The narrow fairways, severe rough and high scores brought about a renameing of the course in some newspapers to “Carnoustie” last time around and took away from the great work John and his team had done on the areas he describes “as the areas the players were supposed to be playing from”.

This time round John has already had to face the media again as they looked back at the last Open and quizzed him on his preparations. He handled himself well when faced with a barrage of questions and took the wind from the sails of one journalist who, hoping to highlight John’s lack of knowledge of the game, asked if he played golf and, if so, of what handicap? John was able to say that, while he doesn’t play so much now, he did once play off 1.

I was lucky enough to catch up with him a few weeks later to talk about the preparations in a more detailed and measured manner and can honestly say that a couple of hours in John’s company is as refreshing as it is exhausting. I came away with my head buzzing full of the ideas and philosophies of a man whose passion and knowledge for turf management. It’s a genuine privilege to spend time in his company.

This time around the rough won’t be as penal – the weather conditions over the last 12 months or so have seen to that while the fairways are a little wider so hopefully more players will appreciate the work that has gone into giving those who play golf as it should be played – finding the short grass from the tee then the green – every chance to control their golf ball.

Those of us who were at Carnoustie in ’90, and had the unforgettable experience of cheering home a home grown winner in Paul Lawrie from the side of the 18th green, would have been staggered to learn that between then and our return to the Angus town there would have been no British winner, not to mention European winner.

It’s with great sadness that a true friend to greenkeepers all over the West Country passed away suddenly on Monday, May 14, 2007.

First and foremost Don was a family man who loved his wife and daughters and later on his grandchildren. West Country greenkeepers and groundsman both young and old were an extension of Don’s family, he always had time to have a chat and always asked about the family before turning to the topical sports story of the day.

Don lived life to the full with his positive attitude that rubbed off on everyone he met, he would always see the good points in people and encourage them with his positive manner.

During recent times Don has been working for Roffeys as their representative in the Devon & Cornwall area, he was also the Section’s events organiser for Devan and Cornwall where he continued to drive the Section forward.

I’m sure Don would like us to remember him with a smile, many of you will have your own memories of gentleman Don; my most fondest memory has to be Don taking an order for materials on the back of a cigarette packet and losing it before he could place the order back at his desk.

The awards ceremony was hosted by former Olympic athlete Colin Jackson CBE who also presented the prizes. Speaking on behalf of A setup, Matt MacKallin said “The commendation means a lot to us. As a result of taking on Apprentices, we have invested in the development of young people and now have a quality, enthusiastic confident, qualified staff and increased staff retention. We aim to take on more Apprentices in the future.”

The alterations ended approximately 30 years of the Carnoustie Links Superintendent John Philip and his team gear up for another Open Championship this month.

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The man regarded as ‘Europe’s first golf superstar’ is also in discussion with golf course developers in the Middle East, continental Europe and the Caribbean – all of which follow his recent collaboration with Jack Nicklaus on the vaunted new ‘The Concession’ course in Florida, USA.

Tony, aged 62, has made a conscious decision to concentrate on golf course design, and is looking forward to taking a unique, hands-on approach with his projects – which will bear all the hallmarks of The Open and US Open champion.

He said: “I have decided only to take on a limited number of design contracts at any one time, as this gives me the opportunity to get personally and deeply involved in each of the projects. “I hope that my signature design courses will be legacy in Europe, where I have learned the game, made many friends and enjoyed many of my finest moments in the sport.”

By becoming personally involved in each project – from the very first preliminary design meetings, right through to the official opening – Tony hopes to forge an enduring link with the golfing community. And he is determined that each and every one of his Tony Jacklin Signature designed golf courses will be a very special place for golfers to learn the game, play and most of all enjoy their golf.
Let's hope so, just as we hope John Philp and his team have a contender. But the beauty of golf is that you never know and a new hero is likely to burst from the dark shadows at any time.

That run will come to an end sometime but, if truth be told, there is no-one exactly holding up their hand and declaring themselves a contender. But the beauty of golf is that you never know and a new hero is likely to burst from the dark shadows at any time.

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Richard Whyman, BIGGA Past Chairman

GENTLEMAN DON: 1938 - 2007

It’s with great sadness that a true friend to greenkeepers all over the World passed away suddenly on Monday, May 14, 2007.

I first met Don when I was a young lad starting on my career path at Saunton GC in North Devon. Don at the time had his own Company based at Bovey Tracey in Devon making and selling topdressing across the South West, his Company also sold fertilisers and course sundries.

Don was a true gentleman and always so willing to help and guide those starting out in the business.

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SUPPORT TEAM FOR BRITISH MASTERS

The Belfry have kindly offered BIGGA five places on their Support Team at the 2007 Quinn Britannish Masters, to be staged at the Belfry from September 20 to 23, 2007.

The five BIGGA Support Team members will work alongside the main crew led by Superintendent Kenny Mackay. Kenny is looking for greenkeepers that are competent machine operators, as the work of the support team will consist of mowing of all cut areas of the golf course along with bunker maintenance. Also a valid driving licence would be of benefit. All members of the Support Team will need to arrive on September 16th and stay until the 23rd. Free accommodation, food and soft drinks will be given to all Support Team members during their stay.

All applications to be made to Kenny Mackay, Director of Golf Course & Grounds. Tel: 01675 470301 or email: kenny.mackay@thebelfry.com

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STUDENT RETURNS AS TEACHER

George Pitts at the Cannington Golf Course

George Pitts, a former top golf course management student at Cannington (Somerset), has recently returned to Bridgwater College’s Cannington Centre for Land-based Studies to inspire future generations of students, as the new Programme Manager for Sports Turf and Greenkeeping.

George studied at Cannington between 1997-2000 for an HND in Golf Course Management, for which he received a Distinction – and awarded the Top Student prize, the BIGGA South West Cup, for his Dissertation. He has been involved in the golf industry for 12 years, working at various golf courses including: St Mellion International – Cornwall; Palazzo Arzaga Club – North Italy; Sherfield Oaks – Hampshire; Bovey Castle – Devon.

George said: “I’m very passionate about the golf industry and the quality of our courses in particular. I’ve enjoyed training employees and seen the benefits it can achieve not only to the sports surfaces but also to a persons self-esteem and confidence. I’ve made many contacts and many close friends in the Greenkeeping industry.”

“At Bridgwater College’s Cannington Centre, where we have a 9 hole, 18 tee links-like golf course, I’m very proud and excited to be working at Bushey Hall. I’m very ambitious for the course; my goal is to make the course the best it has ever been and to be one of the best in Hertfordshire. In 1-2 years I would love the course to be ready to host tournaments for adults and juniors at amateur and professional levels.”

NEW EIGCA PRESIDENT

Scottish course designer Ken Moodie has been elected President of the European Institute of Golf Course Architects (EIGCA), succeeding Mark Adam, who has held the position for the last three years. David Krause has taken over as Vice-President. Moodie said: “During my presidency, I’m especially keen to work on strengthening our relationships with the other professional bodies in the field, such as the American Society of Golf Course Architects (ASGCA) and the Society of Australian Golf Course Architects (SAGCA). We are planning a joint world summit on golf course architecture in 2010, which will be a great opportunity to share our thoughts on the global development of the profession and the game of golf.”

Education is a key part of EIGCA’s remit, and Moodie is committed to strengthening the Institute’s training programmes. “Our diploma course is continuing to grow, but we must keep improving it,” he said. “We also plan to expand the areas of research we already support and carry out, including – learning more about the impact of club technology on course design – so that our members are better placed to design golf courses that will be playable long into the future.”

Seven EIGCA members form the Council – the President, Ken Moodie, and six members, each of whom have responsibility for chairing a committee, as follows: David Krause, PR & Promotion; Thomas Himmet, Professional Development; Rainer Preissmann, Membership; Howard Swan, Education Board; Peter Flaiman, Finance; and Mike Wood, Environment.

ARCHITECTS EXPERIENCE GOLF THE OLD WAY

The men and women behind some of the newest golf courses in the world recently tried golf the way it was played a century ago. Members of the European Institute of Golf Course Architects (EIGCA) – who were gathered in Portmarnock, Ireland, for their annual general meeting – took the opportunity to play several holes of the Portmarnock Links golf course, built in the 1990s by architect Stan Eby and signature designer Bernhard Langer, using hickory-shafted clubs from the 1920s and earlier and reproduction vintage golf balls.

Gavin Bottrell of Timewarp Golf provided the hickory clubs. “I think the EIGCA members found it an interesting experience,” he said. “Different players react in different ways to vintage clubs – some find them very stiff, to others they are very whippy. I believe this is because all of these clubs were tailor-made for individual golfers. But I do try to match the clubs to the ability of each player.”

Bottrell reckons playing extensively with hickory clubs has helped him realise that, although the best golfers could hit the ball considerable distance with old equipment, the lack of forgiveness the clubs provide is the biggest difference. “Better players play well with hickories – they have seen professionals break par on difficult courses using them,” he said.

EIGCA member Tom Mackenzie echoes Bottrell’s view. For Mackenzie, the day after he won the Institute’s President’s Cup golf tournament, it was his first experience of vintage equipment, although he felt having grown up before the era of big-headed drivers and forgiving irons gave him some insight as to how the clubs would feel.” I really enjoyed playing with the hickories, but you have to swing the clubs completely differently,” he said. “You can’t be so eager to get at the ball. For some of the young guys who play the modern game of just swinging as hard as possible then it was a much bigger culture shock.”

“I typically carry the ball between 185-190 yards with a hickory driver,” said Gavin Bottrell. “But the ball flies much lower, and when the ground is firm – as it was at Portmarnock – then the extra roll you get means a good shot can travel quite a long way.” Mackenzie agrees, but is quick to point out the other side of the coin. “Poor shots go absolutely nowhere!” he said.

BOARDROOM CHANGES

Siiss Equipment (Macclesfield) Ltd have appointed two new directors, Derek Cronshaw will become Financial Director, having previously been Company Secretary. Derek has worked at Siiss for 38 years, in Accounts and Purchasing.

David Harrison was Expert Sales Manager and becomes Sales Director with overall responsibility for all Siiss sales. David joined Siiss from college, working in Design & Development and as a Demonstrator, so has much experience to bring to his new role.

Roger Hargreaves becomes Chairman with brother William Hargreaves now sole Managing Director.
We will also be offering a new NVQ Level 3 in as industry specific as we can.

Neil’s impressive international career includes five years working at Murfield in Scotland – one of the world’s most prestigious courses. Murfield has hosted the Ryder Cup and many Open Championships. Neil was part of an eight-man team responsible for bringing the course to such a high standard that it could hold major tournaments at any time of year.

Neil has also worked as Greenkeeper and Superintendent on courses in Moscow, Russia and as far away as Trinidad and Tobago in the West Indies at Tobago Plantations Beach & Golf Resort. It was here that Neil was responsible for the overall management of 72 staff. During this time Tobago Plantations hosted the European PGA Seniors Classic Tours 2000 – 2005. This event was televised worldwide and the course was widely acknowledged as a first class championship golf course.

When asked about Bushey Hall Golf Club, Neil responded: “I initially visited Bushey Hall as a consultant. I was immediately impressed by its beauty and the extremely friendly atmosphere both on the course and in the clubhouse. I’m very proud and excited to be working at Bushey Hall. I’m very ambitious for the course; my goal is to make the course the best it has ever been and to be one of the best in Hertfordshire. In 1–2 years I would love the course to be ready to host tournaments for adults and juniors at amateur and professional levels. Neil added, “my message to anyone in Hertfordshire interested in joining a golf club would be, come and join Bushey Hall Golf Club and be part of the English golfing paradise that’s about to happen – watch the old become new.”

One of Hertfordshire’s golfing gems, Bushey Hall GC, has just appointed Neil Flegel as the new Course Superintendent to take the course to new levels of excellence. Neil (37) who hails from the home of golf, East Lothian in Scotland, brings to Bushey Hall 17 years of world-class expertise.

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Manager, Duchy College), Steve Harris (Course Manager), Paul Adams (Personnel Manager), Andrew Barnett, Stuart Entwistle, Ali Grant, Dave Chammings, and Cornwall Section of BIGGA. The greenkeeping sector has, for the greenkeeping sector within Devon and Cornwall, committed to such training. The Manor House & Ashbury hotels are a privately owned, family business specialising in Sports, Craft and Golf holidays. The company employs 300 members of staff and the company has worked hard to ensure that every one of their team members has access to training.

The Manor House & Ashbury hotels based in Oxfordhampton won the Large Employer of the Year Award; judges were looking for employers that could clearly show the benefits they had gained from a commitment to training their workforce through apprenticeships.

The achievement of this award is a major one for the Manor House & Ashbury hotel and for the greenkeeping sector within Devon and Cornwall. The greenkeeping sector has, over a number of years, raised the standard of vocational training through national initiatives led by the British and International Golf and Greenkeepers Association (BIGGA), and through the Greenkeeping Training Committee (GTC). Clubs and heat greenkeepers throughout Devon and Cornwall have committed to such training. In our department is without doubt the best way to help our greenkeepers improve their understanding, knowledge and enjoyment of their job.”

"If we look at our greenkeeping department, we have 40 staff members working in this important area, some have already achieved their NVQs, 16 have just achieved specialist NVQs and we have nine ready to start their qualification. There has been a measurable improvement in the standard of work being undertaken and we have worked closely with Duchy College to achieve this.” He went on to say, “We hope to follow these training methods by putting two of our head greenkeepers through the A1 Assessors course.”

Duchy College and Manor House & Ashbury hotels worked together in a unique way to achieve the greenkeeping qualifications for a significant number of employees. The training and instruction were delivered by Pete Gross (Deputy Course Manager). This took place totally in the work place, with no college attendance by the candidates, a very unusual system for when a college and a club work together. The college were represented by Bill Pile (retired Head Greenkeeper and life BIGGA Member) who supported Pete in the delivery and assessment process through weekly visits to the workplace. Bill Pile said, “It was very hard work over a concentrated period of time but I was pleased to be able to use my experience to help the individual candidates, Pete Gross and Manor House and Ashbury hotel to raise their greenkeeping standards.”

Steve Evans (Devon and Cornwall BIGGA Section Chairman) said, “This is fantastic news for Manor House and Ashbury hotels and a tremendous example to Golf Clubs in Devon and Cornwall. Duchy College are repaying our support for them in this region as this is the second significant award they have achieved for our industry in the last six months. In January Michael Wannell (Greenkeeper at Bovey Castle) achieved The South West Student of the Year Award from the Institute of Groundsmanship. Well done to all”.

TRAINING PROGRAMME

John Deere and Brooksbury Melton College have launched the industry’s first specialist training programme for aspiring parts apprentices.

The new Parts Tech programme will be run on similar lines to the award winning John Deere Ag Tech and Turf Tech apprentice engineering technician programmes, delivered in partnership with Brooksbury Melton College of Brooksbury, near Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire.

The 18-month training programme is based on the existing City & Guilds NVQ course in Vehicle Parts Operations, Levels 2 & 3. It has been tailored to include specific parts training on John Deere business systems, as well as industry training requirements such as fork lift truck operation and more generic skills such as merchandising and stock control publishing. Completion of the course will lead to the award of the John Deere Parts Tech certificate and City & Guilds NVQ Level 2.

Further details are available from local John Deere dealers or from Brooksbury Melton College, tel 03066 858580 or 855444.

CHELSEA FLOWER SHOW 2007

The Writtle College exhibit ‘How Green is my Garden’, which features in the Lifelong Learning in the Garden Section of the Chelsea Flower Show, has been awarded a Silver Lindley Medal.

The exhibit is an environmentally friendly garden centering upon issues such as recycling, water use, sustainable practices and ‘garden miles’, which determine how far the contents of the garden are physically transported and at what cost. The aim of the exhibit is to educate gardeners about what they can do to improve their environmental credentials. The team used as many recycled products as they could in order to reduce the environmental impact of their own efforts.

Mick Lavelle, Senior Lecturer and team leader for show preparations, said: “I’m really pleased that the exhibit received a Silver Lindley. The students involved were all first year degree students and receiving this accolade is testament to their hard work. This will be the last Chelsea for me, and it’s great to bow out with one last medal”.

PRESTIGIOUS GARDENS

Rolawn is once again celebrating being the first choice for some of the country’s top garden designers at this year’s RHS Chelsea Flower Show.

Rolawn’s famous Medallion turf and Blended Loam (a premium topsoil) have been incorporated into some of the show’s most prestigious gardens and medal winning exhibitors, such as: The Fortnum & Mason Garden; Leeds City Council; Scent of a Roman; Marshalls: The Marshalls Sustainability Garden and The Children’s Society: Lost for Life, to name but a few.
Manager, Duchy College) Steve Harris (Course Manager) and the greenkeeping sector are celebrating a significant success after winning an award at the South West Skills Awards recently. The Award, presented by Jason Gardner MBE, Olympic gold medal sprinter, celebrates the achievements of apprentices, learners and employers who have excelled in the region.

The Manor House & Ashbury hotels are a privately owned, family business specialising in Sports, Craft and Golf holidays. The company employs 300 members of staff and the company have worked hard to ensure that every one of their team members has access to training.

Manor House Hotel based in Okehampton won the Large Employer of the Year Award; judges were looking for employers that could clearly show the benefits they had gained from a commitment to training their workforce through apprenticeships.

The achievement of this award is a major one both for the Manor House & Ashbury hotel and for the greenkeeping sector within Devon and Cornwall. The greenkeeping sector has, over a number of years, raised the standard of training and qualifications available to students and through their commitment to training their workforce through apprenticeships.

On completion we will have 5½ courses to achieve the greenkeeping qualifications for a significant number of employees. The training and instruction were delivered by Pete Gross (Deputy Course Manager). This took place totally in the workplace, with no college attendance by the candidates, a very unusual system for when a college and a club work together. The college were represented by Bill Pike (retired Head Greenkeeper and BIGGA Member) who supported Pete in the delivery and assessment process through weekly visits to the workplace. Bill Pike said, “It was very hard work over a concentrated period of time but I was pleased to be able to use my experience to help the individual candidates, Pete Gross and Manor House and Ashbury hotel to raise their greenkeeping standards”.

Steve Evans (Devon and Cornwall BIGGA Section Chairman) said, “This is fantastic news for Manor House and Ashbury hotels and a tremendous example to Golf Clubs in Devon and Cornwall. Duchy College are repaying our support for them in this region as this is the second significant award they have achieved for our industry in the last six months. In January Michael Wannell (Greenkeeper at Bovey Castle) achieved the South West Student of the Year Award from the Institute of Groundsmanship. Well done to all”.

TRAINING PROGRAMME

John Deere and Brooksbury Melton College have launched the industry’s first specialist training programme for aspiring parts apprentices.

The new Parts Tech programme will be run on similar lines to the award winning John Deere Ag Tech and Turf Tech apprentice engineering techniques programmes, delivered in partnership with Brooksby Melton College of Brooksby, near Melton Mowbray, Leicestershire.

The 18-month training programme is based on the existing City & Guilds NVQ course in Vehicle Parts Operations, Levels 2 & 3. It has been tailored to include specific parts training on John Deere business systems, as well as industry training requirements such as forklift truck operation and more generic skills such as merchandising and double top publishing.

Completion of the course will lead to the award of the John Deere Parts Tech certificate and City & Guilds NVQ Level 2.

Further details are available from local John Deere dealers or from Brooksby Melton College, tel: 01664 850850 or 855444.

PRESTIGIOUS GARDENS

Rolawn is once again celebrating being the first choice for some of the country’s top garden designers at this year’s RHS Chelsea Flower Show.

Leeds City Council, Scent of a Roman

Rolawn’s famous Medalion turf and Blended Loam (a premium topsoil) have been incorporated into some of the show’s most prestigious gardens and medal winning exhibitors, such as; The Fortnum & Mason Garden, Leeds City Council: Scent of a Roman, Marshalls: The Marshalls Sustainability Garden and The Children’s Society: Lust for Life, to name but a few.

The exhibit is an environmentally friendly garden centered upon issues such as recycling, water use, sustainable practices and ‘garden miles’, which determine how far the contents of the garden are physically transported and at what cost. The aim of the exhibit is to educate gardeners about what they can do to improve their environmental credentials. The team used as many recycled products as they could in order to reduce the environmental impact of their own efforts.

Brian Alabaster received “Gold.” The Fortnum and Mason show garden has been awarded “Silver-Gilt,” Illusionesque “Silver” and Nettucis, “Bronze” for the use of grass in the company’s display in the Grand Pavilion.

Mike Seaton, a fellow of the Institute of Groundsmanship (IOG) and founder of the Lawn Society, said that the medals were awarded according to the quality of the sward and the suitability of the grass within the overall design. “Brian Alabaster demonstrated just how good grass can be. Very high quality, but the display made full use of the sloping site and the bronze sculptures of children sitting on a grassy bank had been designed to fit perfectly,” he said. “The Fortnum and Mason garden showed an effective and imaginative use of small lawn areas – squares of grass broken by stone – within a formal design, and Illusionesque’s grass sculptures showed what could be achieved when grass is used as an art form. The Notcutts Group use of good quality grass under a classical arched walkway of yellow climbers created a contrast adding an interesting dimension for the viewer.”

The Society, which was formed to offer expert independent lawn care advice and act as a forum for lawn lovers, can be contacted at www.lawnsociety.org.uk