

Colin Denny, Assistant Greenkeeper at Prestbury GC, in conjunction with Anthony Davies MG, Course Manager, describes the work that went into the new 17th hole

HEAVEN 17



Above: The 17th collapses due to adverse weather conditions

Below right: The dumpers begin their task of rebuilding

Far left, top: Working out the new gradient

Far left, middle: Showing work well underway

Far left, bottom: Nearly 2000 tonnes of soil was excavated from the 13th fairway

The weather in the year 2000 had taken its toll at Prestbury Golf Club as at many golf courses. The constant rain, which seemed not to subside, had forced the land to slip in front of the 17th green at Prestbury. In its wake it left behind a huge cavity big enough for a new style bunker.

After much deliberation the club decided not to reinstate the collapse but to take the chance of creating a more subtle, lesser gradient face with a banking which would offer the greenstaff the opportunity to maintain it to a higher standard than before.

Ken Moodie, of Hawtree Ltd, who had worked on redesigns at Royal Birkdale in 1991, was asked to draw up plans, taking on board the club's views regarding the gradient. Once plans were agreed, a contractor was sought and a fixed price obtained. The hole was closed for play so that work could commence and be open in time for the first competition of 2001.

Griesley Ltd, was contracted to reconstruct the bank and on March 13, 2001 heavy machinery consisting of a hi-mac and two large dumper trucks moved in. The job of excavating and transporting the soil from the site on the side of the 13th fairway commenced and resulted in moving nearly 2000 tonnes of soil.

Before the grading of the soil start-

ed, the greenstaff dug trenches along the lower half of the hollow, to intercept any water which ran down the bank.

Original drains were found and connected to the main drain. Also a 100mm drain was dug to a depth of 1.5 metres along the front of the green. Small laterals were also dug connecting into the newly installed main-drain. Soil was now graded layer-by-layer using the tracks of the

dumper. While the dumpers were in action, work started at the top of the bank in front of the green. First the turf was lifted and placed close by. Three by one metre boards were placed side by side creating a makeshift road for the hi-mac to run along. In doing so it allowed the digger to excavate soil to a depth of 1.5 metres.

With the trench dug 5-10mm gravel was used as a base to which a 75 metre length of 150mm plastic pipe could be laid and back filled. When the last of the pipe was laid and back

filled, 1-2mm grit was used as a blinding layer then topped off with top-dressing, consisting of 70/30 sand soil mixture. Meanwhile the dumpers carried on with the job of transporting the soil tonne by tonne from the pit site and at the same time consolidating the soil in layers. After a few days, the bank face began to change shape. Within two short weeks of constant activity the dumpers finished their task. All that remained was for the hi-mac to grade the top soil at the 13th fairway from which all the soil had been taken. The greenstaff then started work on the final touches.

Large stones and debris were removed from the area and then the entire surface raked creating a fine tilth, still removing any stones which were disturbed. As soon as the area was raked, a pre-seeding fertiliser was applied, the area left until the fertiliser had broken down and was repeated on the excavation site. The top section of the 17th bank was partly turfed to present a sense of maturity to the new hollow.

A drop zone-area was provided which did not incur a penalty. In the interim period the hollow was once again raked in readiness for seeding, and this was repeated on the 13th fairway. Once the seed had germi-





nated it was clear to see any thin patches and these were promptly reseeded and also both areas were given a further application of fertiliser. The new hollow was classed as play "prohibited" and a no entry zone in order to protect it from players walking onto the newly seeded area.

Golf balls were provided by the club inscribed with the "17th hole" and these were presented to the members playing on his hole. The reason was for safety towards players: If players landed short the ball was left and a free shot from the drop zone allowed, thus protecting the seeded area and adding to the golfers safety. The first duty for the groundstaff each morning was to collect the balls which had landed in this area, wash and return them to the professional ready for the day's play. A further improvement to

the 17th was that trees were pruned back to the existing wood line on the left hand side of the hole.

Broom which had grown tall and brash, consisting mostly of brambles etc were cut using a strimmer with a blade attached and the entire area cleared, opening up the whole area and creating the illusion of a longer more strategic hole.

The 17th hole is now fully open and was ready for the first competition in April 2001.

Golfers, greenstaff and Ken Moodie are pleased with the results. And so we should be. A lot of planning and hard work went into the project with the club boasting a hole that has much improved.

The 17th hole at "Prestbury Golf Club" has certainly changed.

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