Brits Gaunt, Marnoch team to take on world

LONDON — Two of the younger British golf course architects have teamed up to form Gaunt & Marnoch Ltd. Jonathan Gaunt and Steve Marnoch have known each other since their days at Leeds Metropolitan University and have been competing with one another ever since. With their office in London's financial district, they are ideally placed to discuss the financing of golf courses, especially considering that they share a building with PFG Group and GDG Acornbridge Ltd. — both specialist financial consultants to the golf course industry.

The company has launched a video of its work, including an example of a 3D fly-around view of one of its holes, which can also be generated for other existing holes.

Jonathan Gaunt, right, and Steve Marnoch eye projects abroad.

Marnoch: Ideally it would make sense, but we are going to find, I think, that there are exceptions to that rule. When we consider Scotland for example, might be quicker for Jonathan [London] to jump on a tube, get to Heathrow and fly to Scotland than for me [Derbyshire] to spend two hours getting to Manchester Airport then flying up. We are going to look at each job individually and sensibly and then make our decision.

Gaunt: I've traditionally done a lot of work in the Northeast and have often spent a long time doing the ground work. So yes, I will continue with these jobs. But if a new job comes up in the North it would obviously make sense for Steve to deal with it.

Marnoch: What other benefits will come from your merger?

Marnoch: Client contact. Covering for each other at holiday times, etc. We both have secretaries now, but being in the office while the other is on holiday makes more sense and gives better client satisfaction by being personally available to speak with clients.

GCNI: Are there any negatives to your partnership?

Marnoch: Yes. We eat and drink too much.

Gaunt: I have been asked why we would join forces, some people say that I'll just have to split all the fees that I learn. To be honest, that doesn't bother me. You can only do a certain amount of work yourself and if you go beyond that threshold the quality of your work starts to deteriorate. I would much rather do two jobs less in the course of a year, do them properly and get a reasonable fee. I just want to go out, do the job right and earn a reasonable living. I don't want to make millions of pounds out of this.

Marnoch: What long-term aims does Gaunt & Marnoch Ltd. have?

Gaunt: Basically we are looking to go worldwide. We are currently looking at jobs in Canada, Malaysia, the Caribbean and... Continued on page 46

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- The only research available on annual base salaries and hourly wages for 29 jobs common to golf facilities.
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GCNI: Why did you join forces?

Gaunt: We proved that, as individuals, we can do the job and survive in the marketplace. Currently, the work is getting harder to obtain and there is a downward trend in the market with more golf course architects and trainee architects out there. Obviously, when we arrive on a short list of three, with myself and Jonathan included, it is quite ridiculous that we are actually working alone, in separate offices up and down the country you can feel isolated in a very competitive market.

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Marnoch: We've certainly clashed in the past. I think that our personalities would still clash if we worked in the same office together. But we have been friends for 15 years and that does make for good understanding.

GCNI: Are there any areas in which you feel that you are going to clash?

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GCNI: Do you plan to have such a geographical split in the work which you take on?

Hemstock opens office in India

BOMBAY — David Hemstock Associates has set up a base in India following its first contract in that country.

Project manager and maintenance specialist Geoffrey Porter is permanently based near Bombay, and the company is looking to extend its influence through him into other new projects and remodeling work. Geoffrey is currently involved with an 18-hole championship course project.

Co-designer and Clubhouse Architect Les Watts is also now working with the company, presently running the design and consultancy work in the Pacific Rim region, but also carrying out design work for the company's European projects.

"We make full use of the globe-shrinking effects of the Internet in order to communicate effectively with each other, with design work often taking less than a few days from inception to transmission electronically to India or Hong Kong," says principal consultant David Hemstock.

The company has launched a video of its work, including an example of a 3D fly-around view of one of its holes, which can also be generated for other existing holes.

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Q&A: Gaunt & Marnoch

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Turkey. In the short term, we aim to spread ourselves wider in the British Isles. Steve and I have been in business for about 10 years now and we have only done one job in Wales. There is still a massive potential market over here. In that respect, I think that we need to consolidate what we are able to do over here before we start going worldwide in earnest.

Marnoch: We currently have offices in Derbyshire and London but we would like to open an office in Scotland. My roots are in Northeast Scotland, near Aberdeen and I'd like to go back and do some work up there. There's an awful lot of work going on in Scotland and there seems to be a lack of BIGCA-qualified people handling the work.

GCNI: The situation in Asia is tricky right now. How do you feel it's going to go?

Gaunt: It's quite interesting actually, you hear about all these big names leaving the sinking ship, but there are consultants out there who don't charge a big fee. I think that there is a big demand in Asia for academy golf courses. The golf course I did in Turkey last year was a nine hole course with a driving range. It's a floodlit development just outside Istanbul and it's important for them to have it because it's entry-level golf and that is where I think that there will be a big boom. I really think this will be the case in Asia too, and not only there, but steadily throughout the golf course industry.

GCNI: Greece is planning 30 courses in the next three or four years, how do you view that?

Gaunt: The first step ought to be researching other countries and what they've done, especially what they've done wrong. In my opinion copying the Portuguese theme will not work in Greece. In actual fact, I think they're probably doing it wrong on the very start and it is all exclusive developments.

In Greece I think that they need to get people interested in playing the game, if not they are going to be creating problems for themselves from the very start.

Marnoch: There are ways of getting water when it seems that there is none. I've been looking at possible developments in Corsica and Cyprus and the major problems are water and maintaining the ecosystem. We must look at how best to use the resources that are in the area.

GCNI: Is the target of 30 courses in three years feasible?

Gaunt and Marnoch: No. Planning problems will be the first of many headaches, a nightmare. They need to look at a much longer time scale to do things properly.

GCNI: How do you feel about professional golfers becoming more involved in course design?

Marnoch: Of course professionals, especially tour pros, have design ideas they want to put into practice and developers think that using a big name will be the key to success. But we think that involving a celebrity is only one ingredient of one kind of development. The pros don't have the technical or practical training. Being a golf course architect is so much more than just a bunch of good ideas.

Gaunt: What annoys me much more is people from other areas of the golf course industry with no technical training claiming to be reliable golf course architects.

GCNI: Is there anything to be said for hiring a professional golfer to do design?

Marnoch: Not if he replaces the golf course architect. Some clients are absolutely convinced that it is the right thing to do. We feel that we have a service to offer and that's what we'd like to get more involved in, working with some of the up-and-coming pros. Our role is to show them how their ideas can be made to work.

Marnoch: Good quality golf courses at a reasonable price.

Gaunt: I'm very interested in the upgrading of existing golf courses. It seems that golf clubs are beginning to understand that they have to do something to compete with all the courses that were built five, ten or even 15 years ago.