

NEWS

Farm estate to become golf complex

This 240-acre farm and parkland estate surrounding Ramside Hall Hotel near Durham is being turned into a golf complex with course manager Roger Shaw coordinating the project.

He started working for the developer, Michael Adamson of Ramside Estates, last September, but construction of the 27-hole course and practice facility only started last month (March).

It is hoped that they will start seeding the fairways and greens in May and that the course will be fully constructed by September, with the opening planned for spring '96.

By then, says designer Jonathan Gaunt, you should find "an unusually mature, well-integrated golf course which is exciting to play and a delight to walk through." He says the views over the surrounding landscape are "delightful".

Much of the course's mature look will stem from the well-established oaks and beeches already on the estate. However, 50,000 extra trees are to be



The Ramside Hall Hotel. Below, a view from the proposed 4th tee

planted in consultation with the Forestry Authority. "Indigenous trees and shrubs will be used to extend and recreate habitats for abundant local wildlife which will thrive in the large areas of rough between fairways, so that even while the new course is establishing, the site will retain a maturity that many take years to establish," says Jonathan.

The main course is a 6,800-yard par 72 layout which aims to be testing without being intimidating or penal, by offering options instead of hit-and-hope obstacles. The features encouraging strategic play include a number of lakes and streams (which also tie in to the drainage and irrigation systems for the courses), sensitive but not over-prolific bunkering, and the careful planting of the new trees. The nine-hole course

has a par of 35 and is aimed at the less experienced golfer. The complex will also have a 1,500m sq chipping and putting green and a golf academy playing out to a 300-yard practice range with various featured targets.

Before Roger joined this project he was course manager at Brancepeth Castle GC, also near Durham. He'd been there for ten years and brought the tired and out-of-condition Harry Colt designed course back to life. Prior to that he was head greenkeeper at Darlington GC for eight years and he served his apprenticeship at Billingham GC.

He brought in designer Jonathan Gaunt, whose credits include a 27-hole complex in Denmark and the Chesfield Downs Family Golf Centre in Hertfordshire.

The construction team is headed by Ian Martin and Bob Hornegold and backed up by agronomist David Stansfield of PSD Agronomy. Drainage is by MJ Abbott of Salisbury and the irrigation system was put in by Par 4 Irrigation of Ripon.

The plan is to build the north of England's largest and best equipped leisure facility, including a clubhouse to open simultaneously with the golf course, and to offer "five star quality at three star prices".



Unhappy choice for Scottish clubs

Three Scottish clubs are having a gun held to their heads – give up the most popular tee times or face a rent rise of 400 per cent or more.

Lord Wemyss' Wemyss & March Estates are building two new golf courses in East Lothian – at Gosford Park and Craigielaw Steading – with a 150-room hotel and 50 houses. The hotel will be finished before the courses, so

the lord wants prime times for guests at three of his other courses in the area – not only until the new courses are built, but also afterwards.

The three existing courses – Longniddry, Kilspindie and Musselburgh – face rent increases of 50 per cent anyhow, but it could be ten times as much if they don't give up the peak tee-off slots of 8-10am and 2-4pm seven

days a week.

Longniddry has been told its rent will go up from £17,000 to £25,000 if it agrees to give up these tee-off times to the landlords, but it will go up to £60,000 or £70,000 a year if it doesn't.

It is understood that Kilspindie Golf Club and the district council which sub-lets the course at Musselburgh are in a similar situation.

FLYING DIVOTS

■ Golf course owners who are having trouble selling their courses could always do what one American is planning. Jack Ridge is going to give his 124-acre course to the nearest the pin on October 9. He is charging a \$2,000 entrance fee and limiting numbers to 3,000 entries – giving him \$6 million. The chosen hole at Bob O Link is the 145-yard 8th, which is fronted by water. The contest will be held over six days with the four closest each day advancing to the final, where they will get four shots to bag the 6,430-yard course.

■ The new head greenkeeper at The London Golf Club's Ron Kirby-designed International Course is 26-year-old Steven Jones. Steven moves to the course, to look after the colonial bent/fescue greens, from the Oxfordshire Golf Club, where he was foreman/irrigation technician. He replaces Simon Grand who has gone to keep the new Lydd Golf Club.

Steven will report to Stephen Marsden, who is now the golf courses superintendent at The London Golf Club, which will have a grand opening in July.

■ Gary Cook, 29, has taken up the head greenkeeper's job at Enmore Park, Bridgewater. He was previously at Annenhill, Kilmarnock.

■ Rhone-Poulenc Environmental Products has appointed three new distributors: RE Rushbrook & Son, Suffolk; Gem Professional, Lancashire; and Amenity Land Services Ltd of Shropshire.

■ Inter Seeds Limited of Inkberrow, Worcestershire, has gained BS 5750 Part 2 as wholesalers and distributors of amenity grass seeds, wild flowers and fertilisers. Tel: 0386 793135.

■ The British Association of Landscape Industries (BALI) has accepted an invitation to join the CBI Council, the governing body of the CBI.