George Pitts, a former top golf course management student at Cannington (Somerset), has recently returned to Bridgwater College’s Cannington Centre for Landbased 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 a 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 Aracga 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 within the Greenkeeping industry.

“At Bridgwater College’s Cannington Centre, where we have a 9 hole, 18 tee links-like golf course we are concentrating on promoting equal opportunities by offering courses to suit all situations. We are raising awareness in nearby schools by promoting sports turf careers. We invite industry professionals to contribute to our courses to ensure the courses are as industry specific as we can.

“We will also be offering a new NVQ Level 3 in Sports Turf, starting this September, which will be run in conjunction with BIGGA South West and BIGGA South Wales regions.”

BUSHEY HALL GOLF CLUB

One of Hertfordshire’s golfing gems, Bushey Hall GC, has just appointed Neil Fergie 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.

Neil’s impressive international career includes five years working at Muirfield in Scotland – one of the world’s most prestigious courses. Muirfield 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 host 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 new come.”

NEW EIGCA PRESIDENT

Scottish course architect 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 Himmel, Professional Development; Rainer Preissmann, Membership; Howard Swan, Education Board; Peter Flitman, 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 Bernard Langer, using hickory-shafted clubs from the 1920s and earlier and reproduction vintage golf balls.

Gavin Bottrell of Tinewarp 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 – 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

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

David Harrison was Expert Sales Manager and becomes Sales Director with overall responsibility for all Sisis sales. David joined Sisis 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.