

New Miracle Professional Premier Greenkeeper of the Year Cedric Gough talks with Scott MacCallum about the award, what it means to him and about his 24 years at Broadway Golf Club.

BROADWAY STAR HEADS FOR VEGAS

There are many who say that to avoid becoming stale you should always be looking forward, aiming high and trying to better yourself. You often hear the view that you must move on to give yourself a fresh challenge.

Cedric Gough has always looked forward, aimed high and continued to better himself as a greenkeeper but has not felt the need to move on to do so having remained at the same golf club for 24 years.

Cedric Gough, Course Manager at Broadway Golf Club, is the new Miracle Professional Premier Greenkeeper of the Year and the rewards which loyalty and continuity bring have been enjoyed both by Cedric and the golf club.

As his Chairman of Green and Immediate Past Captain, Bob Crockford, says, "You only have to go out on to the course and there is 24 years of Cedric - steady improvement every year. He does a great job and everyone appreciates what he and his team does.

"We have always known that Cedric was extremely good. He has pursued a regime of turf care now for 24 years often with a lot of criticism because golfers don't like their greens being interfered with but he has stuck to his guns and as a result we have an excellent course," explained Bob.

Broadway Golf Club is not the easiest to manage. Perched on a hill 900 feet above sea level you can see for miles but the downside is that it is exposed to the north east wind and as Cedric explained, "It is like having a links course inland... plus the extra frost."

"We have very little soil and we are on Cotswold Brash so what soil there is tends to be clay or at least very heavy. Some holes are all clay, some are a combination and others are more natural so we have to have different management techniques for each area of the course."

Cedric was nominated for the Miracle Professional Premier Greenkeeper of the Year Award by the Secretary/Manager of Broadway, Brian Carnie.

"I remember Brian saying, 'I just hope you go on and win it' and thinking I'm not going to say anything but that's just pie in the sky. I thought it was a bit out of my league.

"Having said that the rest of the team and I often say that we couldn't get the course looking



Yes! Cedric Gough, centre, celebrates with his team back at his club

any better with the resources we have if The Open was being held over it," explained Cedric.

"When it was announced that I'd won I was just flabbergasted, because there were some very good greenkeepers in the final. It is one of the greatest things ever to have happened to me."

Cedric wins a trip to the GCSAA Conference and Show in Las Vegas in February while his team receives a cheque for £500.

The initial course visit was performed by Midland Regional Chairman Antony Bindley and 1994 Premier Greenkeeper, David Walden, to whom Cedric also gives credit for entering the competition.

"Although I didn't know David before he came on the course visit he did inspire me when he talked at Harrogate about the award and urged greenkeepers to enter and have a go."

Cedric has an excellent young team at Broadway of Jamie Blake,

Roger Ashby, Martin Jeffs and greenkeeper/mechanic Major Rathbone.

There is no First Assistant at the club as Cedric operates a system whereby all the assistants are equal.

"They are all of a similar standard and strong in different areas so we took a vote and it was decided that I wouldn't promote one to First Assistant. When I'm away I'm happy that I have three heads working instead of one. We find it works very well at Broadway."

One of the elements of Cedric's work which helped clinch the title for him was the tidiness and cleanliness of both the golf course, the maintenance facility and all the machinery.

"There was one tractor which Cedric said was six years old, but looked brand new, and the dirt from underneath the wheel rims had even been cleaned," said Richard Minton, who together

with Pat Murphy undertook the second course visits.

"I like to look after the machinery," said Cedric. "After all, it doesn't come cheap."

Cedric grew up in Bridgnorth and spent much of his childhood helping his father who worked on the local cricket pitch as a volunteer. "It seemed a natural development to go into greenkeeping," he explained.

He began at the nine hole Bridgnorth course and, although he got some help from the local pro, was virtually the only member of the greenstaff. After three years he moved to a First Assistant's job at Ross on Wye, before arriving at Broadway as Head Greenkeeper in 1972. His job title changed to Course Manager in 1989.

"The secret at Broadway is to let the grass get to the mower rather than the mower to the grass - be patient and keep that little bit of extra grass on. It does mean that we have to cut more often, sometimes the tees have to be cut every day."

Travelling up to Aldwark Manor for the final on a Sunday afternoon meant that Cedric missed his first Wolves home game for five years and he was more than disappointed that he missed a fine 3-0 win over Manchester City.

He is Wolves daft and posed the question "Given the option of becoming Premier Greenkeeper or watching Steve Bull score the winner in the Cup Final at Wembley which would you choose?" came up with the answer, "I'd be Premier Greenkeeper, but if it were a case of Steve Bull scoring the goal that took us into the Premiership, that's different."



Leading lights of the competition, with the winner and finalists

Having been a season ticket holder off and on for over 20 years he sees parallels between himself and "Bully" the Black Country's great folk hero.

"I liken myself to Steve Bull because he is a natural player and goal scorer and I'm a natural greenkeeper. I have gut feelings about things. I know when the weather is going to change that sort of thing. I was made to be a greenkeeper," he said, giving a glimpse of the sort of conviction which impressed the judges.

"I don't need to convince people at this golf club that I can do the job because they just need to look at the course but being Premier Greenkeeper is going to be beneficial to me as it shows that the industry has judged me to be Premier Greenkeeper."

Cedric is well used to coping with the critics, whom he calls the five percenters.

"There are the same five percent of the membership in every golf club who know more than the greenkeeper. All memberships are the same but all golf courses are different. You have to stand and take the flack and it is the hardest thing to do. You learn from experience and I certainly feel for the younger well qualified greenkeepers who don't have the experience to deal with the customer."

Part of that experience has resulted in Cedric banning the phrase "temporary greens" at Broadway.

"They are alternative greens rather than temporary and I would like other greenkeepers to stop using the word "temporary" as it causes problems with golfers."

Looking back at his 24 years at Broadway Cedric can't help but

feel a bit frightened by the speed of it all.

"You turn around and 10 years have gone because you are always thinking about the next project. I've built every tee at least once, some of them twice and even more."

Cedric's greenkeeper education started with a week long STRI course he attended while at Bridgnorth and since then has revolved around BIGGA.

"I read magazines and books, attend lectures through the Midland region and Harrogate and also visit other courses with the Chairman of Green and our pro where we play with the local greenkeeper and then look around the course, sheds etc. Likewise they come here. Since winning the Regional Final several greenkeepers have made a

point of visiting to play the course and no doubt more will come having won the National final.

"In the last few years I've felt a need to get more involved in BIGGA, although at Broadway we are a little bit in the fringes of Midland events, and attending seminars at Harrogate has done my confidence a lot of good."

Looking back Cedric has seen the industry change dramatically and he is never slow to move with the times.

"If I took the whole of my career, had someone said to this this young whippet of a lad doing Bridgnorth golf club on his own that he would have pop-up irrigation, triple mowers, self propelled mowers, really expensive equipment to maintain, that he would end up in with an office with a computer and have detailed

records to keep I think he would have melted on the spot.

"In my career I've seen an awful lot of changes and most of them for the better," said Cedric.

"I have been extremely lucky here because I have an excellent team and the Chairman of Green has been superb."

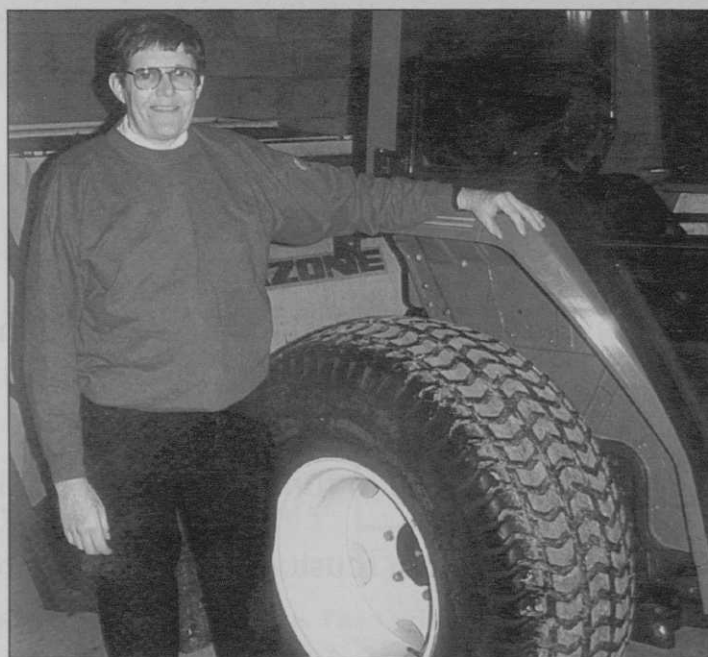
Cedric became the Miracle Professional Premier Greenkeeper from a strong field of finalists representing the five BIGGA regions. Paul Jenkins, of Lilleybrook GC representing the South West and South Wales; Huw Morgan, of Wilderness GC, representing the South East; Stewart McBain, of Hazlehead and Balnagask GCs, representing Scotland and David Leach, of North Manchester GC (now at Lancaster GC), representing Northern.

Having reached the final stages each finalist was again visited and all aspects of greenkeeping were examined including the golf course, maintenance facility, record keeping etc.

The interview portion of the final was undertaken at Aldwark Manor by Richard Minton of Miracle Professional and Pat Murphy, BIGGA's Vice Chairman and Chairman of the Education Sub-Committee, who had visited the courses, and Roger Mossop, also of Miracle Professional, and Neil Thomas, BIGGA's Executive Director.

After long deliberations during which Cedric emerged the winner Stewart McBain was judged second and Huw Morgan third.

Stewart received a holiday voucher to the value of £350 and Huw a holiday voucher to the value of £250.



Underneath the arches: Cedric with clean wheel rim which so impressed the judges