

Building our future

A profile of the British Association of Golf Course Constructors by its general secretary Howard Swan.

IN recognising the need for an uplifting of standards in golf-course construction generally, 1981 saw a few of the more prominent and competent contractors discussing and eventually formulating the aims and objectives upon which the BAGCC was founded. The fundamental objective was to improve standards through representation of member companies and the dissemination of knowledge and information to and from the various parts of inter-related industries.

Initially, members strove to improve by informal education and in early 1982 the first BAGCC education session was held, with 35 delegates at the Lancashire College of Agriculture and Horticulture at Preston. This event laid the fundamentals that were followed by many in the field. The second education session at Writtle College in 1983 was equally successful and the BAGCC began to expand its role in this sector.

The association now has six full members, some of which specialise intensively in golf-course construction. Others rely on the construction and similar activities in other turfgrass areas to supplement golf-course work. In addition to the full members, details of which are set out here, the association also has 12 associate members representing suppliers, irrigation companies and other specialists having a direct bearing on golf-course construction. The BAGCC is represented on the National Turfgrass Council and, through its sitting member, has organised a number of day seminars on sand-based constructions and may become involved in the production of an NTC book on a directory of sands for use in golf and other turfgrass areas.

Members of the association meet at quarterly intervals to discuss policy and programme and are looking to consolidate the existing membership during 1985. Close liaison is kept with other golf associations and in particular with members of the British Association of Golf Course Architects, with whom many BAGCC members work. Joint discussions were held during 1984 with a view to producing a contract document for golf-course construction designed specifically by the two associations for that usage. It is anticipated that, during 1985, such a document will be produced.

The future will see the British Association of Golf Course Constructors working actively through its membership to increase awareness of constructional activity and the need for thoroughness, professionalism and quality in that work to maintain its coveted position of being responsible for the vast majority of United Kingdom golf-course construction.

Those who attended a BAGCC members' meeting recently at The Post House, Crick, Warwickshire were: H.Swan—Golf Landscapes, B.Pierson—Brian D.Pierson (Contractors), R.Blyth—Land Unit Construction, R.Wilson—Southern Golf, Ms K.Colling—Southern Golf, G.Rawlinson—Chipman, J.Cheeseman—Eccles Contracting, T.Banks—Banks Horticultural Products, P.Roberts—Toro Irrigation, J.Franks—British Seed Houses, M.Perkins—Mommersteeg International, M.Coffey—Greenkeeper.

A structure for the association was agreed and these secretarial posts confirmed: J.Cheeseman—membership, R.Blyth—publicity, B.Pierson—meetings, H.Swan—general secretary, T.Banks—treasurer.

Eccles Contracting—based at Hyde in Cheshire and also Scunthorpe, Humberside—started life as the Lincolnshire Spraying and Contracting Company in 1929. It became Eccles Contracting in 1948, taking its name from the founder J.G. Eccles. Upon his retirement, the group of companies was taken over by Faber Prest Holdings of Rotherham, South Yorkshire.

From its original agricultural contracting base, the company moved into civil engineering and has latterly diversified into land reclamation, landscaping and recreational surfacing, which embraces playing fields, athletics tracks, synthetic surfaces and golf courses.

In 1984, Eccles Contracting contributed a turnover of £5.1m to the £38m of Faber Prest Holdings. The company's work is generated mainly from local authorities in the north and Midlands on selective tendering lists. However, if a contract involves a specialised surface, such as a golf course, the company works beyond its usual regional limits. In fact, work has been carried out as far afield as Saudi Arabia.

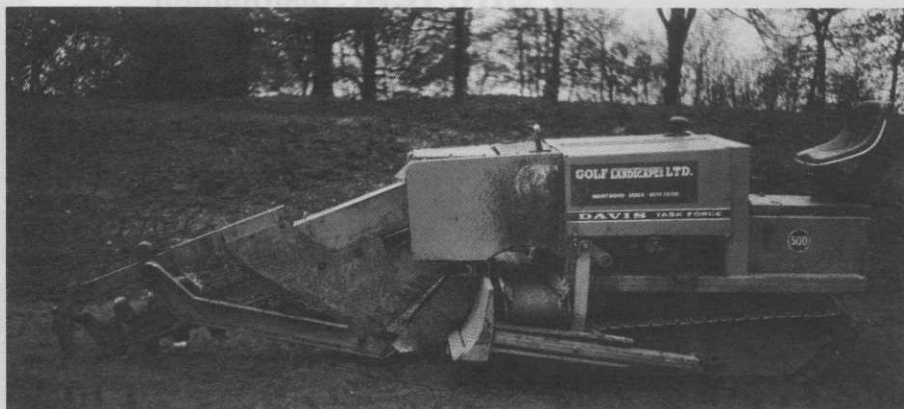
Eccles Contracting is fully equipped and staffed professionally and can prepare projects from initial survey to completion, although occasionally building works have been carried out as part of a wider scheme.

Clients also include landscape architects, private clubs and golf-course architects. Eccles Contracting is a full member of the British Association of Golf Course Constructors, the British Association of Landscape Contractors and the Federation of Civil Engineering Contractors. Eccles Contracting and Faber Prest Holdings both stage annual golf tournaments at Lindrick.

Contact: Eccles Contracting, Brickfield Street, Hadfield, Hyde, Cheshire. ☎ 045 74 63425. The company is also at Eccles House, East Common Lane, Scunthorpe DN16 1FS. ☎ 0724 865861.

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Golf Landscapes has been responsible for over 70 constructional projects throughout Europe. The company has a reputation for high-quality workmanship and efficiency of construction. Its personnel, from director through resident site supervisor to plant operator, are highly qualified and experienced in the technical, managerial and site organisational aspects of modern



golf-course construction.

Golf Landscapes can offer a wide range of services ranging from feasibility studies on new sites, consultancy on golf course provision and construction and fee-based construction management. Design and specification proposals are based upon proven methods thoroughly tested and analysed in the laboratory and in the field. The company works closely with the country's leading schools of agronomy and is able to draw upon the services of the most prominent golf-course architects to provide a design and build approach to a new course.

A significant proportion of the specialist golf-course construction work undertaken by Golf Landscapes is at existing golf clubs and comprises renovation and reconstruction work to greens and tees and extensions and rearrangements of current layouts. Many golf greens are unable to withstand the heavy usage to which they are subjected and, despite rigorous maintenance and surface treatment procedures, do not perform adequately. When that point is reached, reconstruction may be the only answer.

Golf Landscapes is in a position to advise on, specify and carry out such works to the highest standard. The replacement of the foundation and rootzone of existing greens is not expensive when carried out to traditional methods and specifications. Certain cost savings may be effected by the utilisation of the PM green® construction technique, which incorporates a sand rooting medium over an intensively drained base. Such a method significantly reduces disturbance to the course during reconstruction and indications suggest that play can be recommenced more quickly after work than with more traditional methods. Additionally, the technique is economical, reducing overall costs by up to 30 per cent over traditional reconstructions.

While best known for specialist golf-course construction work, the company has a full range of turf drainage and ancillary equipment, together with trained and experienced operators. Accordingly, Golf Landscapes is able to undertake drainage works of all kinds on existing golf courses, to greens, tees and fairway areas, ditching, etc.

The company's appointment as area distributor for TORO irrigation equipment in 1982 extended Golf Landscapes' ability to undertake a broader approach to golf course, sportsground and landscape

construction. Golf Landscapes Irrigation has a team of experienced personnel who have the expertise to design, install and service efficiently and effectively TORO systems. Such a service is backed by a fleet of machinery developed by the company specially for irrigation installation.

At its Brentwood base, Golf Landscapes holds a comprehensive stock of irrigation spares and UPVC pipes and fittings, available at competitive prices, to meet service needs. Planned maintenance is offered by the company's service engineer, as is a seasonal start-up/close-down programme for existing irrigation systems.

The company has developed its own programme of constructional management in golf and sportsground fields, but particularly in relation to golf projects in Europe and further afield. In such cases, Golf Landscapes will take overall responsibility for the construction work, from specification and planning to day-to-day on-site supervision. Control of constructional activity is achieved by a resident site

Land Unit Construction has been building golf courses to championship standard for the past eight years but, due to the decline in new-course construction, the company has specialised in alteration and extensions to existing courses.

Lately, Land Unit Construction's works have included 'mini' land drainage using a 35mm perforated pipe and backfilling to the surface with Lytag drainage medium, which is proving to be successful.

The company's recent involvement with Omnisport has opened up a new market in sand-filled synthetic tees, with proper tee inserts, mainly for winter use.

Contact: Land Unit Construction, Folly Farm, Hanslope, Milton Keynes MK19 7BX. ☎ 0908 510414.

Brian D.Pierson (Contractors) has recently completed its 50th golf course contract, including major alterations on four Open Championship courses, together with many other famous courses.

The company has just finished work on a new nine-hole course at Radley College, major alterations to Alresford Golf Course (precipitated by a new by-pass) and has virtually completed a new 18-hole course at Redditch.

A significant part of the company's

supervisor, suitably qualified and experienced, who is able to direct local resources of plant and labour. Material ordering and importation is controlled at this level. Such a site supervisor would, where required, have a working knowledge of the local language.

Overall project supervision is afforded at director level with regular site visits and inspections timed to suit constructional intensity. In essence, the programme is comprehensive, leaving only the payment of purchases to be handled by the client.

Golf Landscapes' construction management programme is available as a fee-based package, designed for and tailored to individual project requirements.

Golf Landscapes is a founder member of the British Association of Golf Course Constructors, a member of the British Turf Irrigation Association and an international member of the Golf Course Builders of America.

Contact: Golf Landscapes, Ashwells Road, Bentley, Brentwood, Essex CM15 9SR. ☎ 0277 73720.

work has been the renovation of existing courses, where defunct bunkers present only a maintenance cost without relevance to modern play. Many courses have a variety of small tees, which again present high maintenance costs for relatively few teeing positions and the introduction of large teeing areas is increasingly important.

Drainage is a recurring problem on many courses and it is essential that this work is carried out by experienced contractors. All too often, well-meaning agricultural contractors, while fully conversant with the principles of drainage, fail to realise the importance of preserving the fine turf and damage to soil structure caused by heavy plant.

The company is now diversifying into specialist maintenance in an effort to provide a continuity of service. It now has available for hire the full Cushman range and has recently added the Cambridge Soil Vibrator and the successful Verti-Drain, which has been put to use on over 30 courses since its purchase last year.

Brian D.Pierson is becoming increasingly involved in overseas contracts and it is hoped that work will

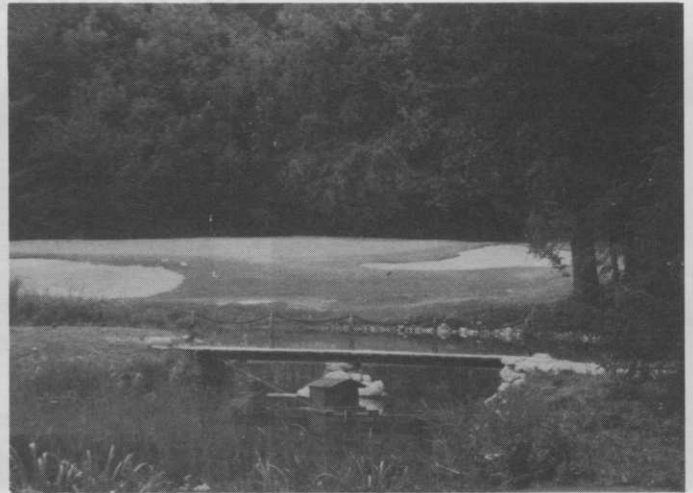
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details
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British Association of Golf Course Constructors



Brian Pierson and Donald Steel stand on the 17th tee of the new course at Abbey Park, Redditch.



A Southern Golf construction — the 7th green at Bonmont Golf Club, Geneva.

commence on a new golf course in Tenerife this year, with possible follow-ups on the Costa del Sol and in Portugal.

A new facet of activity has been golf-course construction at Letham Grange in Arbroath and Bashley Park Leisure Centre at New Milton, where the company has provided construction expertise, programming and site management utilising the machinery and skills of the client's own staff.

The company was originally formed to specialise in golf-course construction and, while it has enjoyed eight successful years, the landscaping and sportsground section has developed to such an extent that six fully mobile landscaping units are operated throughout the south and there have been significant inroads into the local landscaping and sportsground construction market.

Brian D. Pierson (Contractors) looks forward to the future with great confidence and the ability to meet the demands of the ever-increasing leisure market. The company is a founder member of the British Association of Golf Course Constructors, the British Association of Landscape Industries and an international member of the Golf Course Builders of America.

Contact: Brian D. Pierson, 27 Vicarage Road, Verwood, Wimborne, Dorset BH21 6DR. ☎ 0202 822372/824906.

Southern Golf director Jeremy Pern is the first to admit that one of his company's finest achievements did not turn out exactly as he had hoped. It took two years to complete in difficult conditions, was generally considered a triumph over adversity and is now a battlefield! Built in arid semi-desert 50 miles north of the Persian Gulf oil complex at Abadan, the 18-hole Ahwaz Golf and Country Club has been the scene of some of the bitterest fighting in the Iranian revolution and the Iran-Iraq war.

First to go was the massive pump house, which served 22 kilometres of irrigation piping and 130,000 square meters of artificial lakes. It was blown up only hours after the greenkeeper and pro had fled. For Southern Golf it meant the loss of an international showpiece, demonstrating all the construction skills built up since the company was formed in 1972.

Specialising in large-scale prestige projects, the company has sent its teams of soil scientists, irrigation specialists and agronomists to 11 countries in Europe, Africa and the Middle East.

During the last three years, Southern Golf has built over 150 greens on courses in the UK, Germany, Austria, France, Switzerland and elsewhere on such varied terrain as peat bogs, sand dunes, gravel beds, forests, heavy clay farmland and rocky mountain slopes high in the Alps.

Jeremy Pern and managing

director Ray Wilson—who, as a trained accountant, also looks after administration, marketing and client liaison—travelled over 200,000 miles between them last year.

Much of Southern Golf's success is due to the golf-course architects it has worked with and for. These include Commander John Harris, Don Harradine, Robert Trent Jones, Brian Huggett and Neil Coles. And, despite the ever-rising costs of building a full-sized prestige golf course from scratch, there is every sign that the company's expertise will remain much in demand.

Southern Golf aims to start work at the beginning of spring and to pile in enough resources to have 18 holes completed by autumn and, depending on local conditions, ready for play the following year. "That's where our specialists come in, our agronomists, soil scientists and greenkeepers, who make sure that the drainage, seed and fertiliser we put in produce a green and healthy sward and that it stays that way," Jeremy Pern said. "There would be nothing more embarrassing than spending all that time, money and effort and then have it all die on you. There are no clay courts in golf!"

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• The sixth BAGCC member is Chipman.