

ISEKI

national greenkeepers' golf tournament '88

The final of the inaugural National Greenkeepers golf tournament was held at the St. Pierre Golf and Country Club at Chepstow on the 19th August.

Conditions on the day, especially from the back tees, were not easy, as there was a strong westerly wind and intermittent heavy showers.

The old course at St. Pierre, which is in the care of course manager David Jones, is a parkland layout with heavy rough and more than a few well placed trees.

The course and entrance to the club were decked out in BIGGA and Iseki flags and the specially prepared control unit was sited next to the first tee, from where the team of BIGGA officials, headed by Neil Thomas and including David Golding, Arnold Phipps Jones and Ivor Scoones, organised the golf and collated the scores. The format for the competition was nine holes in the morning (the back nine) followed by 18 holes in the afternoon from the 10th tee.

The eventual winner was Edwin Walsh, head greenkeeper at Whitefields Golf Club, which is situated between Bury and Manchester. Edwin is an appropriate winner of the first BIGGA national golf tournament as he was a Lancashire county golfer in the mid seventies, and now holds a handicap of six at Whitefields.

He qualified for the Iseki final as the runner up in division one the of the Northern regional event, and at

St. Pierre his golf was of an even higher calibre. For the morning nine holes he shot a net 33 which left him two strokes behind the leader at lunchtime, his only moment of drama in the morning coming at the 6th where he pitched into a ditch short of the green, dropped out only to fluff his pitch but then recovered by getting down in two. It was no doubt a great boost to birdie the final hole in the morning, for in the afternoon out in the middle of the field amidst gales and showers he pitched and putted for par no fewer than five times. He missed an easy birdie chance at the 7th, but throughout the round drove straight and true, eventually finishing with a 75, net 69, against a par of 71 and an SSS of 73. His only birdie came at the 5th - significantly stroke index 1.

A fantastic effort in the conditions, for which he will no doubt be rewarded by a cut in his handicap!!

Edwin Walsh has been a successful golfer for many years, winning local and national events, but few have

given him as much pleasure as winning at St. Pierre.

"It is always nice to be the first to have your name on a trophy and I am already looking forward to trying to defend the title next year. I am also very pleased to be involved in the first national event of BIGGA, as it is one of my greatest wishes to see the Association succeed and to have the opportunity to put something back into a game and an industry that I love. I have to say that the Iseki National Final has been very well run and thoroughly enjoyed by all."

Edwin is not only a winner on the golf course but represents England at indoor bowls and was runner up in the English national singles championship (short mat) in 1987.

There were many tales of woe and disaster at St Pierre, none more unfortunate than the Scottish contingent, headed by their administrator Chris Kennedy, whose mini bus broke down both coming and going in pouring rain.

In the evening the prizegiving ceremony took



Right: Edwin Walsh - getting down in two.

place, after an excellent dinner. Our MC for the evening was the Northern region administrator, David Golding, who gave a very polished performance. David first of all introduced John Hawkins, managing director of the sponsors, Iseki UK Ltd., who was clearly delighted with the success of the event and hoped that it would be possible for Iseki to sponsor the event next year. He thanked all concerned, especially the regional administrators of the Association, who had done so much in helping to run the competitions; David Jones, the course manager of St. Pierre, for the presentation of the course; and Steve Broad of Broad Spectrum who, with his team, had organised the regional qualifying events and the finals so well. Mr Hawkins applauded the Association's commitment to better education for greenkeepers and pledged his company's support. He then turned to Iseki's new product line which had been displayed for the Press earlier in the day, and hoped that as many greenkeepers as possible would try out the various tractors, mowers and aerators and give him their opinion as reaction from the end-user was of great importance.

Next to speak was the Association's Chairman, Jack McMillan, who as usual apologised for his accent - something he has no need to do as over recent years his brogue has been listened to by more greenkeepers than anyone else in greenkeeping, with no lack of understanding.

Jack was keen to stress that although this was a golfing occasion he refuted the comments made in certain circles that BIGGA was a golfing society pure and simple. With three conferences up and coming at Ayr, Harrogate and Cambridge, the Association's educational programme was

well under way. Jack was particularly proud of the array of international speakers gathered together at Ayr, and the list of speakers for Cambridge could not be more impressive. However he pointed out that as greenkeepers the Association's members served the golfer and he felt that every greenkeeper should play and understand the game, therefore it was only natural that the BIGGA should be strongly involved in golf, for it was only through shared experience that practical help and advice could be meaningful. The Iseki tournament was devised to strengthen ties and identification for the newly formed regions, and in this it had been supremely successful. Jack thanked the sponsors for their foresight in backing the newly formed Association and he was sure that the partnership would be a long a fruitful one. He then turned to

David Jones the course manager of St. Pierre and thanked him on behalf of all the competitors for the excellent job he had done in presenting the Old course in such fine condition and for making everyone so welcome. Finally Jack also paid tribute to Steve Broad for the highly professional way in which he had organised the tournament.

Next it was the turn of the irrepressible Colin Gregory, Sales Director of Iseki, to present the prizes. Colin not only knows every part of his tractors, but he also knows every greenkeeper in the world by his first name!!

Edwin Walsh won with a superb score of 102 net for the 27 holes, playing off a handicap of 6. Edwin, from the Northern section, received a magnificent silver cup and a colour TV as well as a range of Iseki clothing.

His win was greeted with great applause.

RESULTS:-

Division 1. Arthur Williamson 108.5 (Graigle Hill GC) Scottish Region, 2. Michael Hannam 110 (Moortown GC) Northern Region, 3. John Parr 111.5 (Exeter GC) South West Region.

Division 2. Rhys Thomas 104 (Enville GC) Midlands Region, 2. Robert Phillips 107.5 (Porters Park GC) South East Region, 3. Jeff Chambers 109.5 (Leatherhead GC) South East Region.

Division 3. 1. Michael Gregson 109 (Shipleigh Northcliffe GC) Northern Region, 2. Steven Hird 110 (Scunthorpe GC) Northern Region, 3. Mark Bindley 112 (Kirkby Muxlow GC) Midlands Region.

Over 55. Derek Coomber 110.5 (Pyecombe GC) South East Region.

Under 21. Neil Woolfrey 114 (Tewkesbury Park GC) Midlands Region.

Best gross. Charles White 115 (Largs Kelbourn GC) Scottish Region.