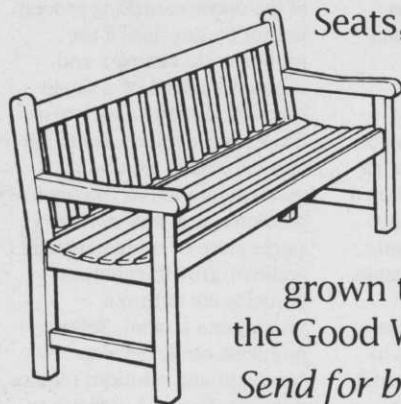


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AD REF 204



Stockley Park, Uxbridge, shows the way with signs that meet EC standards

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AD REF 35

Why would Peter Oosterhuis, once one of the biggest names in European golf, leave the Hollywood set at the prestigious Riviera Country Club in Los Angeles for a pay-and-play course on a former rubbish tip near Heathrow Airport?

Because Stockley Park is special.

It is a Robert Trent Jones Senior design. It has USGA-spec greens and tees, and wall-to-wall irrigation. Set in the middle of a 250-acre country park, the 18-hole course is owned by the London Borough of Hillingdon but run by the PGA European Tour, Mark McCormack's International Management Group and Stockley Park Consortium, the developers of the course and nearby business park.

And although it opened less than a year ago (last June), it has staged a Challenge Tour event and it is set to host a Senior Tour competition.

"The intention is to have a great golf course that anyone can play," says course manager Cameron McMillan, the youngest of Jack's sons.

Furniture and fittings

Because it is new and different, we thought we'd use it as our case study for our annual course furniture and fittings feature.

There is nothing too fancy here because the 6723-yard course is in the middle of a public park and things could easily get stolen or vandalised.

What they have got that's a bit different is EC regulation signage warning pedestrians of golf in play, horses, vehicles crossings, not to swim in the three lakes, keep to the footpaths etc. These signs have standard colours (like road signs) and pictures as well as words for the ethnic minorities who don't speak English. There are also signs telling horse riders to keep to the bridlepath and



Some of the 30 signs at Stockley Park

Sign of the times



telling dog owners where they can exercise their pets. One particularly interesting idea is information boards telling everyone about the wildlife and trees in the park.

Hole information is carried on 2ft high 'telegraph poles', but Cameron is thinking of replacing these because the elm wood is splitting and Peter thinks they're intrusive. They would prefer plates set in the ground.

Also on the tees are pineapple-shaped tee markers. There are eight ball washers on the course and half a dozen rubbish bins in addition to the bins in the park. There are no benches for golfers, just for the public in the park.

The park was built to gain planning permission for the business park. Having an upmarket business park, Stockley Park Consortium decided to build an upmarket golf course next to it as part of the country park. London Borough of Hillingdon sold the landfill site to the developers for £1, they developed it and sold it back for £1. Once handed over, it was then leased to Stockley Park Golf, which is made up of Stockley Park Consortium, the PGA European Tour and International Management Group, for 25 years.

The developers used gravel and London clay from the flat site for the business park, when construction began in 1985. The holes created were filled in with rubbish from the business park area. The capping was taken off and more landfill was put on top of landfill to create the contours Robert Trent Jones Snr wanted. The site was then recapped.

They knew the landfill would generate methane for 10-15 years so they installed a methane extraction system which sucks methane to the far end of the golf course and burns it off – enough to power a 1 megawatt generator for ten years but the cost of building and running a generating plant was too prohibitive.

Transition layer

The golf course construction continued with the creation of a "transition layer" (subsoil) upon which man-made topsoil (a mixture of the original capping material and sewage sludge) was put. This is proving to be a very good growing medium: "We'll have to cut the fairways daily in the summer," says Cameron. Because it was man-made, they had to "plant" 1.5 million non-casting earthworms.

During the construction, 4.5 million cubic metres of material was moved in nine months. To get a better idea of how much earth this is, imagine a one acre base with all this soil and rubbish piled on top – it would be higher than Mt Snowdon.

Once the land had been shaped, approximately £3.5 million was spent turning it into a golf course. The fairways and rough were seeded with perennial ryegrass and smooth stalk meadow grass, the tees with

perennial ryegrass, smooth stalk meadow grass and fescue, and the greens with Colonial bent/fescue. *Poa annua* found its own way there – "I inherited that," Cameron is quick to point out.

140,000 indigenous trees were planted – a mixture of fast and slow-growing species. The course also has 56 bunkers (large and unusual shapes, as you'd expect from an American architect).

The tees and greens were built to US standards, so they need a lot of water and feeding, but



Cameron McMillan, right, with Peter Oosterhuis. Top: an aerial shot of the course

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Information boards tell park-goers all about the trees and wildlife.

they've stood up well to more than 25,000 rounds in their first year. Water for the greens, tees, and fairways comes from a Rain-bird system supplied by one bore-hole.

So that is how the golf course was born. Or to be precise, a golf course, £1m clubhouse, nine football pitches, a district park with picnic areas, bridlepaths, and footpaths.

There is a lot of grass to cut but the only handwork is around bunkers. Ten greenkeepers, including 28-year-old Cameron and a mechanic, look after the site. They contract out the methane extraction and landscaping. Five men look after the trees and are following a "scorched earth" policy regularly spraying off weeds with Paraquat.

Recently, the greenkeepers have been busy REMOVING sand from the bunkers. Cameron estimates they've taken out 700 tons - taking the sand from 1ft deep to 4 or 5 ins. They did six holes in the autumn and the rest in March - "three weeks constantly digging out with an excavator." They will use the excess sand for topdressing the fairways. Another prob-

lem with the sand is it is too light and fluffy and for the Challenge Tour competition they had to water it down by hand.

Cameron, a five handicap golfer, has only played the course five or six times. "I've been too busy," he says.

Of the five McMillan sons, all of whom run courses, he has the lowest handicap "but I'm not the best," he says modestly.

Cameron has been a greenkeeper for 12 years, starting as an apprentice under father Jack at Sunningdale. He left there when he was 21 to take charge at Liphook in Hampshire. After two years, he went to Germany and got involved in golf course construction. He also helped build some courses in the UK, including the back nine at Aldwark Manor. After more than three years building courses he returned to management at Laleham GC in Chertsey, Surrey. Then, last June, when Stockley Park opened, the father-to-be moved round the M25 - and was impressed with what he found: the flat landfill site had been turned into a pretty country park with some of the newly-made

GOLF COURSE SIGNS



A comprehensive brochure is available including details on the following.

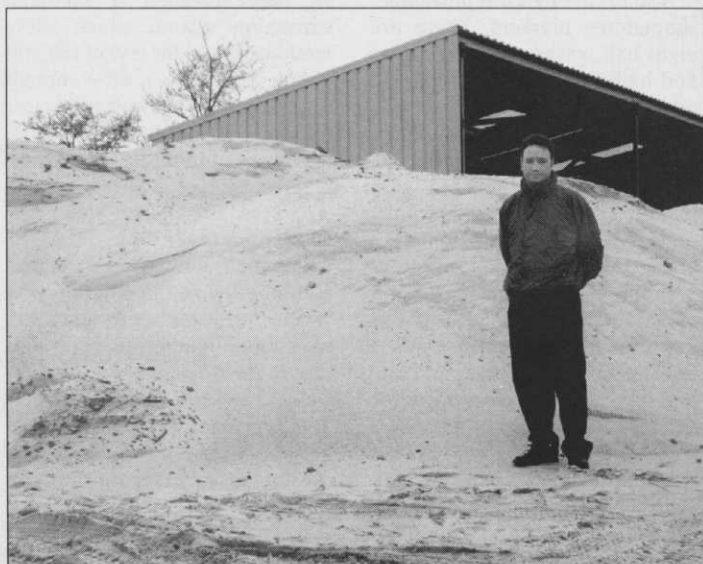
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Just some of the 700 tons of sand taken from the bunkers