve going forward.

It is amazing to receive such feedback because there are some great clubs in the UK but in relation to the overall experience I think what we create here and the course itself is pretty special. Here you've got the vistas, you've got the views, the staff telling the story of the club's history and people just love it, they soak it all up. I think we do that very well.

North Berwick is part of a Visit Scotland / Scotland's Golf Coast tourism group with accommodation providers and other big name golf clubs. How did this come about, what do you offer and what benefits have you found from this?

The creation of the strap line 'Scotland's Golfing Coast' has been an ingenious marketing vehicle for the area of East Lothian and it is very much a first choice golfing destination. It is not only the more recognised clubs, such as Muirfield, The North Berwick and Gullane that have benefited from this, but many of the other smaller clubs or 'hidden gems', which is great for the game of

golf in Scotland. East Lothian has 21 courses and 30 miles of picturesque coastline.

The ability to work with tour operators and other businesses and organisations directly involved in Scottish golf is very beneficial. The Scottish Golf Tourism Week is a fantastic platform to meet and engage with tour operators and other golf clubs who all contribute to the impact golf has on the Scottish economy.

Finally, a few years ago we reported that some tourists were visiting the seaside town and then walking to the golf course to have picnics on the greens and even build sandcastles in the bunkers! Is this issue under control now?

It can often be challenging due to the proximity of the course in relation to the town and the fact that members of the public can access the beach via the golf course. Although this will continue to be a challenge for the club going forward, I think we manage this dynamic well. TGB

in their own words

Brendon Pyle

chief executive of the Golf Foundation

For the first time, the Golf Foundation has been able to measure the impact of a golf coaching programme on its participants. The results have been life changing – for example, a child, who was regularly excluded from school for losing his temper, learnt breathing and visualisation techniques and he subsequently avoided exclusion for the entire length of programme



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s golfers we know that our sport has the power to change lives. Frustratingly, we sometimes struggle to communicate this or to prove what we believe, which is why I have been extremely excited to reveal the findings of a research project we have carried out. For the first time, we have been able to measure the impact of a golf coaching programme on its participants and the results have been life changing.

Several groups of 11 to 16 year olds were evaluated at the beginning and end of the new programme, which teaches techniques such as breathing and visualisation alongside traditional golf skills. In just 10 weeks, youngsters showed an average 20 per cent increase in their mental resilience. They report that being mentally tougher helped them perform better, feel happier and address stressful situations. Most significantly, all of the youngsters used the techniques they had learnt during their golf coaching in everyday life; at home, at school and in exams. One youngster summed up the experience perfectly when he told us that he was 'better at golf and life'.

The new programme, devised in collaboration with mindset experts Yeast Ltd and a group of PGA professionals, provides significant statistical data, which is reinforced with powerful anecdotal evidence. One particularly

**We are now making
the programme
available to PGA
professionals under
the name
'Unleash Your Drive'**



impactful story came from a child who was regularly excluded from school for losing his temper. During the programme he learnt breathing and visualisation techniques that allowed him to 'control his fizz' and subsequently he avoided exclusion for the entire length of programme.

We are now making the programme available to PGA professionals under the name 'Unleash Your Drive', a title which was chosen by our 'Young Ambassadors'. We are holding a series of five regional one-day training workshops, which will form part of the PGA's CPD

programme, and will be presented by the team from Yeast who designed the programme. Some of the PGA coaches involved in the pilot study will also be sharing their experiences during the course.

Children are under an increasing amount of pressure from all angles, which is why we are incredibly proud of the results of this research project. We

have already had a great response from across the sports world and are looking forward to hearing the reaction of the sports minister when we meet her in the coming weeks. This project opens up the exciting possibility of us taking this work beyond golf. The children involved are the biggest advocates of the programme, which tells us everything we need to know, and you can hear from them first hand by watching the short film we made with them on www.golf-foundation.org. TGB

Age discrimination

In its latest article offering legal advice to golf clubs, the National Golf Clubs' Advisory Association warns about making assumptions about capability based upon age



In this article we examine the importance of ensuring that golf club employers do not make assumptions about the health, age and capability of their staff when dealing with their ability to perform the job. Before embarking upon a procedure to manage and potentially dismiss an employee, advice should be taken and careful thought given to the situation, particularly in relation to the correct reason for any action and in relation to the procedure to be adopted

The case of *Jolly vs Royal Berkshire NHS Trust* was recently heard in an employment tribunal where Ms Jolly, who had been employed by the trust since 1991, worked as a medical secretary until her dismissal. She brought claims unfair dismissal, age discrimination and disability discrimination following her dismissal in 2017.

It is thought that Ms Jolly is the oldest person ever to bring a claim of age discrimination, being 88 years of age at the time of her claim.

The facts of the case

The background to the claim was that Ms Jolly worked as a medical secretary for a consultant at the Berkshire NHS Trust. Shortly after a



change in her role, she arrived at work one day to be told that she was under investigation for alleged waiting list breaches. She was then suspended and escorted off the premises.

Whilst on suspension, she received a letter from the trust to inform her that she was being investigated under the capability procedure and that she would be required to attend a meeting. Her trade union representative was unable to attend that meeting, so she requested a postponement of the meeting, but the trust refused that request.

Ms Jolly submitted a grievance alleging age discrimination and, in her

appeal, she explained that she never received adequate training for the changed role and that the consultant (her immediate line manager) for whom she worked, had no issues or complaints with her work.

The grievance was ignored and Ms Jolly was subsequently dismissed. She appealed against her dismissal but this was rejected, on the basis of

it having been lodged outside of the requisite time limit. It was found in the employment tribunal that this time limit point was incorrect.

Ms Jolly subsequently lodged claims for unfair dismissal, age discrimination and disability discrimination (on the basis of her heart condition and arthritis).

In the employment tribunal, her claims were upheld, along with a

finding that assumptions had been made about her health and age, which had led to her dismissal. The employment tribunal noted that the investigation report included comments made by colleagues that Ms Jolly 'had old secretaries' ways' and was 'frail'. Another colleague was quoted as saying 'it was a concern that you would walk in and find [Miss Jolly] dead on the floor'.

The tribunal determined that these comments had influenced the decision maker.

The tribunal went on to hold that the failure to hear Ms Jolly's appeal, not dealing with her grievance and suspending her on the basis of capability also amounted to less favourable treatment on the basis of her age and disability.

In a recent case, an 88-year-old was dismissed by her employer for alleged waiting list breaches. Colleagues had said she was 'frail' and this had influenced the employer's decision to dismiss her. However, she argued she had not been given adequate training – and an employment tribunal upheld her claim that assumptions had been made about her age

NGCAA comments

It is of the utmost importance when dealing with employees to ensure that matters are dealt with properly and that assumptions are not made in relation to staff when handling their ability to perform a job simply because of their age. Where employees of any age might be viewed as not performing to the required standard, then steps should be taken to establish a possible cause, regardless of age. It should not be assumed that a person is unable to perform simply because they are of a certain age.

The compensation has not yet been awarded in this case, but it could be quite considerable since Ms Jolly's evidence was that she intended to work until she was 90 and that her treatment by the trust had left her feeling depressed, ashamed and humiliated.

For advice in relation to how to handle employee capability cases, age discrimination and all employment law matters, as well as other legal matters affecting your golf club, please contact the NGCAA on either alistair@ngcaa.co.uk or 01886 812943



The National Golf Clubs' Advisory Association

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Too many cooks

If a golf club wants to thrive today it needs to make decisions in the same way a modern, dynamic business does – and that's difficult if the committee has a large number of people on it. Here, Adrian Cooper argues that streamlining the board is essential – and offers tips on how to achieve this



they're not happy. Moving clubs has never been so easy.

How do you make change happen?

The key words here are engagement and transparency.

Set out a clear business case around why the committee would perform better with five or six people and engage with the members through focus groups, for example, focus groups should consist of the following, but not limited, to this list:

- Senior section
- Ladies' section
- Past captains ladies and gents
- Past presidents or chairmen
- General membership.

These focus groups should meet when the sections play, for example ladies' day on a Tuesday – get them together at 2pm on the afternoon and make the general membership on

a Saturday afternoon and one evening.

The best way to communicate this is via a PowerPoint presentation – and give out handouts of the presentation after the focus group (otherwise there will be a distraction while you are trying to engage the group). This is an opportunity to see what your members think and take on board comments and suggestions and amend if you feel necessary. Be very clear what the roles will entail and how they will work within the operation.

As well as this display the new structure on exhibition

Does three hours to discuss the length of a sock sound familiar?

Large committees, in some cases as large as 17, are slow, hard work and more often than not unproductive. They start at 7pm but don't finish because one of the committee members throws in a hand grenade at 9pm that means the dinner will be cold and you will be there until after 11pm.

Large committees are reactive and take an age to make decisions; if a club wants to be taken seriously in this modern, dynamic business world, it needs to change and change quick as members now have so many golf club options if

boards in the clubhouse to let the members see what's being suggested; remember a large number of members will not turn up for these focus groups so you need to get the message out. Also use the website and email.

All the suggestions and comments need to be circulated to all of the members at the end of all the focus group sessions so members can be reassured you have not dismissed their input. This can be done through your website or a simple email to your members – whichever has the best route of communication.

One of the most important points to raise here is changes may need to be made to your Articles of Association to reflect the new business structure. This may also require you to hold an AGM to get the decision voted through. I have found that this is the first time for a long time a club would have looked closely at their articles so it would be prudent to form a small group of members from all facets of the club. Review your articles from top to bottom to make sure they reflect how your club operates today and how you would like it to look for the future.

So, going back to the committee, it's important the new structure reflects how the club will operate now, and in the future, and these are my suggestions:

- Chairman / president (chair) and casting vote
- Course director
- Golf and social director
- Finance director
- Health and safety director
- General manager / secretary.

Large committees are reactive and take an age to make decisions. I've been on committees with as many 17 members – meetings started at 7pm and were still going on at 11pm

Each role would require a formal application with an explanation as to why they would be the right person for the job. You will notice that I have not included club captain (male or female) on the board as my preference is to leave the captain to enjoy the role of being

the club ambassador and not to be burdened with club politics – they would be best suited to engaging with the golf and social committee.

I've used director but some clubs may just substitute this for a committee member. Each director or committee member can form their own subcommittee away from the main committee or board and put together a group of members of their choice, calling upon the expertise within the club, if required. It's the result of these sub committee meetings that the chair of that forum will bring to the main committee meeting or board meeting.

This is no easy task and could take up 12 months to roll out so be prepared for the long haul! And good luck.

TGB

Adrian Cooper is the former manager of a number of golf clubs, including Harborne, Henley, Hinkley and Drayton Park. He now runs

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club profile

Holywell Golf Club

This inland links-type course is one of the highest in Wales and has served its local community well for over 100 years – and the club has been investing in its clubhouse to ensure that this continues for much longer, writes Andy Waple



The hive of industrial activity and the relics of the area's heritage are plain to see across the course. Lines of relatively shallow pits from the lead mining are still visible and the club has wisely utilised these distinctive features, integrating them into the fabric of the course, presenting a rare landscape of great visual interest.

Old limestone quarries underlie the second and eighth fairways and together with disused lime kilns, form tough hazards on the 14th, 15th and 16th holes.

Beneath the first, second, seventh, 11th, 12th, 13th and 18th tees were entrances to lead mines descending hundreds of feet.

T

he pioneer golfers of Holywell GC were not the first to carry clubs as they walked the fairways on Brynford Common in Flintshire, North Wales.

Archeological remains point to a long history of human activity in the area, carried out by Roman invaders, Bronze Age warriors and the man who beheaded St Winefride. Their clubs were not the ones found on golf courses everywhere today, but weapons.

Golfers who now enjoy more peaceful pursuits on what is described as a fine inland links course are reminded of the area's more recent history and the toils of local men, thanks to the numerous man-made humps and hollows that are the remnants of a once prosperous yet dangerous industry.

It is believed an ancient Welsh tribe was the first to make use of the rich seams of lead ore that lay just below the surface of Brynford Common. Following the conquest, the Romans developed the mining trade which continued throughout the Middle Ages into the Victorian era. Works included the Clwt Militia Mine which lay close to the golf club, a complex which yielded lead and silver from the early 19th century until its closure in 1903.

Eventually the famous Flintshire industry dwindled as cheap imports impacted on its viability and only limestone mining remained.



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Holywell GC built its initial course in 1906 on land from the dominant local landowners, the Grosvenor's, whose family was bestowed with the title of the Duke of Westminster by Queen Victoria in 1874.

Holywell is one of the highest courses in Wales with glorious views to the Clwydian Range and Snowdonia.

The original course was a nine-hole layout, extended to 18 holes in 1924, reverted post-war to a different nine-hole layout before finally in 1991 becoming the 18 holes that is played today. The course is flat but challenging thanks to its many natural hazards. Over the years the club has put considerable resources into greens' improvement and due to the limestone sub-soil it proudly states that it never uses temporary greens.

Holywell GC is affiliated to the Golf Union of Wales and Union of Flintshire Golf Clubs and welcomes new players and juniors. Its coaching facilities include a state-of-the-art golf studio with video recording and projection managed by head professional Josh Charnock, a regular competitor in local PGA events and a previous winner of the Order of Merit in Shropshire and Herefordshire.

In keeping with its long and distinguished history the club has continued to evolve both on and off the course and it remains one of the most popular in the region.

The clubhouse is very welcoming and its catering is highly regarded. Functions such as Christenings, birthday parties, anniversaries, wedding receptions, funeral teas and Christmas parties are catered for.



It features a spacious, refurbished dining room with views over the course and across to the Clwydian range of hills.

There is an outside area to enjoy the surroundings, which becomes very popular in good weather.

Other modernisations have included the recladding of the exterior in 2018, and refurbishment of its locker rooms by industry leader Ridgeway Furniture, which carried out a refit of both male and female changing rooms, installing new lockers and benches.

Carol Saunders, secretary manager at Holywell, said: "The locker rooms had got to the stage where they needed updating and we looked to see who could do the work. We selected Ridgeway Furniture and they did a fantastic job; the locker rooms look beautiful. I can certainly recommend Ridgeway."

Since its inception Ridgeway has manufactured tens of thousands of lockers that have been installed in some of the most prestigious golf clubs in the world.

The company has seen turnover increase by more than 100 per cent over the past six years and has invested more than £500,000 in a new factory increasing its capacity by over 50 per cent. The facility, at more than 18,000 square feet, means the company is now the UK's largest dedicated manufacturer of wooden lockers. TGB

after dark golf

Night fever

The Ladies European Tour ran its first-ever night golf event last month, in which participants commented on how much fun it was. Golf clubs, meanwhile, are also tapping into this entertaining and different format, writes Tania Longmire





Last month saw the world's first professional day-night golf tournament – the Ladies European Tour's Omega Dubai Moonlight Classic at Emirates Golf Club – and the excitement around the event shows the potential for night golf.

Cheyenne Woods (Tiger's niece and winner of the 2014 Volvik RACV Ladies Masters) said: "I think it's a great event for golf. I think these formats keep the fans interested and it's good for us too, just having a different experience playing."

Meghan MacLaren, winner of last year's Women's New South Wales Open, added: "Any time that golf tries to innovate it creates a bit of a buzz, which I think is exactly what the game needs. The idea of playing under floodlights is pretty cool."

Several UK golf clubs have been tapping into this buzz in recent years.

Parley Golf Centre in Dorset, for example, has invested in LED equipment to illuminate the balls, fairways, greens and flags.

This winter it ran bi-weekly six-hole competitions during the evenings.

"The competitions were meant as a bit of fun and a way of getting more golf in before winter turns to spring," said spokesman Ed Baker.

"The balls have coloured LED lights inside them, which also makes them easier to find when they end up in the rough.

"The fairways are illuminated like the runways at the neighbouring Bournemouth Airport, and the greens and flags also have bright lights on."

Dan Murphy, vice-captain of Parley Court Golf Club, which organised the competitions, said: "The LED balls are like hitting a normal golf ball. They can be switched on and off

via a torch so there's no rush to find your ball before the light goes out."

This spring, nocturnal fundraisers in Scotland also teed off under darkness at The North Berwick Golf Club, in aid of MND Scotland, which provides vital support to people living with motor neurone disease.

Generous golfers played the 'Wee Course' at night armed with glowsticks and illuminous golf balls to help them take aim during darkness. The fun-filled night-time competition has become an annual fundraising fixture at the golf club and this year's after-dark tournament proved as popular as ever, and raised almost £900 for the chosen charity.

Elaine McBride, general manager at The North Berwick Golf Club, said: "We were delighted again to help raise money for this worthy cause. It is the third year we have staged the night golf fundraiser and the second year it has been in aid of MND Scotland.

"This year's successful event raised £892, bringing the overall total raised by The North Berwick Golf Club for MND Scotland to £2,102."

The charity boost was welcomed by MND Scotland, which presented a certificate of thanks to the historic golf club and its generous golfers.

Iain McWhirter, MND Scotland's head of fundraising, said: "I'd like to thank everyone involved in making The North Berwick Golf Club event such a huge success. Thanks to fundraisers like this, we are able to provide vital financial, practical and emotional support to everyone affected by this devastating disease in Scotland, as well as fund ground-breaking research to take us a step closer to a cure."

McBride added that members play a Texas Scramble format competition over six short, par three holes. "This is a popular social event," she said. **TGB**

Fraser Symon, Steve McMahon, Michael Davidson and Ric Foulner at a charity night golf event at The North Berwick Golf Club this March

Club Ambassador Programme

How to win two tickets for the Solheim Cup

Ahead of the 2019 Solheim Cup at Gleneagles, Scottish Golf has unveiled a 'Club Ambassador Programme' in a bid to help clubs in Scotland benefit from the tournament.

The programme encourages all golf club members across Scotland to get involved in leading local activities to promote the event ahead of its return to the home of golf this September.

Ambassadors, who will organise and deliver Solheim Cup events within their clubs, promote the Solheim Cup to fellow club members,

promote opportunities to buy tickets and be the key contact within the club for all things to do with the Solheim Cup, will be rewarded with a benefits package that includes two tickets to the Solheim Cup as well as the chance to win a club visit from Europe's captain, Catriona Matthew, with the Cup. Other benefits include access to the PING pavilion at Gleneagles during the event.

Catriona Matthew said: "I was excited to hear about Scottish Golf's Solheim Cup Club Ambassador





Programme. It is a great way to ensure that members of all the various clubs in Scotland have the information they need in order to make it as easy as possible for them to come to the Solheim Cup.

“Local support will be really important to us in our bid to win the cup back from the USA.”

Fiona Maciver has taken on the role as ‘Solheim Cup Ambassador’ at The North Berwick Golf Club. She said: “Not only does the initiative allow ambassadors to engage with club members, it will also promote the event within clubs around the country to ensure that the home supporters have the biggest presence and loudest voice during the tournament. It is especially pleasing for The North Berwick Golf Club to support Catriona during her captaincy and we wish her and the team the very best of luck to win the cup back from the USA.”

Scottish Golf CEO, Andrew McKinlay, added: “We will work with clubs to provide proactive, on-the-ground, awareness for members and find innovative ways to build up to the world’s greatest women’s golf team event.” TGB

Catriona Matthew and Andrew McKinlay with the Solheim Cup.
To sign up to be an ambassador, visit tiny.cc/Solheim

‘To be head professional here is an honour’

Gordon Robertson is the head PGA professional at Drumpellier Golf Club in Lanarkshire. He talks to *The Golf Business* about the shorter hole courses the venue has established to help him introduce the game to beginners and the technology he’s invested in to ensure his business never stands still

W

hat daily challenges do you face in running a pro shop and teaching?

For me it’s all about member and guest experience; ensuring that this is surpassed every day is vital in my view. I absolutely love my job providing a service

and building the retail, custom fit and tuition side of the business so that my members and guests can satisfy their golfing needs.

I pride myself on keeping the shop looking sharp and well merchandised and my assistants are very much involved with this.

Teaching wise I generally do most through the week during the day and evenings as I like to be in the shop on weekends behind the counter to allow me speak to the members.

I absolutely love my job providing a service and building the retail, custom fit and tuition side of the business so that my members and guests can satisfy their golfing needs





Gordon (and left) at Drumpellier Golf Club.
Below: Gordon teeing off at Carya Golf Club's 16th tee, during TGI Golf's Team Challenge

There is a constant flow of new golf products – how do you manage your stock to serve the needs of your members and visitors?

I have recently invested in a Crossover XPOS system so I'm looking forward to seeing the reports it has to offer and what works well and what doesn't. In previous years I have gone with the brands I know the best from my time in the industry.

I only started in business in 2017 so went with the little and often approach, which worked well within my budget until I could build up enough cashflow to provide a wider range of products.

I have always offered a different range of products from three or four different suppliers, whether it be apparel or hardware. It's difficult to cater for everyone's needs but as long as you offer a variety in each range I think it satisfies customers.

How do you manage your day?

Like most PGA pros this is a difficult challenge on a daily basis. Most of the time I compile a to-do list on my phone, as you know something new always pops up. Generally I try to get all marketing, emails and admin done during quiet days when I'm not coaching or fitting. I've also got my

assistants more involved with the marketing side of things.

What are you doing to support junior golf and introduce kids to the sport?

We have recently started our Junior Academy which has seen a great uptake, we also offer free junior coaching camps throughout the school holidays and visit the local driving range with the kids during the winter.

Our junior section is growing all the time thanks to the junior convenors at the club who have been great at driving the junior section and developing new ideas. We are looking to head into local schools and offer taster sessions to primary school kids.

I believe having technology is a must as it's so competitive and members are always looking to get the best service

Are you trying to attract more women to golf?

It's an area we would like to attract more golfers to and we will look to begin our ladies' 'Get into golf' offering at the club. We are lucky to have an active ladies' section



the PGA professional

and we shall look to involve the current ladies' section as well as gents to encourage family members and friends to start the game.

Do you have any programmes in place such as academy membership to make it easier to introduce beginners to the game?

We have a programme in place to make it easier for beginners. The club has recently installed a six-hole course on the practice area to help introduce new golfers and on the main course we have a short nine-hole course, where the tees have been moved up so beginners can develop and learn to play on the main course.

A lot of PGA pros are having to be a step ahead of their competitors in their offerings and technology – what additional added value services do you provide?

We have installed a brand new indoor swing studio with

Trackman 4 Launch Monitor, which we use for all coaching and fittings. It's been a massive success thus far for us as it has really increased the services we can offer.

We also use it for our Junior Academy as the kids love the simulator. I believe having technology is a must as it's so competitive and members are always looking to get the best service.

When did you join the TGI Golf Partnership and what was it about it that attracted you?

It was a very easy decision for me to join TGI when I started the business in 2017.

My previous employer is a TGI Partner, so I was able to experience the many different services and events TGI offer whilst getting to know the TGI team.



Has TGI Golf been of benefit to you as a PGA professional?

No doubt about it, since day one of joining the group it has been tremendous, the support you receive from the whole TGI family is first class and I feel it really helps enhance my business on a daily basis. The events are amazing, the golf days and Turkey Team Challenge allow

you to take some friends or club officials along and have a great time while enhancing relationships.

The annual business conference is going from strength to strength and being able to attend top quality seminars, meet suppliers and mix

with other partners is another huge benefit of joining TGI.

What year did you turn professional and what have been your career highlights, both playing and employment?

I turned professional in 2010, I had always wanted a career in golf so the decision to become a PGA pro was an easy one. Playing wise as an amateur I was a decent county player, winning a few tournaments here and there and played a few national tournaments.

As a pro I've had a few highlights and some decent finishes. I managed to qualify for the TGI Partnership Trophy (an annual match between Scotland, England and Wales and Ireland) played at St Andrews, which was an amazing experience. I'm very proud of my achievements thus far in business and to be the head professional at Drumpellier Golf Club is an honour. TGB



Gordon representing Scotland at St Andrews during TGI Golf's annual Partnership Trophy in association with Callaway and Callaway Apparel

golf course design

A pinch of Colt

Regarded as one of the best inland golf courses in Northern Ireland and designed by the same man who put Royal Portrush together – Harry Colt, Belvoir Park Golf Club is in the process of having its course updated – and that means shaping modern reconstructions while maintaining Colt’s concepts. Tania Longmire explains how the club is achieving this



It's a big year for golf in Northern Ireland, with the Open Championship returning to the Harry Colt designed Dunluce Links at Royal Portrush Golf Club for the first time in 68 years. Two years before he laid out his plans for Royal Portrush, Colt created an inland masterpiece at Belvoir Park in South Belfast.

Belvoir Park Golf Club, founded in 1927, is widely regarded as the finest parkland course in Northern Ireland. The course is located just two miles from Belfast city centre but situated in the tranquility of 163 acres of mature parkland.

On accepting his commission at Belvoir Park, Colt reported: "I consider that it will be possible to make a course affording an excellent test and, at the same time, one that will give the maximum of pleasure to players." Golfers at Belvoir Park will recognise many of Colt's design traits, such as the small but simply-contoured putting surfaces closely guarded by deep greenside bunkers. The short 8th is a great example of this where, despite only measuring a little over 40 yards, any wayward shot will be quickly gathered into one of the bunkers, swales and hollows that surround the raised green.

Swan Golf Designs has now been charged with updating the course while maintaining the concepts and spirit of Colt's original designs, and it is this same aim of producing a golfing challenge and an enjoyable game that guides the ongoing work. Since his appointment in early 2018, William Swan has undertaken renovations on the 4th, 8th, 11th, 13th and 18th holes, working in

close collaboration with course manager Aaron Small. These works have included new bunkering, reconstructed tees and reshaped green surrounds, with the new features all having been brought back into play in time for the start of the competitive season in spring 2019. In addition, the practice ground has seen extensive reconstruction over the winter to implement Swan's new design and to allow club professional, Michael McGivern, to make full use of his innovative objectively-measured practice system.

The project team is now in the process of finalising plans for the 2019/2020 winter works, with a view to completing the renovation of all remaining holes and practice facilities over the next three to five years.

It's not only at Belvoir Park that Swan Golf Designs has been tasked with updating and restoring the work of the 'golden age' architects. The company's work can also be seen at the likes of Colt designed Barton-on-Sea, James Braid designs at Thorpeness and Workington, the Old Tom Morris and Henry Cotton layouts at Moray Golf Club, as well as the recent restoration of Herbert Fowler bunkering at Huddersfield Golf Club. TGB



the golf course

Friendly Shire

The Shire London has appointed a new, young greenkeeping team. Tania Longmire reports

The son of the European Tour's chief agronomist, Richard Stillwell has been appointed to lead a youthful and energetic course management at The Shire London. Already a veteran of 20 European Tour events, where he either assisted the tour's agronomy team or worked alongside the in-house greenkeepers, George Stillwell, now in his 30s, has honed his skills from the age of 16 at his family golf club. George was also made lead agronomic consultant for the Ladies European Tour in 2014 and has received two R&A greenkeeping scholarships.

"I have far more resources than any club that I have dealt with before," he said. "Our owners' [The Bridgedown Group] approach makes decision making very easy and the family atmosphere is great to work in. It reminds me of when I worked in the family business.

"When working with my dad, we always used the old methods much more than other golf clubs, just like Jim Arthur had taught him. I do like productivity,

however, and I am always finding ways to do more with less. I like to encourage the greenkeepers to think outside the box and come up with their own ideas and take ownership of them. Through this, I believe you start to really care for the course and this is my ambition here at The Shire."

Ceri Menai-Davis, director of The Bridgedown Group, added: "In his short time at the club, George has already implemented a number of new processes and procedures which have improved productivity and, ultimately, enhanced the condition of the Masters Course at The Shire London."

"We are delighted with the progress he has been making leading a young but enthusiastic team and guarantee our guests and visitors will appreciate the measures he has set in place."

The Shire is the only golf course designed by Seve Ballesteros in the UK. TGB

**I have far more
resources than any club
that I have dealt with**



The Shire London. Inset: New head greenkeeper
George Stillwell (left) and assistant Stuart Day



Go West

West Hill Golf Club in Surrey is one of the best heathland golf courses in the world. We speak to its course manager, Ben Edwards, about how the club stores essential irrigation water despite not having a reservoir and the major projects the greenkeeping staff have been carrying out



Based near Woking in Surrey, where some of the greatest heathland golf courses in the world are located, West Hill consistently features in UK top 100 golf course listings. Designed by Cuthbert Butchart in 1907, the course is lined with towering Scots pines and the brook of Brookwood meanders its way through the course, coming into play on six different holes. The greens are famous for having some of the most challenging natural undulations you will ever play. The venue, one of Surrey's '3 W's', along with Woking and Worpleston, is said to have the best hole of the three – the scintillating long par three 15th with its wickedly contoured green.

Here, Ben Edwards, course manager at West Hill, talks about the work that goes into maintaining this facility.

Ben Edwards

"The weather and the changing climate is a challenge here," he explained. "Take April for example, minus three degrees to plus 26 degrees in one week. Also, the removal of a number of very useful chemicals. It makes you have to really think about planning regarding the application of fungicides and also can be incredibly soul destroying if you happen to get an attack from grubs and we simply have nothing which can control it. This, in turn, can have a huge effect on the golf course and can damage the business as well as the reputation of the club."

Ben explained that the club has been running a soil exchange programme on the greens: "We began the process around seven years ago after realising that the soil in the greens wasn't free draining in anyway," he detailed. "We then began to double hollow core the greens to depths between four and nine inches. This is a big task and involved an annual quantity of 300-plus tonnes of sand. We then installed drainage to a number of the greens to aid further with the drainage. This has proved to be a success and we've wintered well for the past four years now. The members seem to be very happy with the

**The members at
West Hill are very
understanding and
realise that the works
all need to be done**

surfaces and they can really see the benefit of doing the programme and continuing it for years to come.

"We carry out large amounts of hollow coring to the greens. We also sand inject Graden the greens again to aid with thatch removal and drainage rates. As a club we have two main weeks to carry out the maintenance. In those weeks we generally hollow core greens, tees, approaches and fairways. We also Vertidrain all areas at least twice a year. We are a busy members' club so all of the above does have to work around the diary, but generally the members at West Hill are very understanding and realise that the works all need to be done."

The course also underwent a heavy tree removal programme in 2016.

"The club has previously had an annual budget for tree removal which was great but I just never felt like we

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the golf course

would ever get to the point where I was happy with the amount that were coming out," Edwards stated.

"We then made the decision to have a tree harvesting company come on to site and with our planning we removed around 3,000 trees and scrub.

"This has proved to be a very good project for the course and most importantly the regeneration of heather. We are a heathland course so our woodland needed to be managed to promote the right environment for the heather to begin to regenerate. It has also allowed more air and light to the greens and other parts of the course which has helped with keeping us drier throughout the year."

The club has also upgraded its irrigation system.

"In 2018 we advised Topturf Irrigation to proceed and install our new Toro Lynx control system and cable network," he said. "We also had a new pump station and a 300m³ tank installed. This increased our water storage to 500m³. With the heads on greens, approaches and fairways now being individually controlled, I have much more accuracy in where we need to water. This in turn reduces the amount of water we waste which is key for us as we currently do not have a reservoir.

"The members and visitors expect very high standards at West Hill, whenever they choose to play the course.

We are, as a club, looking at installing a reservoir which will hopefully secure all of our water needs going forward. With water becoming more and more scarce it is a high priority project



Having the irrigation working at its optimum level is key and Topturf, with their service, provide this for us."

Edwards takes us through the work the club has done to its bunkers: "We started a bunker refurbishment programme back in 2012 and we have 86 bunkers in total," he explained.

"The aim was to create a moor natural / heathland style look bunker with heather faces and more irregular shaping. We also installed mains drainage systems to all of the bunkers to aid with keeping them more playable after heavy rainfall. We are now going around and simply refreshing bunkers that we did years ago with fresh sand and heather. I

think going forward we will install a rubber liner, but this is further down the current wish list.

"Elsewhere, we are looking at building new tees on the 12th and 18th holes and are planning on continuing the heather planting across the course. We are, as a club, looking at installing a reservoir which will hopefully secure all of our water needs going forward. With water becoming more and more scarce it is a high priority project going forward.

"As a club we are always looking to keep things going forward and looking to invest in the course. In my time here so far we have carried out a large drainage project to the greens, built a state-of-the-art driving range



facility, undertaken a vast woodland management / heather regeneration project and have tackled the bunkers. It certainly helps having the club and its members behind you in what you are trying to achieve and we certainly have that here."

How does West Hill help its greenkeepers develop?

"We at West Hill continuously have

members of staff on the training courses which we see that will be of benefit for their progress," stated Edwards.

"It is a key part of the

development and the progression in their career.

"Presentation for me personally is a huge part of the golf course. It raises the level of the course straight away as members and their guests love seeing a well presented, neat and tidy golf course.

This can only be achieved if you have a good team who all care and strive to make the course look and play at its best for every single day of the year.

We as a team push each other to make sure the standards are always as high as possible.

"I feel that nowadays the course manager is seen as a very

In my time here so far we have carried out a large drainage project to the greens, built a state-of-the-art driving range facility, undertaken a vast woodland management / heather regeneration project and have tackled the bunkers. It certainly helps having the club and its members behind you

New Eco Village comes to SALTEX

SALTEX visitors can expect to experience the latest green technology in groundscape in a new area on the show floor for 2019 – which is purely dedicated to environmentally-friendly products.

The trend towards sustainable and environmentally-friendly practices in groundscape is gathering pace. Today, an increased number of grounds personnel, greenkeepers, landscapers and contractors are looking for products that can deliver quality results but also reduce carbon footprints to the environment.

Although more than 80 per cent of SALTEX 2018 visitors rated their overall show experience as being excellent, the post-show survey also revealed that visitors thought the exhibition could benefit even further from a wider choice of eco-friendly products and services.

The all new Eco Village at SALTEX will feature a programme of daily demonstrations of cutting-

edge sustainable technology – offering visitors an opportunity of seeing a number of products in action.

Furthermore, industry experts, within this village, will offer advice on green technology and how it could benefit current working practices.

Commenting on the Eco Village, SALTEX event director Matthew Knight, said: "Each year we listen to every single piece of feedback and implement tangible changes that will make the SALTEX experience even better.

"It is great to see groundscape manufacturers committed to reducing the environmental footprints and with the increasing demand for battery-powered products it makes sense to launch a new area at SALTEX, which solely focuses on these technologies."

SALTEX 2019 takes place at the NEC, Birmingham on October 30 and 31. For more information visit www.iogsaltex.com



The greenkeeping team at West Hill

important part of the golf club. The members are aware that we, as course managers, have the golf course's best interests at heart and that we are always trying to improve the conditions for them to play on. I think that interaction with the members and communication is key and helps to make the club feel as one and not separate from each other.

"We, as a club, have achieved lots in the past eight or nine years. You need to be supported from the club in good times and bad. We had a particularly challenging winter, 2014/15, regarding the greens' drainage.

As a team though, and with the help and advice of the STRI, we decided to drain all of the greens which needed it and we came out stronger after that happened. It was a fundamental part of the greens which was missing (drainage) which, touch wood, has worked very well.

"I personally think that greenkeeping is a fantastic choice of career and one I would highly recommend. I personally enjoy working outdoors and love seeing the course take shape and being able to see things improving year on year. My advice [to a young greenkeeper starting out today] would be to work as hard as you possibly can and take on board as much knowledge from the more experienced guys as possible. It may take time to reach the level of course manager but if you're driven and willing, you can get there." TGB



in their own words



Jim Croxton

Chief Executive of the British and International Greenkeepers Association (BIGGA)



Jim Croxton

During May I attended an event that was billed as an 'emergency summit', which looked to provide some solutions to a golf industry that is dealing with the loss of products that have in the past efficiently and cheaply controlled pests on and in turf.

It was hoped that by bringing different industry stakeholders together, a better idea of the situation we face could be understood. I can assure you that the countless conversations I've had with BIGGA members in recent years has confirmed that this is a serious situation.

Each year the golf industry in the UK is worth more than £4 billion to the economy. Nearly four million people play golf regularly and 75,000 are employed within the sport across some 3,000 facilities.

BIGGA exists to serve its members and look after their needs, but we also play an important role in showing leadership to the rest of the golf industry in greenkeeping matters. A lot of golf courses have suffered significant damage by turf pests and their predators. Poor quality turf means unhappy golfers and unhappy golfers play less golf. This can threaten the sizeable numbers outlined above.

In the last couple of years we have supported the emergency authorisation of a pesticide called Acelepryn, which controls chafer grubs and leatherjackets. This authorisation demands a very high level of environmental stewardship in the use of the product and a limited supply has only been granted for golf greens, tees and fairways, racecourses and airfields. It is currently a temporary solution, but in the circumstances we believed that something that benefits turf and alleviates some of the pressure upon greenkeepers was worth lending our weight behind.

Quite rightly the regulatory environment for chemicals gets tighter every year. But weeds, pests and disease have to be managed on golf courses and in all elements of the amenity sector. Products that are available today have to be used judiciously as part of an integrated approach using all the various tools available. On golf courses this means increased cultural practices such as aeration and topdressing, along with the use of biological products. That side of things can be left to the turf manager to look after as he has the expertise and the knowledge of the unique ecosystem of the golf course.

The regulatory environment for chemicals gets tighter every year – which means golf clubs need high quality greenkeepers like never before

This tighter regulatory environment is redefining the control turf managers have over pests and diseases. In the past the products available would provide total control of a specific challenge for a long period of time, years in some cases. This is no longer the case and rather than

being eradicated, problems are now controlled. Additionally, the conditions in which modern solutions have to be applied are much more onerous, meaning greenkeepers need to be better prepared and equipped to do so. In some cases golf clubs will have to understand that perfection is no longer achievable and expectations of golfers will need to be managed.

I would heartily encourage golf club committees and managers to engage with their greenkeepers to discuss these challenges, how they are going to be met and, crucially, how they are communicated to members and visitors.

This situation is undoubtedly challenging for our members as they are almost always perfectionists. However, it is also my opinion that this situation is very good news for the role of the greenkeeper. Our members need a very high level of education and experience to manage today's turf problems with current solutions. Equally, golf clubs need high quality greenkeepers like never before and must give them the resources and the support to carry out their roles with precision. TGB
For more information, visit www.bigga.org.uk

Otterbine

reesinkturfcare.co.uk

Royal Cinque Ports Golf Club has invested in two Otterbine High Volume aerators to improve the water quality of its reservoir and help prevent stagnant smelling water and weed build up.

The club in Deal, Kent has a 13,000m³ reservoir, the water from which is used to irrigate the 18-hole championship links course, but with no aeration to keep the water clean and clear James Bledge, course manager, was noticing a significant deterioration in water quality.

"The water was starting to turn stagnant and was giving off a strong smell, and there was a considerable amount of weed and algae forming on the bottom of the reservoir," he explains.

To solve the worrying problems the club opted to have two Otterbine aerators installed at the same time as a new Toro

irrigation system and a renewal of its Toro fleet, all delivered by distributor Reesink Turfcare.

The club is a Toro Total Solutions club meaning it has a 100 percent Toro fleet as well as a Toro irrigation system, but that didn't mean an automatic order for Otterbine, which is also distributed by Reesink Turfcare.

In fact, the Otterbine aerators were suggested by Robin Hume Associates when designing the new irrigation system. With success at similar clubs in the same application, the irrigation design consultancy was confident Otterbine would help to solve the issues at Royal Cinque Ports, and it seems that judgement was right.

"We're seeing a substantial difference since the installation of the new Otterbine aerators," says James. "The water doesn't smell anymore and we're already seeing an improvement in the water quality."

The Otterbine High Volume aerator adds an impressive 3.3lbs or 1.5kg of oxygen per horse power, every hour and is constructed from marine-grade, 316 stainless steel, thermoplastics and a rugged, energy efficient, low speed motor to withstand even the toughest of aquatic environments.

But it's not just that which has impressed James, the ease of use of the control system has too: "It's been set on a timer, so that way it doesn't disturb any nearby residents and helps us to save on energy."



EcoBunker

ecobunker.co.uk

Working on a course for a Ryder Cup is a great achievement for any golf construction professional. To work on two in the space of a week, though, is pretty remarkable. But that's what EcoBunker site manager Louis Palser did last month.

Louis spent two days at Le Golf National in Paris, supervising EcoBunker's part of the construction of the 2018 Ryder Cup venue's new state-of-the-art practice facility, which is being managed by golf consultant Alejandro Reyes (the former superintendent of Le Golf National). Flying directly from Paris to Rome, Louis moved on to the Marco Simone club, currently under reconstruction at the hands of European Golf Design architect Dave Sampson, in advance of its starring role in the 2022 Ryder Cup. There, for ten days, he worked alongside EcoBunker's top construction specialist Llewellyn Matthews installing EcoBunker's AquaEdge lake edging product on the 16th and 18th holes.

EcoBunker CEO Richard Allen says: "Louis has rapidly become an important part of our growth."

John Deere

JohnDeere.co.uk

Gleneagles in Scotland has celebrated the 100th birthday of its iconic King's and Queen's Courses, with a little help from local John Deere dealer Sandy Armit of Double A.

Designed by James Braid and created using nothing more than manual labour and horse and cart, both courses were officially opened in May 1919 and have an illustrious history.

As part of the special centenary celebrations, Gleneagles staff recreated several historic archive photographs from the 1920s, including an image of a tractor pulling a set of gang mowers on a fairway. This was replicated with a 1941 John Deere Model B tractor, equipped with a set of trailed cylinder gang mowers. The tractor is owned by Sandy Armit and is usually on display at the dealership's headquarters in Cupar, Fife.

Gleneagles signed an exclusive contract with John Deere in 2017 for the supply of golf course maintenance equipment and



related technology to the three championship golf courses at the award winning hotel and golf resort.

John Deere also celebrated its own centenary last year. The Model B tractor that was loaned to Gleneagles is still John Deere's all-time bestselling model, with 300,000 sold from 1935 to 1953.

Kubota

kubota-eu.com

Kubota is establishing 'Innovation Centres' in Japan and Europe as organs for the creation of new business ventures, products and services. Working together with external partners, the centres will advance open innovation for proactive engagement with ICT, AI and other advanced technologies, and accelerate the creation of new business, products, and services.

To date, Kubota has pursued the development of products responsive to the needs of customers mainly through specialised development departments for each of its product lines, such as agricultural machinery and construction machinery, working in partnership with an in-house research and development department in charge of advanced technologies and component technologies. At present Kubota is developing and strengthening its research and development bases



both within Japan and internationally to respond to business globalisation and product line expansion.

At the same time, in order to respond to changing customer needs such as the rising awareness of food safety, environmental conservation and other aspects of social sustainability, the company needs to deliver new forms of value such as 'system solutions' utilising ICT, AI and other advanced technologies, beyond the existing product lines. These technologies are evolving at an increasingly rapid pace, and in order to engage with them in a timely manner it is essential to pursue partnerships (open innovation) with venture businesses, companies in other industries, universities, research institutes and other external partners.

It is for this purpose that Kubota is establishing its new Innovation Centres, which will take the lead in planning and proposing new business activities, products and services that transcend existing boundaries between different product lines, promote open innovation through investment in and joint research with external partners, and seek to create new forms of value that surpass customers' expectations.

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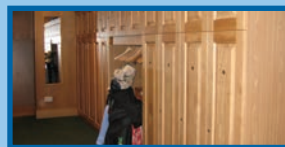


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