

Ronnie Bunting, Head Greenkeeper of Kilmacolm Golf Club, gives the story behind his success in the recent Green Apple Awards

The apple of Kilmacolm's eye

On a cold wet Saturday in February I was sitting doing the wife's crossword. The letter box rattles and it's the local free newspaper. The wife reads out the requirements to enter what was described as the prestigious Green Apple Awards Competition etc. "Why don't you send some of that gibberish you've been typing for the last month," she says. "Anything for a bit of peace."



Ronnie receives his prize

I had just completed my Environmental Summary for the club in the hope it would be a start for the club to get enrolled on to the European Golf Ecology's new programme "Committed To Green". I typed out the reason behind my submission, addressed an A4 brown envelope and set off to post it. I should explain that the local pub is next to the post box.

Early July and a letter arrives explaining that my submission had been short-listed for a major award. I am invited to attend a ceremony on the 3rd August 12 noon at the Chambers of the Environmental Health Department, Hatfield Street, London, where it would be presented. It was also explained that we were

entered into the small business category.

The 3rd of August, and we arrive at Kings Cross Station. Stepping out of the train was like opening the door of an oven - 32 degrees and no breeze what so ever. We got into a taxi it may well have been Indiana Jones driving. Scary or what!

At the reception everybody there seems to be business types and the hostesses seem offended if you don't accept a glass of wine from them, I certainly wouldn't offend anyone. The nametags we're given seem to attract attention because it was a private golf club and not a council or something more important. I'm asked the same question a couple of times, "What could a small golf club be doing for the environment to justify their presence at such an important ceremony?"

Rather than enter into any lengthy discussion I smile and play the daft laddie, (that has never been difficult for me). Another glass of wine is forced on me and I can feel the confidence swell and before I realise it I'm tapping one of the enquirers on the shoulder and proceed to explain that... I have produced a Course Management Policy Document, and an Environmental Management Plan, but that the submission I put forward was an Environmental Summary of Good Environmental Practice. This consisted of mission statements concerning, Planning Nature Conservation; Natural and Cultural Heritage; Water Resource Management; Sound Turfgrass Management; Energy Efficiency; Education Within the Working Environment; Communication and Public Awareness, and Waste Management. Also under these headings we have highlighted actions that have been implemented, and identified projects we are investigating for

their environmental value and how cost effective they are. There were more than a few impressed glances amid the number of listeners. More wine please.

My good Lady and I sit at one of the 20 or so enormous round tables with floral displays that covered 50% of the table surface. The palatial effects are matched by the buffet served with more excellent wine.

The awards are introduced and the method of presentation described in detail.

There are three categories small business, medium business, and large business. We are in the small business class and there are four awards in each class - the highest being crystal would be announced last.

As the ceremony progresses and all trophies are presented except the crystal, the wife and I look at each other and I whisper, "We have either won the big one or our name isn't in the hat."

Then the compere announces that the Crystal Award of Excellence in the small business category goes to Kilmacolm Golf Club. We get the biggest cheer of the ceremony.

I remember leaving my seat and going up to receive the Green Crystal Apple Trophy, some pictures are taken I return to my seat totally over awed.

Later when we are sitting on the train we could only stare at each other it all seemed like a dream.

Needless to say Kilmacolm Golf Club is very pleased with all the good publicity. As for Jonathon Smith and the Scottish Golf Course Wildlife group, without his enthusiasm and encouragement the experience would never have happened.

As it turns out it is not over yet for the press release is just being given out and the recognition will go on for a wee while yet.

It was a day neither of us will ever forget.