

# TAIN to AUGUSTA!

**I would defy anyone not to be just a little envious when they read Iain Macleod's trip to the States. Seeing the Masters live and playing Pine Valley? I ask you.**

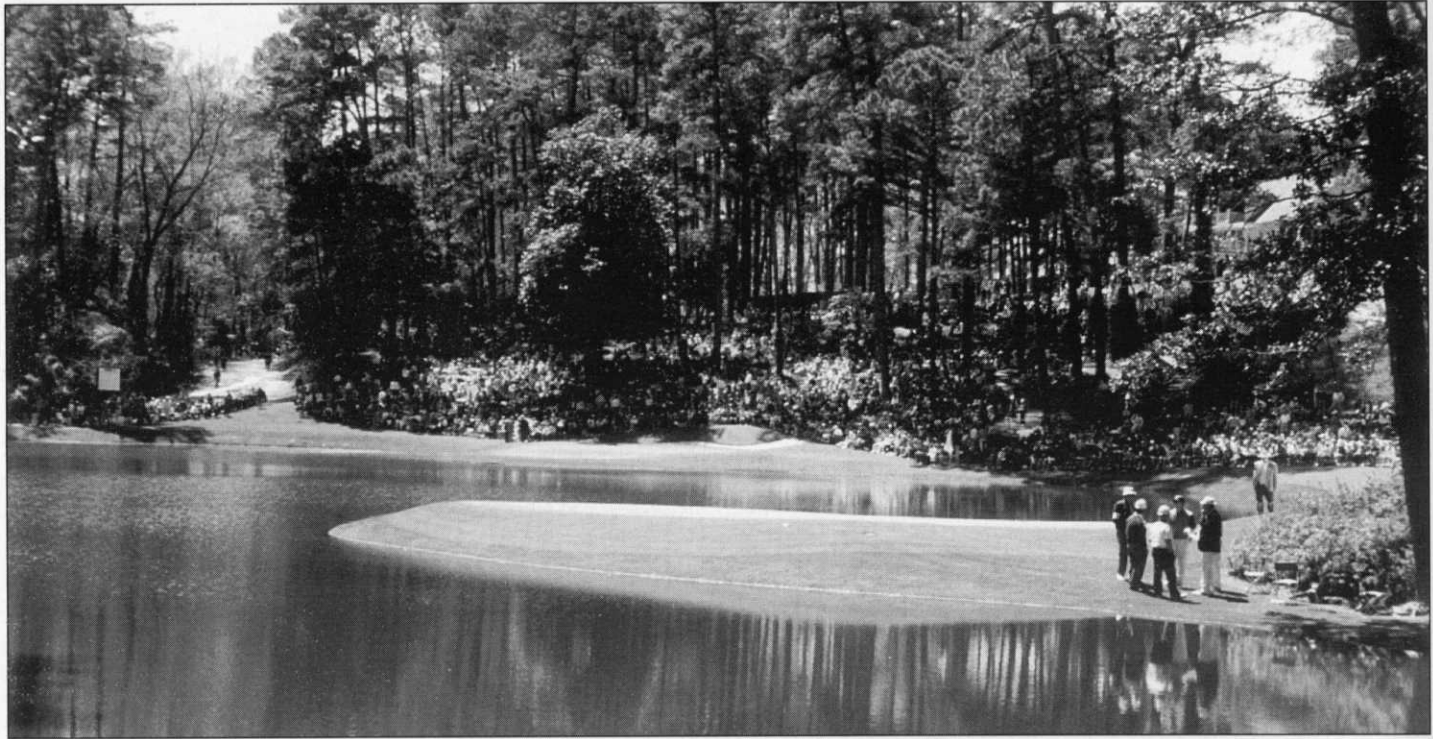
**A**t the 1995 Open Championship at St Andrews my American friends Steve Cadenelli and Shaun Barry introduced me to Dr Rich Hurley of Loff Seeds in New Jersey. Two days

later Dr Hurley was inviting me over to the 1996 Masters at Augusta as his house guest. This was clearly a chance not to be missed if at all possible. Fortunately my good wife, Barbara, agreed and

with considerable help from Steve and Shaun, nine months later, I was flying to New Jersey for the holiday of a lifetime.

On my first day Steve, Shaun and I travelled to Essex County

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Augusta Par 3 course. Previous page: the 170yds 16th, tee shot

Country Club to play with another good friend, Ed Walsh. We had a great day playing over Ed's superb course in glorious sunshine.

We spent an evening in New York City, doing a bit of sightseeing including a visit to the Empire State Building.

On the Sunday we were due to play Steve's course, Metedoconk National but the weather was against us so we decided to leave it until the following week.

We stayed overnight in Baltimore before travelling the short distance to Caves Valley Golf Club, Owing Mills, Maryland where Steve's brother Bruce is Superintendent. The three of us played this fine course unhindered as it is officially closed on Mondays. After thanking Bruce for his hospitality and congratulating him on the excellent course, we set off on the next leg of the journey, a seven hour drive to Pinehurst, North Carolina. We actually spent the night at the Hampton Inn, Aberdeen, North Carolina.

The next day we played 36 holes at The Pit Golf Links, Pinehurst. Another lovely course and I experienced playing to my first



Iain with Donald Ross!

Island green. We visited Pinehurst with its eight courses, the number two course considered to be Dornoch man Donald Ross's finest creation. Shaun, another superintendent Dave Pease a man whose reputation owed much to the Lithuanian blood in him, and I travelled down to Augusta and to the house that would be my home for the coming week. That night Dave and myself sank a few Buds (his two for every one of mine)

and another golf related friendship was forged.

The house is actually owned by a gentleman unfortunately named Mr Shanks, and yes he is a golfer. It is rented for Masters week each year by Dr Hurley's Company to entertain guests etc mostly Course Superintendents it seemed.

On the Wednesday morning Shaun, Dave and I travelled the short distance to Augusta

National Golf Club. Wednesday is final practice day and the Par Three Competition. I find it hard to describe my first view of the course without going overboard, awesome springs to mind. The grass looked so perfect and uniform in colour, there is no rough, the area under the trees is cleared of grass and pine needles are spread. The ponds have perfect coloured water in them. Even Georgia had suffered this Winter, so the beautiful colours were not so evident as usual, but they got better each day as the hot weather arrived.

The greens looked excellent and so undulating, something I noticed about the whole course as television certainly levels things out. In fact, looking at the fairway bunker at 18 makes me realise what an incredible shot Sandy Lyle played when winning here back in 1988. I took my camera with me as during the afternoon the course is closed so it would be my only opportunity to take photographs of the course and green-staff working. I walked a few holes watching the Pros' practice then went over to the par three course to watch some of the competition.



**Fairway cutter complete  
with tennis ball!**

I met up with Steve and Shaun and we went out onto the course to see the greenstaff in action. At the 11th we witnessed 12 Ransomes fairway mowers cutting the fairway, each one slightly set back from the other. They cut the fairway one way from green to tee and it takes two passes. Each machine operator has a tennis ball on his control panel and if the machine in front develops a fault he throws the ball ahead and the operator can stop work immediately. The greens were being mowed by Jacobsen pedestrian mowers, two per green. The pond banks were being flymoed with flymos that had nylon line instead of metal blades. We were told that the whole course is cut in about 53 minutes! I soon realised that the six rolls of film Ed Walsh had most generously given me were all going to be used.

Thursday morning we were up early to go and watch the Ceremonial Tee Off at 7.45am. Sam Snead, Gene Sarazen and Byron Nelson opened the tournament by teeing off at the first hole. We spent the rest of the day watching the golf, most of the time at the par three 6th sitting on the bank behind the green. Unlike The Open over here where you can get all kinds of food, sandwiches and crisps were just about all that was available inside the grounds. The sandwiches were excellent



and very cheap as, well. Something I noticed about everything for sale inside Augusta National was the fair prices, even in the golf shop.

It was good to see a few Brits up on the leaderboard on day one, but Greg Norman was the man in form shooting 63.

On Friday morning we decided to try and get a game at the course on the estate where we were staying, Jones Creek. Shaun and Dave had left on the previous morning to head back to New Jersey, stopping off to play golf on the way. Steve, myself and Joe O'Donnell Manager of Sunbelt Seeds, Atlanta who was staying at the house with us, managed to get a time for the afternoon shotgun start at 1.30pm. We were joined by a local member to make up a four ball teed up at the 7th.

Joe calculated that with two full shotgun starts a day during Masters week the club would take in around \$250,000 in green fees alone. We had a very enjoyable game on a very undulating course, where I managed to get up and down five times out of six from greenside bunkers thus earning the nickname "The Highland Sandman" from Joe. The free bar at two tees around the course was much appreciated on this lovely sunny day.

Saturday was spent at the course watching Greg Norman stretch his lead as none of his nearest challengers made a move. Nick Faldo remained in second place but was six shots back, surely too far to prove a threat now! For the second day running I had the shorts on and with the help of my Masters sun bloc the

tan was coming along nicely. Also down at the waterfront is a bronze statue of Arnold Palmer, the start of a Golfers Hall of Fame which is due to open in 1998.

Sunday. The day of reckoning and a stroll in the park for Greg? With only 42 in the field the golf was not starting until 11am, so no need for an early start, which was just as well as we had sampled downtown Augusta night life the previous evening. We walked a few of the early holes to start with and then found a good seat in the stand at the 13th green to watch all the matches come through. The scoreboard behind us started to tell the amazing story of Norman's collapse and the gallery were clearly upset, except for me of course resplendent in my Leeds United shirt so everyone would know I was a Brit. When Nick and Greg arrived Nick was already two shots ahead. We watched both birdie the 13th and then moved to the left side of the 16th to watch play to the 15th green and 16th hole. I think Greg's ball was closer to us than the green at 16 as his dreams vanished in the water. As everyone now knows Nick Faldo closed with a 67 and won the 60th Masters by five shots, which was great for me, a Brit winning when I was present. But you have to feel very sorry for Greg Norman and hope that he recovers from this major disappointment. We stayed on for the prize giving ceremony held on the putting green after the televised event in the Butler Cabin. After the prize giving I spoke with a couple of friends from the R&A, David Rickman and Mike Stewart, from the European Tour who were over



Augusta 11th, fairway mowing 455 yards



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Pine Valley 16th, 433 yards tee shot



areas of sand and trees. The Caddie's advice, to keep the ball in play or you will get double bogies or worse, was spot on. The sand areas are all treated as bunkers, but because of the size they are only raked once a week so when I put my tee shot into one at the 232 yard 5th and found it in an impossible lie the Caddie just said "Welcome to Pine Valley!" We had a great time on a great course and I managed a couple of bridles for good measure.

Rick took us to their ten hole short course after our round. Most of the holes are replicas of either the par threes on the main course or the second shots into the par fours, ideal for practising. Eric is Course Superintendent at a new course in Atlantic City, apparently nine of the holes are modelled on Pine Valley and nine on Augusta, so I look forward to visiting him and playing there one day.

Tuesday April 16 and my final day. Shaun took me to see Robert Hansen at his family owned Bel Aire Golf Club. Robert has an incredible collection of antique golf equipment and he very kindly showed us it. I think it is time to start searching the antique shops. The next stage of the plan was to meet Steve at Metedeconk for golf, but alas the weather was against us again. We visited a shopping mall so I could buy some presents and had lunch. With time running out we headed for Newark airport and my 7.40pm flight home. My return journey was very smooth and by 11.30am I was unpacking at home in Tain, sad that my holiday was over but happy to be with my family.

I have so many people to thank for making this trip possible and for all the great times on it, but will not bore anyone with a list here, I have personally written to all concerned and hope to be in a position to return the favours some day, anyway I have to go back to play Metedeconk National Golf Club.

One final thing I must say is that this whole trip became a realty all because I am a greenkeeper in BIGGA, and had I not been, then I would not have met these people and ended up at Augusta National Golf Club.

working at the Tournament. During the day several British folk said hello on recognising my shirt.

We dined at an Indian restaurant just down the road from the golf club to let the traffic get away, yes folks there are even Indian restaurants in Georgia.

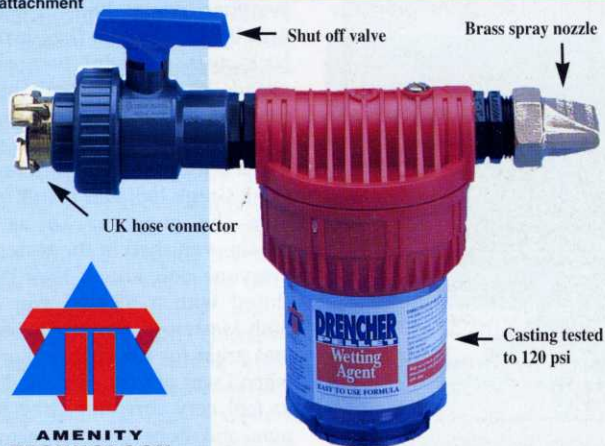
That night there was only one other person left at the house with Steve and myself. Paul was a Hungarian who had been at the prize giving representing the Hungarian Golf Federation. He owned a golf course in Hungary and was planning to build more so was in search of greenkeeping knowledge. Maybe we should get him to join BIGGA and avail himself of our knowledge. We went to bed at Midnight and were up at 4.30am to drive to Columbia Airport in South Carolina to catch a flight up to Newark, New Jersey at 7am. Shaun met us at the airport and we drove the two hour journey down to Pine Valley to play what many consider to be the number one golf course in the World. Steve's other Brother Eric met us and Course Superintendent Rick Christianson joined us. Here we were on the World's number one course playing a five ball with the course to ourselves as it is shut on a Monday, and no green fee to pay, just caddie fees.

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