



Welcome

PRESERVE THIS PIECE OF GOLFING HERITAGE

A call came into the office a few weeks ago from a guy wishing to drum up support for a campaign with which he was involved. It's not an uncommon occurrence but on this occasion Ian Colville, of Musselburgh, was pushing at an open door.

Old Musselburgh Links is regarded by many as being the oldest golf course in the world, but it is currently fighting for its very survival. The reason? The course is in the centre of Musselburgh Racecourse and a planning application has been lodged for the extension of the track and the installation of a new all-weather track and floodlights.

The plans call for the historic 1st green - which records show having been in place as early as 1832 and has been used for Open Championships - to be destroyed and replaced with a replica while the integrity of the entire golf course would be severely compromised. Indeed under the proposed plans with 60 new race meetings added to the current 25 access to the golf course would also be extremely limited. It would, in effect, ruin one of the most significant venues in world golf.

Now it may be that calculations have been made displaying that there is far more revenue to be made from racing than golf but I'm sure I'm not alone in despairing.

If the oldest golf course in the world were in any other country it would be revered. Indeed it would be treated as a living museum and a town would get as much as it possibly could out of what it was lucky enough to have within its boundaries. Any council worth its salt would hang its hat on the fact that the pioneers of a game which is now played all over the world had started to swing a club on their patch.

I visited Old Musselburgh Links and wrote a feature on it for the magazine in the mid 90s and I was surprised then, that not more was made of the history of the course, but I was pleased at the passion and commitment of the people then involved in the maintenance of the course and the preservation of it however little interest the council, even then paid to it.

More information on the campaign to save the course can be found on www.hool.org.uk and letters of objection should be sent to the Director of the Environment, East Lothian Council, John Muir House, Haddington, EH41 3HA.

Talking of golfing "antiques" I'd also like to pay tribute to BIGGA Past Chairman, Gordon Child, who complete with two new hips and a rejuvenated ticker, beat his age for the very first time recently. Gordon shot a 73 around Churston bettering the target by one. Gordon has always been a fine player but it's a rare feat for anyone to beat their age under any circumstances so for him to do so is even more noteworthy. It's not a record Tiger will match for a while anyway!

Scott MacCallum, Editor

HITTING THE MARK

Billingham Golf Club was the winner of the annual Blazon 'See Your Way to a Better Spray' promotion and, as has been custom over the past 13 years, the winner attended a BIGGA presentation ceremony at Saltex.

From a high number of entries across mainland UK, Billingham's name was the first to be drawn and the club will receive a 300 litre tractor mounted Gambetti Barre amenity sprayer.

The prize was presented to Bob Lawton, the

club's Course Manager, by BIGGA Chairman Kerran Daly together with John Pemberton. In attendance also was Richard Aitken Jnr, representing Aitken's Sportsturf who distribute Blazon, Bill Oliver, from Gambetti UK, and Richard Fry, from GreenLink International.

In addition to receiving the sprayer on his club's behalf, Bob Lawton was presented with a top of the range Toshiba laptop computer and carry-case for his personal use.



NEW FACILITIES

Kees Bleeker, CEO Royal Barenbrug Group, has officially opened the new production and warehousing facilities at Barenbrug UK's headquarters in Bury St Edmunds

Barenbrug's UK business has seen sustained growth in recent years, and to cope with the increased business and improve customer services substantial capital investment into new specialised storage facilities for certified seed, new packing lines and customer service facilities have been made.

The requirements were to house 2,500 tonnes of cleaned and certified seed, to have five dedicated packaging lines, install a full under cover unloading canopy to house 30ft articulated trailers, new meeting and training rooms and production staff wash and rest rooms.

"In our discussions with the UK company it had become very clear that if they were to meet their objectives this extension was essential. The company has already claimed an important position in the UK market and our aim is to make Barenbrug the undisputed number 1 in the UK grass seed industry," said Kees Bleeker at the opening.



L-R: Kees Bleeker, CEO Royal Barenbrug Group, Rob de Vries, Director Royal Barenbrug Group, and Paul Johnson, Barenbrug UK Managing Director