FOCUS ON ROTHWELL

... JOHN LELEAN REPORTS ON THE BUILDING OF A NEW 27 HOLE GOLF COURSE FOR THE LEEDS CITY COUNCIL.

The City of Leeds, has sixteen golf courses, including five run by the municipal authority. By next year this will increase to seventeen when the new public course at Rothwell is due to open, initially as eighteen holes and later with another loop of nine.

Moortown and Alwoodley, designed by Dr. Allister Mackenzie with Harry Colt are listed in the top fifty for the British Isles. Moor Allerton, Robert Trent Jones's first intended to convert the Hall regarded as a classic nevertheless is a redoubtable test of golf. Now the Leeds Council are aiming to produce a course of championship standard on the rolling parkland at Oulton Hall, seven miles south of the city centre.

The demand for more golf courses can be seen by the enthusiasm displayed by golfers wanting to play the municipal tracts. Teeing off by the light of car headlights is a common feature at weekends by those using the two courses at Temple Newsam. At Middleton and Cotts Park, nearby cafes open at 5.00 a.m. to provide refreshment, to those fanatics waiting for the pro's shop to open, to book a tee off time.

The private clubs all have full membership lists and at Wetherby where residential development is mushrooming, the pressure is so great even those waiting Monday to Friday golf will be waiting many years before consideration for entry is possible.

Oulton Hall is a listed building, built by Sydney Smirke in the early 19th century. Unfortunately by the time Leeds MDC was able to acquire it, vandalism and the passage of time had brought the building to a dilapidated state. A planning brief for the Hall had been approved, and it was intended to convert the Hall into a hotel and conference centre with associated facilities for golfers.

Such is the state of our society mindless destruction could well have put this superb house beyond the state of repair. For many years the grounds have been used informally by local residents and the pond in particular has attracted interest from coarse anglers.

The feasibility of developing an 18 hole golf course on the Oulton Estate was investigated in 1972 but difficulties with land ownership, tenancies, underground coal mining, and finance, hindered progress. Furthermore it was recognised that acquisition of the Hall grounds was essential to allow development for an 18 hole golf course. The grounds were acquired last year and coupled with a modified financial climate the readily available MSC labour, provided the impetus for development to start.

As well as developing 18 and 9 hole golf courses a 16 bay driving range was proposed and farm buildings picked out for conversion into a maintenance depot and irrigation control point. The possibility of a green-keeper's cottage. Clubhouse facilities will be sited in the Victorian stable block.

Leeds wanted to be sure that the golf course, would attract a range of golfers from beginners to professionals. With this in mind Dave Thomas Ltd., were engaged in the spring of 1985 to provide the overall design input and occasional site inspection. The day to day design and management of the project, however, has been taken in the direction of the authority's own Chief Landscape Architect, Mr. John Morgan, who has drawn together expertise from various sources.

Forestry advice was provided by the City Forester, ecological advice has come from the Yorkshire Ecological Information and advisory service. Turfgrass matters were overseen by the experienced parks staff. Water and fishery matters were dealt with via the help of the Yorkshire Water Authority, only irrigation design is being sub-contracted to a specialist company.

On the implementation side, the scheme is unusual in that the works have been by a balanced combination of MSC labour, Parks, Landscape and some contract labour.

Construction commenced in the spring of 1985 when an MSC team started preliminary works on site, including fencing and clearing out existing ditches and drainage works. At this time the condition of the existing woodlands was assessed by the City's forester.

During early 1985 Dave Thomas, in conjunction with the authority, provided the sketch layout for an 18 hole course. A detailed planning application based on this plan was submitted, and approved. Subsequently the consultant provided green and typical tee drawings, and a general specification.
When formation levels were achieved, trenches were dug to accommodate herringbone land drainage, using wavencoil pipes, 80mm diameter for mains, and 60mm diameter for laterals, all wrapped in 'Terram' and covered with 37mm diameter clean hard stone. 'Terram' sheets were then laid over the formation base and the land drains, and then a further 100mm of stone carpet was then laid. This was then blinded by sharp sand at 2500kg per m³.

In the majority of cases the sand was deep enough to allow for 100 to 120mm of sand and peat to be applied. Deep trenches were excavated to the required depth and the sand and peat was spread, compacted and levelled to the required levels. The sand was then spread over the areas and depths could be achieved by damp sand and topsoil prior to seeding operations. Some of the more compacted areas were subsoil ploughed at approximately 1 metre centres in two directions.

The sand was then smoothed and compacted in layers to produce a seed bed. A 2500kg per m³ spread was used on the main areas and layers of 1 metre were compacted by hand to give a final bed of around 200mm thick.

The sand used is uniformly graded sand, free from silt and clay, less than 6.8.

The topsoil went straight back onto an adjacent area that had been regraded. Profiles were eroded to achieve proposed subsoil levels.

After the subsoil had been graded a 150mm layer of topsoil was spread over the areas and prior to the seeding operations some of the more compacted areas were subsoil ploughed at approximately 1 metre centres in two directions.

The seeding operations on the fairways and around the greens involved breaking up any hard pans by ploughing, disc harrowing, duct harrowing, seeding, chain harrowing and cambridge rolling, followed by stone picking as necessary.

Bunkers were excavated to a depth of approximately 500mm by using both the JCB and the 951. First the JCB marked out the area and generally shaped the bunkers, and then the 951 tracked and married the bunkers into the surrounding ground. The bunkers were constructed to allow for 100 to 140mm of bunker sand on top of a lateral connection to the land drainage system or a soakaway at some distance.

When the fairways and surrounding areas of the greens had been soiled the bunkers were soiled and seeded to the bottom of the inside banks. This was so that the actual shape and size of the bunker could be marked and cut out nearer the time of the opening of the course. This allows a lip of at least 180mm thickness to be left to act as a retaining structure to prevent loss of sand by erosion. When in place, the bunker sand comes up to within 50mm of the top of the lip. An interesting feature of the course involved the creation of two small lakes, a meandering stream, and the dredging of three existing ponds, one of which was in use by anglers. Great care was taken to safeguard the ecology of the ponds. However, in order that the largest pond could be kept to a lip of at least 180mm thickness and to act as a retaining structure to prevent loss of sand by erosion. When in place, the bunker sand comes up to within 50mm of the top of the lip.

The shrubs to be used as an understorey and fringe planting amongst the groups and also in the existing woodlands where appropriate, and will include:

- Hazel
- American Elder
- Hawthorn
- Guelder Rose
- Snowberry

Equipment used for Construction:

- Caterpillar D8 and Scraper Box - Topsoil strip, regrading sub layer
- Caterpillar D8 and Ripper - Relieving compaction
- Caterpillar 951C with 4 in 1 bucket - Final grading and formation works
- JCB 4 x 4 Turbo Extradig - Digging drain trenches, initial work to bunker, etc.
- 915 International Harvester with 4 in 1 bucket - Final grading and formation works
- Caterpillar D5 LGP Bulldozer - Cleaning out lakes
- Moxy D16B Dumpertruck - Cleaning out lakes, formation of new lakes
- 1390 David Brown Agricultural Tractors and attachments including sub soiler, plough, disc, dutch and chain harrows and Cambridge Roller - Working up prior to seeding Preparation and seeding works
- Caterpillar 215B - Placing sand and peat on greens
- Dumpers, Rollers, etc. - Miscellaneous site works

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dredged, it was necessary to move the fish, and this was done by electro-netting them and transporting them to a new pond higher up the stream. This work was carried out by the Yorkshire Water Authority's river division staff, and a grant has since been received from YWA for the re-stocking.

Using a 6" Univac pump, remaining water was pumped from the pond so that dredging works could commence. A problem arose, however, with the limited access around the pond and progress with the 22RB + excavator type bucket and the low ground pressure Caterpillar D5 (used to push the slurry out into surrounding pastureland) was slow. After a week, it was decided to remove the middle section of the dragline boom and change to a grab bucket. With the low ground pressure Caterpillar pushing the slurry further afield satisfactory progress was made. In this way it took about four weeks to complete the dredging to this pond and two and a half to clear the two other smaller ponds.

In line with the City Foresters recommendations, a management programme of selective thinning, surgery and replanting began in late 1985. A great number of the trees felled were cut up on site, using a diesel powered saw generator and re-used for the timber protective fencing on the perimeter of the new forestry plantations. The majority of the brash and waste timber was either burnt on site by the MSC team or removed to the woodburning boiler at the City's horticultural nursery. The remaining brash and timber was left within the woodland areas to encourage wildlife and flora habitats to develop.

As part of the development it was agreed to plant more than thirty acres of plantations, phased over 3 years, in accordance with a Forestry Commission grant approval. There was also the need for some ornamental tree planting as part of creating the course itself.

The species planted are indigenous in order to be compatible with the surrounding vegetation and the soil conditions. The tree areas alongside the fairways and surrounding the greens will be mainly broadleaves, with shrub understorey and places, and sizes ranges from transplants to standards with the emphasis on feathered whips. Protection against vermin involves fencing to large blocks and rabbit collars to individual trees.

The layout incorporates a number of interesting features. These include: several greens and tees cut into existing woodland; a meandering stream with a timber ha-ha across one of the ponds. As part of the development it was agreed to plant more than thirty acres of plantations, phased over 4 years, in accordance with a Forestry Commission grant approval. There was also the need for some ornamental tree planting as part of creating the course itself.

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CONCLUSION:
This article illustrates the way, in difficult economic times, how construction of a golf course can become financially feasible when the approach is toward a linked Community Programme and a Local Authority Scheme with further support from Forestry Commission and Fisheries grants.

To work on such a major recreational scheme is a real training opportunity for those seeking employment through MSC.

Lastly, the method of working illustrates how a local authority can maximise the use of its own resources and use specialist consultants and contractors in a most cost-effective way.

The Editor is most grateful to John Morgan, The Chief Landscape Architect to Leeds City Council who has tackled this enterprising project with a great deal of enthusiasm, and injected a similar feeling among those working with him.

The information contained in this article has been obtained from a paper prepared by John Morgan for a forthcoming presentation.
New 50m Golf Complex for Northampton

1976 Open Champion Johnny Miller is to design his first 'own name' golf course at Northampton. Miller made a come back this year, winning the A.T.&T. at Pebble Beach, his first tour victory since 1983.

Work on a £50 million golf complex in central England designed by Open Champion Johnny Miller, based on the concept of combining health and leisure facilities on one integrated site has started outside Northampton. It will be the first development of its kind in Britain.

Collingtree Park is the first integrated complex to be built by Health and Leisure International in Britain and is based on the concept of setting top quality executive homes into the beautifully controlled landscaped environment of a championship golf course similar in many ways to both Wentworth and St. George's Hill.

The Company intend to go several stages further by incorporating onto the golf course, Britain's first purpose-designed golfing academy to teach golf to people of all ages and abilities. This will be complemented by further leisure and health facilities designed to give tuition in many other sports. This concept is aimed particularly at senior business executives and professional people and includes a sports injury clinic capable of providing full rehabilitation and sports injury and sports rehabilitation.

A partner company International Resort Holdings, a golf development consultancy, represents Jack Nicklaus Golf Services in Europe and was the development consultancy involved in the St. Mellion golf course in Cornwall. Shanning Group the other partner is an international healthcare organisation based at Berkhamsted in Hertfordshire. It has been responsible for hospitals, clinics and nursing homes around the world.

Finance for the Collingtree Park project is being provided by Golforce Inc. for the technical design aspects. The course has been specially designed so that the driving tees lead away from the houses making gardens safe from stray or sliced golf balls. Outlying houses will also be protected by the design of the course.

The club house will include dining rooms, bars and rooms for private functions and provide a personal service which will take care of golfers' needs from the moment they step out of their car until they leave the club.

The academy facilities will include three practice holes of golf - a par 3, a par 4 and a par 5 not provided anywhere else in Europe. There will be the more usual facilities of a double edged driving range, chipping bunkers, practice greens and putting green.

The specially designed academy will run residential and non-residential courses for complete beginners through to advanced players in both golf and later tennis. A sports hall with squash, indoor tennis, cricket and bowls is scheduled for the latter development stages.

The 185 exclusive 4 to 5 bedroom detached homes will stand in a third of an acre looking on to the golf course. Contracts for building some of the homes have already been agreed with Bovis and Wimpey. It is expected that they will be completed and ready for occupation by 1991.

Negotiations are at an advanced stage for the four-star hotel which will have 150 bedrooms and aimed at both the strong mid week commercial corporate market and the weekend resort guest.

The health centre will be one of the most advanced in the world for dealing with stress among executives, treating sports injuries and sports rehabilitation.

A 18-hole golf championship course covering 150 acres will be one of the most spectacular in Europe. It is the second in Britain to be designed to full USPGA specifications - the first being at St. Mellion golf course in Cornwall. Extensive drainage and irrigation will guarantee superb golf play throughout the year.

The academy facilities will include a forward health sports teaching academy and health centre as well as a 60-bed nursing home.

Collingtree Park was chosen as the site for HLI's first golf complex because of its geographical position at the crossroads of central England and the access to it by motorway. It is within easy reach for executives and professional people to drive to for a day's golf from the Midlands and Home Counties. Watford and the outskirts of Greater London are only an hour or so's drive away. Access is a few minutes off Junction 15 of the M1 just three miles from the centre of Northampton.

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The course is the first to be designed by Johnny Miller under his own name. Johnny will be responsible for the golf course strategy and has the back-up of Golforce Inc. for the technical

Mr. Graham Fisher, Chairman of Health and Leisure International said: "Collingtree Park will put Northampton on to the world's golfing map. Collingtree Park has been chosen as the site for HLI's first golf complex because of its geographic position at the crossroads of central England and the access to it by motorway and rail."