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Building our future

A profile of the British Association of Golf Course Constructors by its general secretary Howard Swan.

In recognising the need for an uplifting of standards in golf-course construction generally, 1981 saw a few of the more prominent and competent contractors discussing and eventually formulating the aims and objectives upon which the BAGCC was founded. The fundamental objective was to improve standards through representation of member companies and the dissemination of knowledge and information to and from the various parts of inter-related industries.

Initially, members strove to improve by informal education and in early 1982 the first BAGCC education session was held, with 35 delegates at the Lancashire College of Agriculture and Horticulture at Preston. This event laid the fundamentals that were followed by many in the field. The second education session at Writtle College in 1983 was equally successful and the BAGCC began to expand its role in this sector.

The association now has six full members, some of which specialise intensively in golf-course construction. Others rely on the construction and similar activities in other turfgrass areas to supplement golf-course work. In addition to the full members, details of which are set out here, the association also has 12 associate members representing suppliers, irrigation companies and other specialists having a direct bearing on golf-course construction. The BAGCC is represented on the National Turfgrass Council and, through its sitting member, has organised a number of day seminars on sand-based constructions and may become involved in the production of an NTC book on a directory of sands for use in golf and other turfgrass areas.

Members of the association meet at quarterly intervals to discuss policy and programme and are looking to consolidate the existing membership during 1985. Close liaison is kept with other golf associations and in particular with members of the British Association of Golf Course Architects, with whom many BAGCC members work. Joint discussions were held during 1984 with a view to producing a contract document for golf-course construction designed specifically by the two associations for that usage. It is anticipated that, during 1985, such a document will be produced.

The future will see the British Association of Golf Course Constructors working actively through its membership to increase awareness of constructional activity and the need for thoroughness, professionalism and quality in that work to maintain its coveted position of being responsible for the vast majority of United Kingdom golf-course construction.


A structure for the association was agreed and these secretarial posts confirmed: J.Cheeseman—membership, R.Blyth—publicity, B.Pierson—meetings, H.Swan—general secretary, T.Banks—treasurer.

Eccles Contracting—based at Hyde in Cheshire and also Scunthorpe, Humberside—started life as the Lincolshire Spraying and Contracting Company in 1929. It became Eccles Contracting in 1948, taking its name from the founder J.G. Eccles. Upon his retirement, the group of companies was taken over by Faber Prest Holdings of Rotherham, South Yorkshire.

From its original agricultural contracting base, the company moved into civil engineering and has latterly diversified into land reclamation, landscaping and recreational surfacing, which embraces playing fields, athletics tracks, synthetic surfaces and golf courses.

In 1984, Eccles Contracting contributed a turnover of £8.1m to the £38m of Faber Prest Holdings. The company's work is generated mainly from local authorities in the north and Midlands on selective tendering lists. However, if a contract involves a specialised surface, such as a golf course, the company works beyond its usual regional limits. In fact, work has been carried out as far afield as Saudi Arabia.

Eccles Contracting is fully equipped and staffed professionally and can prepare projects from initial survey to completion, although occasionally building works have been carried out as part of a wider scheme.

Clients also include landscape architects, private clubs and golf-course architects. Eccles Contracting is a full member of the British Association of Golf Course Constructors, the British Association of Landscape Contractors and the Federation of Civil Engineering Contractors. Eccles Contracting and Faber Prest Holdings both stage annual golf tournaments at Lindrick.

Contact: Eccles Contracting, Brickfield Street, Hadfield, Hyde, Cheshire. 0457 436425. The company is also at Eccles House, East Common Lane, Scunthorpe DN16 1FS. 0724 865861.

Golf Landscapes has been responsible for over 70 constructional projects throughout Europe. The company has a reputation for high-quality workmanship and efficiency of construction. Its personnel, from director through resident site supervisor to plant operator, are highly qualified and experienced in the technical, managerial and site organisational aspects of modern construction.
golf-course construction.

Golf Landscapes can offer a wide range of services ranging from feasibility studies on new sites, consultancy on golf course provision and construction and fee-based construction management. Design and specification proposals are based upon proven methods thoroughly tested and analysed in the laboratory and in the field. The company works closely with the country's leading schools of agronomy and is able to draw upon the services of the most prominent golf-course architects to provide a design and build approach to a new course.

A significant proportion of the specialist golf-course construction work undertaken by Golf Landscapes is at existing golf clubs and comprises renovation and reconstruction work to greens and tees and extensions and rearrangements of current layouts. Many golf greens are unable to withstand the heavy usage to which they are subjected and, despite rigorous maintenance and surface treatment procedures, do not perform adequately. When that point is reached, reconstruction may be the only answer.

Golf Landscapes is in a position to advise on, specify and carry out such works to the highest standard. The replacement of the foundation and rootzone of existing greens is not expensive when carried out to traditional methods and specifications. Certain cost savings may be effected by the utilisation of the PM green® construction technique, which incorporates a sand rooting medium over an intensively drained base. Such a method is economical, reducing overall costs by up to 30 per cent over traditional methods.

While best known for specialist golf-course construction work, the company has a full range of turf drainage and ancillary equipment, together with trained and experienced operators. Accordingly, Golf Landscapes is able to undertake drainage works of all kinds on existing golf courses, to greens, tees and fairway areas, ditching, etc.

The company's appointment as area distributor for TORO irrigation equipment in 1982 extended Golf Landscapes' ability to undertake a broader approach to golf course, sportsground and landscape construction. Golf Landscapes is a founder member of the British Association of Golf Course Constructors, a member of the British Turf Irrigation Association and an international member of the Golf Course Builders of America.

Contact: Golf Landscapes,
Ashwells Road, Bentley, Brentwood, Essex CM15 9SR. 0277 73720.

Brian D. Pierson (Contractors) has recently completed its 50th golf course contract, including major alterations on four Open Championship courses, together with many other famous courses. The company has just finished work on a new nine-hole course at Radley College, major alterations to Alresford Golf Course (precipitated by a new by-pass) and has virtually completed a new 18-hole course at Redditch.

A significant part of the company's work has been the renovation of existing courses, where defunct bunkers present only a maintenance cost without relevance to modern play. Many courses have a variety of small tees, which again present high maintenance costs for relatively few teeing positions and the introduction of large teeing areas is increasingly important.

Drainage is a recurring problem on many courses and it is essential that this work is carried out by experienced contractors. All too often, well-meaning agricultural contractors, while fully conversant with the principles of drainage, fail to realise the importance of preserving the fine turf and damage to soil structure caused by heavy plant.

The company is now diversifying into specialist maintenance in an effort to provide a continuity of service. It now has available for hire the full Cushman range and has recently added the Cambridge Soil Vibrator and the successful Vertical Drain, which has been put to use on over 30 courses since its purchase last year.

Brian D. Pierson is becoming increasingly involved in overseas contracts and it is hoped that work will
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commence on a new golf course in Tenerife this year, with possible follow-ups on the Costa del Sol and in Portugal.

A new facet of activity has been golf-course construction at Letham Grange in Arbroath and Bashley Park Leisure Centre at New Milton, where the company has provided construction expertise, programming and site management utilising the machinery and skills of the client's own staff.

The company was originally formed to specialise in golf-course construction and, while it has enjoyed eight successful years, the landscaping and sportsground section has developed to such an extent that six fully mobile landscaping units are operated throughout the south and there have been significant inroads into the local landscaping and sportsground construction market.

Brian D.Pierson (Contractors) looks forward to the future with great confidence and the ability to meet the demands of the ever-increasing leisure market. The company is a founder member of the British Association of Golf Course Constructors, the British Association of Landscape Industries and an international member of the Golf Course Builders of America.

Contact: Brian D.Pierson, 27 Vicarage Road, Verwood, Wimborne, Dorset BH21 6DR. 0 0202 82372/824906.
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R & A Supports Turf Research For Golf

The Royal & Ancient Golf Club of St Andrews has agreed with The Sports Turf Research Institute to provide £80,000 spread over four years to finance a programme of research into some of the most urgent problems affecting golf courses. The project will be in three parts.

1. A research investigation into the construction of pure sand golf greens. This work will involve looking into the construction and maintenance problems associated with the use of 100 per cent sand constructions. Fertilisation of golf greens is a controversial subject, with many people applying excessive amounts of phosphate in the mistaken view of its beneficial effects. On sands, or soils with a high sand content, the problem of fertilisation becomes more acute because of the inherent nutrient deficiency of sands. To fully evaluate the effects of fertilisers on sand greens, a large experiment will be set up at Bingley. The study will include measurements on aspects of playing quality, changes in botanical composition, including annual meadowgrass invasion, and thatch development over a number of years.

2. In conjunction with the University of Aston, Birmingham, a research student will study the properties of golf turf and relate this to the playing qualities of golf greens. The project will involve studying the characteristics of golf green turf in relation to the roll of golf balls and ball bounce and spin properties.

3. A new research project will investigate fairy rings, including superficial fairy rings (thatch fungi), about which little is known. Particular emphasis will be placed on the control of these fungi and a range of chemicals will be evaluated for this purpose.

It was due to the efforts of the R & A Golf Club in the 1920s that the Board of Greenkeeping Research (as forerunner to the STRI) came into being 56 years ago.

Business As Usual For Jacobsen & Co

Much speculation has arisen regarding the future of the Jacobsen Bunton and Ryan brand names in the UK following the announcement by Lindsay Marshall of UK importers Marshall Concessionaires that, due to the adverse dollar/pound exchange rate, the company was to cease acting as the main importer.

Walter Kuhnen, managing director of Orag International, the main European distributor based in Switzerland, confirmed to Greenkeeper that a new UK importer is being sought after talks with Charterhouse Turf Machinery failed to fructify.

However, Mr Kuhnen added that a 'caretaker' agreement has been reached with Marshalls to continue as main UK agents at least until the IOG exhibition at Windsor in September, when it is hoped to announce new arrangements for the UK under the Orag umbrella. Customers need not be concerned about the availability of spares or new machines, Mr Kuhnen concluded.

Paul Goes It Alone

Until recently head greenkeeper at Dale Hill Golf Club, Paul Wright has set himself up in business as Aeration & Drainage Services. Paul has purchased a Verti-Drain from his former club, where he first recognised its contribution towards easing compaction.

Dale Hill acquired the Verti-Drain last June and soon took on the aeration of other golf courses — now Paul is to continue the good work.

His machine is mounted on a tractor with a hydrostatic gearbox, which gives the variable forward speed essential for a satisfactory performance from the Verti-Drain.

With a background as a greenkeeper at several clubs, Paul feels he is well-qualified to assist others with the valuable aeration operation.

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