

Terry Crawford manages the only inland 36 hole development in Northern Ireland and, as Scott MacCallum found out, he has some interesting views on greenkeeping...

# MR BIG



Above: Terry Crawford aboard his new Millennium Putting Green

Terry Crawford stands on the balcony of Clondeboye's imposing modern clubhouse surveying his latest project - the Millennium Putting Green which was due to be opened officially on the upcoming Captain's Day.

"I suggested a putting green for the area in front of the clubhouse and the Council agreed that I should put a small one in... but everything has to be big with me," said Terry, with a smile.

"I've given them three different characteristics. A links area so you can practice breaking putts, another which is typical Clondeboye with a lot of subtle borrows and then an area which is completely flat," he explained, at once showing that a greenkeeper who possesses golfing knowledge can be a real asset in so many ways.

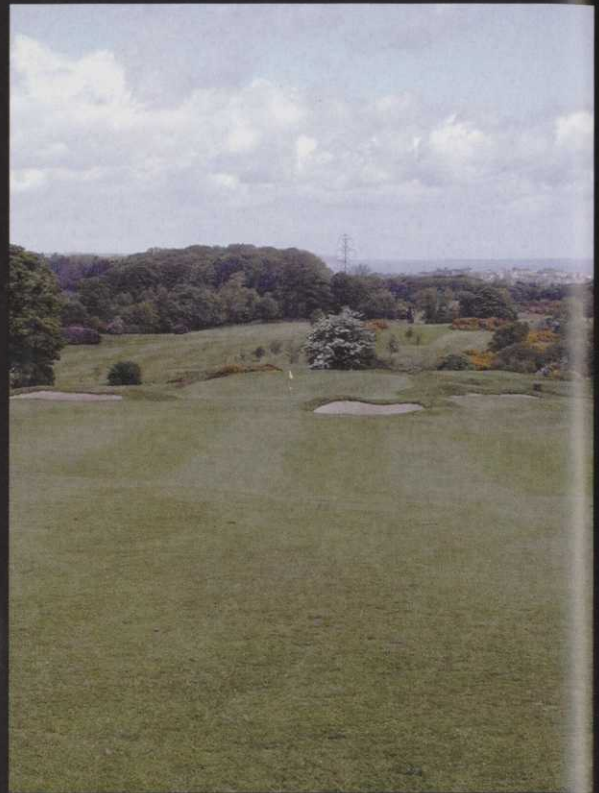
Now a 36 hole development, just a few miles from Belfast, the Duffern and Ava courses offer differing chal-

lenges to member and visitor alike but Clondeboye was originally an 18 holer with nine coming for each of the present two 18s and was built 20 years ago for the princely sum of £33,000.

The Duffern is more manicured and takes up a greater expanse of ground while the Ava is more heathland and much more rugged.

"We've been ranked highly in inland course categories but with so many multi-million pound developments in Ireland we have had to work hard to





Above: The results of some of the alterations made to the course recently

Far right: One of Clandeboye's excellent greens and aprons

Below: The team



maintain our standing," explained Terry, who is a former Chairman of the Northern Ireland Golf Greenkeepers Association, and now an active BIGGA member.

To fulfil this ambition £1.8 million has been spent on the new clubhouse for the 1500 members, £180,000 has been allocated for new maintenance facilities and Howard Swan was commissioned to make alterations to the Duffern course.

"I met Howard, along with Simon Gidman, on one of BIGGA's training courses and liked him very much. I brought him over to do a critical analysis of the golf course but it kind of just went mad," chuckled Terry, as he recalled the occasion.

"The reason I got Howard in was to bring the golf course up to a higher standard by lifting and levelling tees to give better sightings to the fairways and to introduce new bunkering."

Having done some work on the course, including tightening up the entrance to the 8th hole Howard met with the Council members and his potential brief grew enormously.

"The Council members met him in this very room and before he left he was bringing the 9th hole back to the clubhouse, building new practice facilities and all but designing new golf courses."

The meeting ended with Howard drawing up five different options which the members will decide upon in due course.

Terry has been at the club for 10 years and in that time has also used his own methods of improving the courses.

"Golf is becoming easier with the modern day equipment so the cheapest way to improve the course and to make it more difficult is to grow in the rough. The next cheapest option is to put in bunkers and the most expensive way is to redesign and rebuild the greens. We've gone down the cheapest route first to try and make the course more difficult," explained Terry who has also spent around £30,000 on mature trees for the course.

Terry admits he is extremely fortunate to be at a golf club which is so forward thinking.

"I can put my hand on heart and say that in my ten years here they have not refused me one thing. Not too many Head Greenkeepers could say that after 10 years."

"I feel that I'm probably a very lucky greenkeeper but you must work hard to keep yourself in that position."

"The one word that I use about management philosophy, and when I'm talking to younger greenkeepers, is consistency. That's the name of the game."

"If a golfer is on a green and it's not in peak condition there is no use me saying to him 'If you were here last week when we had the Irish Amateur they were brilliant.' He'd say 'But, Terry, I'm here today and I have guests with me.' You must be consistent

and have no ups and downs."

With that in mind everything is done seven days a week at Clandeboye. Bunkers are done seven days a week, greens are cut seven days a week while fairways and tees are cut three times a week.

"We have two teams but with so much golf is is sometimes difficult so sometimes we'll go out and blitz one course and then blitz the other," said Terry.

He has noticed that disease has become more apparent in recent years.

"We're getting more traffic and the climatic conditions are changing. We're not getting season now or rather we can get all four seasons in one day. We're not getting frost to kill off disease. In fact, although we're high up, we've had no frost at all this year and we've only closed the course perhaps three times this year. It is golf 365 days a year and people will play more competitively for a turkey than they will for an Open strokeplay event."

"I'm using much less fungicide than I was five years ago and 50 times less than when I started - aeration is the name of the game. The preventative approach is better than having to find a cure," said Terry, who was the youngest Head Greenkeeper in Northern Ireland and the first to go to Elmwood College.

"I never thought I'd be here at Clandeboye. In fact I never thought I'd get out of Newton Stewart (his first job) because in the past people would go to a golf club and stay there but I could see the challenge of a 36 hole club and this is the only 36 hole parkland club in Northern Ireland."

He is proud of the fact that he has turned out four Head Greenkeepers and is keen to promote the young greenkeeper.

"I've only got a couple of guys over





30. I'd rather they came to me without experience so that I can train them in the way I want them to do a job and they don't have bad habits."

Terry is very much an inland greenkeeper and enjoys a bit of banter with his links land colleagues.

"I think there is more of a challenge working on a parkland course whereas links courses look after themselves really. Alan Strachan (Royal County

Down) wouldn't come and work this because he'd think it was too hard," laughed Terry.

"Greenkeeping to me is very basic and the more basic you can think about greenkeeping the better you will get on. This high tech greenkeeping that you hear about will never last. It gets too advanced and you can't control what is happening."

Terry, who advises at four other

clubs has strong views on what is expected of the modern day greenkeeper.

"Committees and councils used to be full of older guys but now it is the younger members who sit on these and they demand that the course is at its best every day. If it isn't they look to make changes. If you are at the top and you're not producing what they are demanding the next

step is out the door. The first person to be targeted is the Head Greenkeeper.

"Golfers used to expect. They don't expect any more. Golfers demand. That is the difference nowadays."

In Terry's case he delivers more than is demanded as with the case of his state-of-the-art putting green in front of the clubhouse.