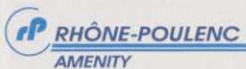


A JUST REWARD

Lindrick's triumph in the BIGGA Golf Course Environment Competition, in association with Amazone Ground Care and Rhône-Poulenc Amenity, is long overdue and well deserved.



In many competitions there are entrants who always have the rest of the field looking over their shoulder. I'm thinking about Brazil, and perhaps Germany, in the World Cup; in golf in the 60s and 70s it was Jack Nicklaus and in Europe, of late, it's been Colin Montgomerie; in rugby union it's the All Blacks.

They may not win every time, but they ensure that everyone else feels that they are the ones to beat to lift the spoils.

In golfing environment terms Lindrick is the name which has been on everyone's lips since the start of the BIGGA Golf Course Environment Competition, in association with Amazone Ground Care and Rhone Poulenc Amenity and indeed when the competition was originally launched as the Amazone Golf Course Environment Competition in '95.

In each of the first three years Lindrick was mentioned in dispatches, becoming regional winner or being Highly Commended but it was not until this year that the famous South Yorkshire Club won the title and received the trophy from none other than HRH The Duke of York during Askham Bryan's recent Golf Environment Conference.

It is a measure of the emphasis placed on the environment at the venue, which will forever be known as the venue for the final Great Britain and Ireland Ryder Cup victory in 1957, that it doesn't go out of its way to win the competition. It just opens its doors and says "This is what we do, and have

been doing for a great many years, see what you think."

And it's true. Lindrick was one of the first golf clubs to take an active interest in matters not strictly concerned with playing areas.

The driving force for much of the early work was Eddie Park, a Sheffield-based dentist and a man so engrossed in the game of golf, course maintenance and greenkeeping generally that his views were regularly sought and published in the likes of *Golf Monthly*.

His collected writings, including a series on "The Management of British Golf Courses" have been gathered together by his widow, Nan, into an excellent book "Real Golf", which includes a pictorial history of conservation work at Lindrick.

"Eddie lived close to the course and the whole team used to go to his house once a week for lectures, based on what he had learned while visiting other courses," recalled Course Manager, Kevin Hazlehurst.

"Eddie died in '89 but he would have been chuffed to bits to have won this award. I know Nan is," a fact confirmed by the fact that as soon as the announcement had been made Nan, still a Lindrick member, was looking at ways of maximising publicity for the club.

Son, Nick, also a dentist, carried on much of Eddie's work and his involvement, experience and expertise has seen him become Vice Chairman of the R&A's Golf Course Advisory Panel.

"This success is a tribute to the staff but also to the Parks as we're carrying out the actions that Eddie and Nick put in place," said Kevin.

The club was formed in 1891 on an area of magnesium limestone - which has now seen parts of the course designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest - and initially had only a handful of trees over its entire area.

Over the years trees grew but so did hawthorn which became the real conservation problem for the club.

"The gorse was being invaded by hawthorn and scrub and we were losing the club's rare limestone grasslands," explained Kevin, who has kept copious records and photographs of the work that has been carried out over the years.

It called for drastic action and large areas were cleared. much of it done by NACRO - National Association of Care and Rehabilitation of Offenders who - with up to 20 men working at a time.



Below: Dougal Rae receives the 1998 Environment Award from HRH The Duke of York

Bottom: The justifiably proud Lindrick Greenkeeping team



"The whole operation was new to us and clearing areas was not something that we'd previously thought about," said Kevin, who has been at the club since 1977.

"In November of '83 the club bought its first chain saw and that made things a lot quicker for us and we cleared the edge of the 1st."

We would clear trees down to the bare soil and then in the spring it would regenerate with bulbs and cow slips and the area would be a mass of colour.

More recent history has seen the club revive the environmental policy which had been established in the 70s and 80s and the SSSI designation, an agreement was drawn up including a management plan for the relevant areas of the course.

"We have introduced English Nature's policy to other areas of the course and, such is our relationship with English Nature we would have been happy to have the SSSI extended to cover the entire course," said Chairman of Green, Dougal Rae.

"I would say we have done more in the last three years than at any other times in the club's history to push back the scrub and open up the grasslands. We believe that what is good for the environment is also good for



the club as we have wild flowers and increasing numbers of orchids on the course which look quite spectacular in spring and early summer," he added.

The English Nature programme involves a three year cycle of cutting back to different heights at different times of the year and the club employs someone in the summer to trim the areas and rake up all the cuttings.

"We are paid by English Nature to look after these areas but we wouldn't have the time to do the amount of work we do without the extra help we employ," explained Kevin.

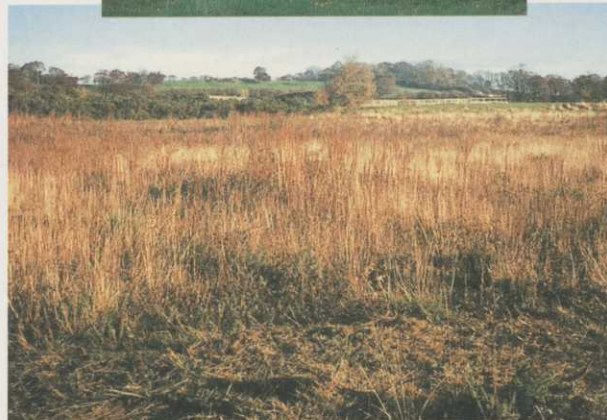
The area which Kevin revealed to be English Nature's favourite is to the back of the 12th.

"It was initially cleared so that it could act as a car park in the 60s - no doubt for one of the many professional Tour events the club has hosted. It was scraped down to the rock but it grew back with a mass of small wild flowers. The area wasn't worked on from 1990 to '95 and it reverted to the original overgrown mass.

"English Nature asked if we could take a JCB and clear it again which we did, all 1.2 hectares. It has now recovered and looks great. We now cut it to three different levels.

"People think that you need to put a barbed wire fence around things and leave them alone and that when you're cutting things down you're not conserving anything but that's not the case," said Kevin.

The club will use some of the £5000 prize to give a bonus to the greenkeeping staff; carry out a programme of hedge laying in conjunction with the Sheffield branch of the British Conservation Trust as well as funding a full environmental study of the course.



Above: A glorious view from the back of the 18th green at Lindrick GC

Right: The three stages of recovery:
Top: (Feb '95) The area around the 12th tee had become overgrown with Gorse

Middle: (Apr '95) Clearing reveals bare rock

Bottom: (Nov '96) After 18 months the difference is there for all to see