

Headquarters move from Bingley to Aldwark

The BIGGA are to move their headquarters from the Sports Turf Research Institute at Bingley to Aldwark Manor, a golf and country club hotel on the outskirts of York.

The impending move was announced during the ETM Exhibition at Harrogate, subject to successful negotiations with the owners, but since then Aldwark Manor and the nine hole golf course has been sold to a York based property company Chessingham Estates, though this is unlikely to have any affect on the move planned for the first week in May.

Aldwark Manor on the banks of the River Ure was built in 1865 as a wedding present for the daughter of Lord Walsingham. It has changed hands several times since and during the war years became the headquarters of the Canadian Airforce who flew from the nearby airfield at Linton on Ouse. Later a special school was opened under the control of the County Council.

The nine hole golf course was laid out in 37 acres of the tree lined grounds of the estate some ten years ago and the club currently has a membership of around 200. Guests staying at the 20 bedroomed hotel can also use the course.

In the short term the BIGGA Executive Director, Neil Thomas and his staff will use an adjacent building as the Association's headquarters offices. Later there are plans for a purpose built building nearer a new clubhouse for golf club members.

Mr Jeremy Benson, General Manager at the Aldwark Manor Hotel said the new owners are fully supporting the move by the Association to Aldwark in May, though they were not able to make an official announcement until the purchase contracts are signed at the end of February.

The golf course managed by Head Greenkeeper, Richard Gamble is also in line for redevelopment. Negotiations were already taking

place for the acquisition of additional land to extend the course to 18 holes and it is understood they will continue under the new ownership.

If the company are able to extend the golf course to 18 holes it will offer an excellent opportunity to use the construction period as a training operation for other greenkeeper members. Accommodation can be provided in the hotel, at a discounted rate, there are Seminar Rooms for lectures and opportunities for practical exercises out on the course.

It is anticipated the golf course will be extensively used by equipment manufacturers for 'Open Days' and demonstrations. The hotel complex is ideal for distributors conferences.

From the A1, Aldwark Manor is approached over a narrow toll bridge, one of the few left in the country, but at 8p a car this is far cheaper than a detour through York.

spray the turf once established to keep out Poa Annuua?

A. Unfortunately it is not legally permissible for them to use the chemical but Advantage will give the best possible start to any green.

Q. Will the Advantage turf be mown at the same cutting height as the rest of your turf, which takes a greenkeeper quite a while to bring into play?

A. For some time we have felt that our greens turf could be enabled to be brought into play earlier if it were mown shorter than our normal $\frac{3}{4}$ in to 1in cutting height. Accordingly we have purchased a range of equipment more likely to be found on a golf course than on a turf farm. A member of Rolawn staff is now permanently assigned to caring for and maintaining the Advantage turf. In this way our product will be much closer to what the greenkeeper actually wants and will speed up the creation of a putting surface considerably.

Q. The early maintenance of the newly turfed green is crucial to getting a good result. What do you advise?

A. We can supply a first class turf only to see it ruined by poor

management within a matter of months. This may allow the ingress of annual meadow grass or delay the start of play. We give advice in the early management of the turf, but in the long run the standard of the end results are up to the greenkeeping staff. Much of good greenkeeping is attention to detail - removing a weed by hand when you see it for the first time rather than leaving it to produce seed, for example.

Q. Once the turf is laid, how long will it be before it is ready for play?

A. That depends on when the turf is laid. If it is laid in the Spring, it should, with proper care, be ready for play in three to four months, if laid in the autumn it will be ready by the following Spring. The Sports Turf Research Institute say that turf needs fifteen growing weeks before it's ready for play, so if it is a mild winter, it will be ready even earlier. This is something we will be taking a keen interest in and will give a prize to the greenkeeper who gets his Advantage turf into play in the shortest time.

Q. How much of this new turf is available.

A. This is a key question particularly as we are all used to turf growers making claims for new kinds of turf which are only available in limited amounts or are still at the planning stages and there's never enough for a golf club needing turf for 18 new greens for example. We should have sufficient to meet the demand this year, a demand we expect to be heavy as we intend promoting Rolawn Advantage extensively.

Q. Where can Advantage be seen? Has it been used and tested by greenkeepers?

A. Any greenkeeper is welcome to visit out Turf Production Nurseries in Yorkshire and Bedfordshire to see the growing turf. In addition a number of leading golf courses have taken the advance sowings, including St Pierre Golf Course, Chepstow, Fulford Golf Course, York and the Gleneagles Hotel Golf Courses for the Championship King's Course. The greenkeepers have expressed a willingness to vouch for their satisfaction of Advantage - whatever we might say about the turf, it's their opinion that matters in the long run!