



**One of the judges of the 1999 BIGGA Golf Environment Competition, BOB Taylor, Senior Ecologist for the STRI, gives some thoughts on this year's competition**



GRASS ROOTS  
—TRADING COMPANY—

# Environmentally aware

Possibly one of the greatest challenges within the golf industry today is the need to focus our attention on raising the environmental profile of golf. We need to show that with the appropriate management golf can contribute positively towards bio-diversity and play a part in the conservation of our wider countryside. This is clearly an issue that I over the past 10 years have been developing and it is one that Rod Baker, Managing Director of Amazone UK Ltd, was keen to pursue when he introduced the Amazone Environment Competition for Golf back in 1995.

The competition, has grown since then and three years ago became the BIGGA Golf Environment Competition, in association with Amazone and, this year, The Grass Roots Trading Company, and is an excellent forum from which environmental good practice can be recognised, encouraged and promoted.

It also clearly highlights to the Statutory Conservation Bodies such as English Nature, Scottish Natural

Heritage, the Countryside Commission for Wales and others like the RSFB, that golf can be an acceptable land use providing valuable wildlife corridor (linking) habitat throughout the countryside. Being of general interest the competition provides an ideal platform, in which to educate non participating golf clubs and possibly more importantly the players.

I am extremely grateful to BIGGA, for organising and administering the competition as well as to Amazone and Grass Roots for the level and interest behind their sponsorship and this clearly shows that even commercial companies are aware of the need to demonstrate golf's environmental good practice and image, particularly in light of the increasing level of European legislation which I am sure will be adopted in the UK in the near future. Such interest also shows that commercial companies, often thought of as insensitive towards environmental matters, are both aware and keen to enforce their standing.

This year (1999) a total of 53 entries were received from throughout the UK, 22 of which had not previously entered. As in previous years the level of entry was very high indeed with several very comprehensive and detailed applications being forwarded. The level of entries always makes judging extremely difficult but it is the role of Jonathan Hart-Woods and myself to narrow the field to a workable level.

Of the 53, 30 golf clubs were chosen and assessed and it would be fair to say that every entrant visited and possibly most of those not this year receiving any visit, would be worthy winners in their own right. Indeed the time taken to complete the application form and compile any additional information does show in itself a degree of commitment and interest.

Judging the competition is possibly one of the most difficult duties that we perform. Every club has its own areas of intrinsic interest, some have a greater level of financial help, others are more educated in ecological matters and several golf clubs do benefit from SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest) status and thus receive varying degrees of help from the statutory conservation bodies. It is difficult when visiting clubs in the late summer/early autumn not to be seduced by the very impressive nature of the heathland sites as it would be the case throughout the earlier summer period with the downland and botanically rich parkland courses. Given these problems a scoring system has been devised to address the level of interest shown throughout the whole of the club, the quality of the work being undertaken and the way in which the message is being spread through the club and beyond.

From the 30 clubs visited six finalists were chosen and it was from these that an overall winner was decided.

The clubs reaching the regional finalist stage included Kilmacolm Golf Club (Scotland), Wilmslow Golf Club (North), Cardiff Golf Club (Wales), Temple Golf Club (Midlands), The Dyke Golf Club (South) and

Broadstone Golf Club (South West).

Having selected the regional finalist it was time to bring in the Chief Scientist of English Nature Dr Keith Duff to assist the STRI in choosing an overall winner. Although the level of environmental enthusiasm and commitment is clear at all of these clubs it was eventually decided to give the first prize of £5,000 to Temple Golf Club.

One of the outstanding features of Temple is the level of outreach being shown. Golf clubs are regularly visited and often contact Temple to discuss environmental management. The level of enthusiasm is clearly shown at all levels within the club management structure including the whole of the greenkeeping work force. In terms of good environmental practice Temple had through their own initiative improved the golfing environment considerably and as Dr Duff was keen to point out the extent of rough grassland now being managed must be over 50 acres in total. This may be one of the largest areas of chalk grassland in Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire outside existing nature reserves.

The level of commitment being shown at Temple should not however detract from the quality of management being shown at other courses. Without constant management attention The Dyke Golf Club would clearly change from a grassland dominated course to a hawthorn/scrub woodland. At both Cardiff and Wilmslow Golf Clubs an increasing level of commitment is being given to both tree management and grassland management which through regular communication is becoming much more widely accepted by the Clubs. Cardiff Golf Club has an ecological sub committee of over 20 enthusiastic representatives.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank BIGGA for running the 1999 Golf Environment Competition, and the sponsors for their obvious commitment and level of enthusiasm. But most of all, each of the Golf Clubs that have taken the time to complete the application forms. This clearly shows that the golfing industry does care about the wider environment.





Clockwise from right:

Teign Valley Golf Club are extremely committed to environmental good practice. The owner regularly collects flowers from the course and labels them for members within the Clubhouse

The level of enthusiasm towards rough management at The Dyke Golf Club is considerable

A very enthusiastic commitment to environmental management is given at Merrist Wood Golf Club

The judges discuss heathland management with the greenkeeping staff at Broadstone Golf Club

Improving the golfing interest within the woodland edge at Mid Herts Golf Club

Just one of the very attractive golfing features at Hamptworth Golf Club on the edge of the new Forest

