



A Long Time Coming!

For the first time in its 10 year history, a Scottish club has won the BIGGA Golf Environment Competition. Brighthouse Bay GC near Kirkcudbright in Galloway, have scooped this year's prize with one of the most holistic and deserving entries ever. Lee Penrose reports...



Brighthouse Bay Golf Club, Dumfries and Galloway

The course forms one of the principal attractions within the larger Brighthouse Bay Holiday Park and is managed by a team of only four greenstaff under the guidance of Head Greenkeeper, Richard Davis. Owned and managed by Tom and Evelyn Gillespie, the overriding policy for the whole site states; "We at Brighthouse Bay Holiday Park are endeavouring to become the most environmentally sustainable tourist resort in the United Kingdom." Having already achieved the 'David Bellamy Gold Award' for sustainable tourism 10 years in a row, they can't be far off!

Overall Winners	Brighthouse Bay Golf Club, Dumfries and Galloway
Runners up in Winners Region	Reay Golf Club, Caithness
Northern Region Winner	St Annes Old Links Golf Club, Lancashire
Midlands Region Winner	Notts (Holinwell) Golf Club, Nottinghamshire
South West and Wales Region Winner	Royal St. Davids Golf Club, Gwynedd
South East Region Winner	Rookwood Golf Course, West Sussex
Best Newcomer	Guildford Golf Club, Surrey
Best New Initiative	The Grove Golf Centre, Herefordshire
Highly Commended 2006	Beaconsfield Golf Club, Buckinghamshire
	Bude & North Cornwall Golf Club, Cornwall
	Budock Vean Hotel Golf & Country Club, Cornwall
	Caldy Golf Club, Merseyside
	Dunnerholme Golf Club, Cumbria
	Farnham Golf Club, Surrey
	Manchester Golf Club, Gtr Manchester
	Marriott Worsley Park, Gtr Manchester
	Montrose Golf Links, Angus
	Newbury & Crookham Golf Club, Berkshire
	Newport Golf Club, Gwent
	Ratho Park Golf Club, Mid Lothian
	Royal Porthcawl Golf Club, Mid Glamorgan
	South Essex Golf Centre, Essex
	Stocksfield Golf Club, Northumberland
	The Honorable Company of Edinburgh Golfers, Muirfield, East Lothian
	The Pines Golf Club, Dumfries and Galloway
	Wilmslow Golf Club, Cheshire

The club have previously been the recipients of two BIGGA Scottish Regional Winners Awards. These prizes have largely been awarded for the progressive environmental management throughout the clubhouse and associated complex, in addition to the excellent outreach and communication with the surrounding communities. Recently completed and ongoing projects in these areas include; construction of a reedbed for wastewater treatment, use of solar panels on clubhouse/leisure club, onsite production of compost from green waste, use of grey/recycled water for course irrigation, energy transfer technology in clubhouse/leisure club, creation of environmental signs and booklets for visitors and a comprehensive recycling programme involving almost all arising waste streams.

2006 saw a tremendous improvement in the nature conservation side of the Club's application with a significant number of habitat enhancement projects on the course. The 18 hole course nestles beautifully into its dramatic clifftop setting and appears to be timeless in character despite being only seven years old. The development of appropriately sited and managed deep rough grassland contributes to its air of naturalness while providing home to breeding skylark, adder and a host of other wildlife. Gorse has become a dominant feature of the

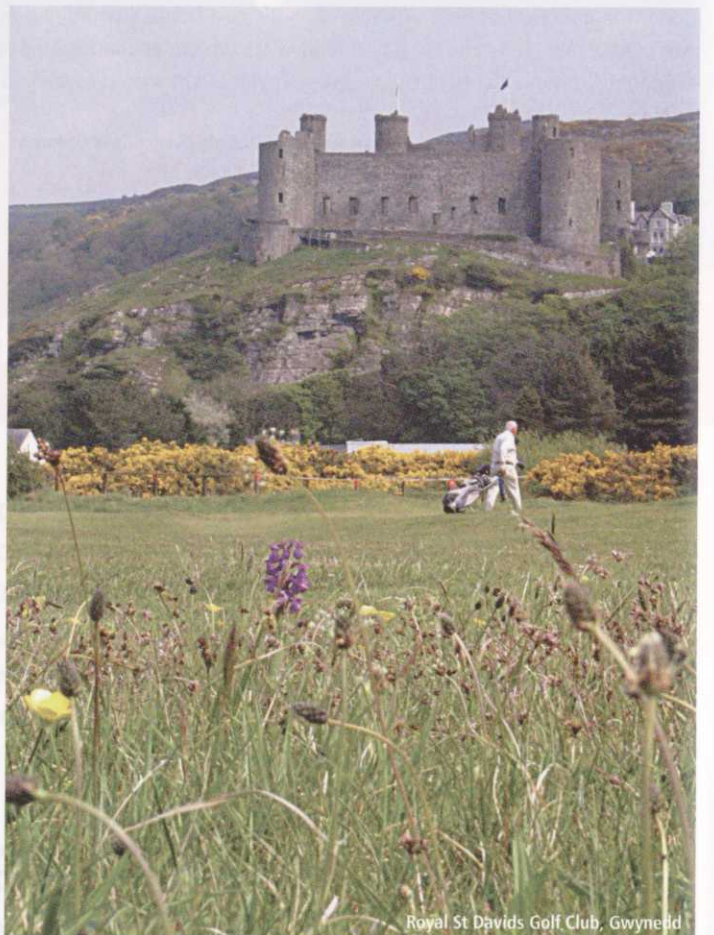
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Reay Golf Club, Caithness



St. Annas Old Links Golf Club, Lancashire



Royal St Davids Golf Club, Gwynedd

central section of the course in recent years as it has developed into a mature to degenerate plant and marched aggressively through the high quality acid-grasslands. A strong gorse management programme has now been put into place in order to retain good quality specimens in the correct places while restoring grassland where appropriate.

Complete species lists of all flora and fauna (including a comprehensive mollusc list) have been professionally compiled so as to provide a basis for ongoing management and a record of the value of the course for local wildlife. The club have also engaged the services of the Scottish Golf Environment group to undertake an 'Appraisal of the Landscape and Cultural Heritage' of the course which recognises and provides management advice on all aspects of archaeological interest. One of the most important features highlighted within is the extensive network of dry stone walls (known locally as dykes) which provide outstanding habitat for specialist birds, reptiles and several types of lichen.

The most northerly golf course on mainland Britain is the proud title held by the Runners Up in the Winners region, **Reay GC**. Managed by a 'team' of one greenstaff (plus an extra man in the summer!), the traditional link course sits adjacent the sea 12 miles to the west of Thurso in Caithness. Do not be fooled, however, into thinking that such a modest club only contribute to the environment by accident. Proactive grassland, stream and dune management, composting and scrub removal are all excellent on course projects that are emphasised to the local community and tourists by nature walks and wildlife leaflets available. Perhaps Reay's best asset however is the minimal input approach to the whole site. Traditional greenkeeping and maintaining the status quo mean that this course is one of the most truly 'sustainable' in the UK.

In the North of England, **St Annes Old Links** were successful in only their second application to the competition in securing the regional title. An excellent individual project in the creation of a large practice tee utilising waste spoil from other onsite work was the highlight of this year's entry. As with all other winners in 2006, a holistic recycling policy is well in place with other important projects such as relict heathland restoration and scrub control on the golf course. Down into the Midlands; **Notts (Hollinwell) Golf Club** secured the regional title for the third year running. The club are widely recognised for their extensive heathland creation and specific habitat management on the golf course and have been highlighted in previous years of the competition for the construction of reedbeds for wastewater treatment.

Royal St Davids GC, in Harlech, have won the South West and Wales Region in their first year of entry, and staved off some very stiff competition this year in historically the weakest region. Working closely with The Countryside Council for Wales and STRI in maintaining the Site of Scientific Interest (SSSI) which covers some 95% of the course, the club are undertaking extensive grassland management trials in order to develop the most appropriate techniques in maintaining a good quality sward for both wildlife and golf.

The South East Region has previously hailed more overall winners than any other in the history of the competition. 2006 again saw some extremely strong entries from a range of golf clubs. After much deliberation by the judges, the public pay and play **Rookwood Golf Course** in West Sussex were finally chosen as regional winners. Owned by Horsham District Council, the course is managed sympathetically for wildlife with buffer zones developed around all water bodies for breeding water fowl. In 2006 when concerns about golf courses using excessive water for irrigation made national news, Rookwood took it upon themselves to put a few ill-educated pessimists straight and produce a series of signs and leaflets about the strict water use policy on the course. The promotional materials that contain the tag line 'Using water wisely' are professionally produced. What is more, they have been displayed in high profile areas, on the roadside at the entrance to the course, on the



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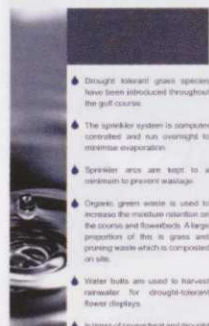
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- Drought tolerant grass species have been introduced throughout the golf course.
- The sprinkler system is computer controlled and run overnight to minimise evaporation.
- Sprinkler areas are kept to a minimum to prevent wastage.
- Organic green waste is used to increase the moisture retention on the course and flowerbeds. A large proportion of this is grass and growing waste which is composted on site.
- Water butts are used to harvest rainwater for drought tolerant flower displays.
- In areas of overheat and drought heights of cut are increased and additional organic dressing is spread to reduce evaporation.
- Flocks and water features are ecologically maintained to ensure maximum collection and storage, whilst encouraging the biodiversity of these natural wildlife habitats.

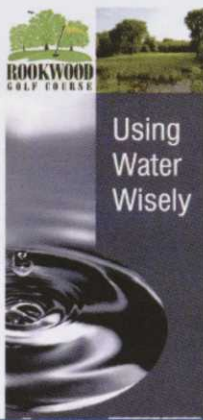
Further Information

Rookwood Golf Course is an exceptional public pay and play golf course. No membership fee is payable. The course is set in an area of gently undulating parkland, providing excellent use of the large number of mature trees with nitrogenous composted greens. The course is rich in wildlife and complements neighbouring Wainham Nature Reserve.

For further information on Rookwood's water-saving measures please contact:

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Rookwood Golf Course, West Sussex



Why do we need to think carefully about our use of water?

Water conservation is increasingly becoming an important consideration for us all. Drought levels in South East England are at their lowest in 20 years.

As of 2nd April 2006, almost 13 million people have been restricted from using lawnmowers and sprinklers. Under the Water Resources Act 1981, Drought Orders are now being put in place across parts of the South East, to limit water use even further.

Low rainfall continues to put pressure on the region's limited water supply.

How does Rookwood Golf Course currently manage its water usage?

• Using water wisely has always been a high priority at Rookwood Golf Course through its design, construction and on-going management.

• No mains water supply is used for the irrigation of any part of the 18 hole golf course or 9 hole pitch and putt course. The irrigation system only uses rainwater and harvested water.

• This water is collected from the course drainage system and external roadways. This is topped up from the neighbouring millpond but only during flood conditions and over the autumn and winter months. The lake provides an important natural resource (lake). The lake holds enough water for over three years of drought and over seven years at current consumption. The lake provides not only an invaluable water storage facility, but is also a feature in itself offering an attractive habitat for wildlife.



• The use of irrigation water has been carefully monitored over the past five years and has been reduced to under half the recommended maximum, for courses of a similar or smaller size, as recommended by the Environment Agency.

• In 2005, Rookwood Golf Course won the South East England BGGGA (British and International Golf Greenkeepers Association) Golf Environment Award: conservation of natural resources including water contributed to this success.



course and in the pro shop and club house leaving no-one who passes or visits the course in doubt that the club is fully committed to water conservation.

Water use features strongly in the 'Best New Initiative' prize in the 2006 competition also. **The Grove Golf Centre** in Herefordshire (not to be confused with its namesake in Hertfordshire) have recently installed a collection and treatment system, which will capture all water used in the clubhouse and surroundings, in addition to rainwater landing on roofs and hardstandings. The water is treated via an underground series of chambers before passing through a reedbed and into a storage lake and used for course irrigation. This makes the club completely self sufficient in terms of course irrigation and moreover makes each litre of water paid for work twice as hard!

Guildford GC have clinched the coveted Best New Entrant Prize this year for their excellent conservation work on the course. Restoring relict heathland on a presently wooded golf course,

forms a large part of the greenstaff's annual workload and involves assisting in maintenance of a nearby nature reserve in return for heather seed/turfes. An outstanding project emphasised to the judges is the Club working closely with Surrey Wildlife Trust in placing 30 dormouse boxes alongside the 8th hole. Over the last year the Mammal Recording Officer has recorded two mating pairs - pretty good for a species named on the IUCN Red List and the subject of a UK Biodiversity Action Plan.

All in all, 2006 has been another excellent year for the BIGGA Golf Environment Competition, Brighthouse Bay finally came out overall winners, however they were pushed all the way to the last by one of the regional winners. The competition is consistently getting harder to judge as the clubs involved in sound ecological management has risen from a small percentage to a majority. The full list of clubs achieving a prize or highly commended certificate is printed below, which I hope highlights the fact the competition is open to all clubs irrelevant of size or history and that no biased is placed on prestige...only effort and attitude.

As always, I would like to offer the sincere appreciation of all involved with The BIGGA Golf Environment Competition to our generous sponsors at Ransomes Jacobson, Syngenta, CourseCare and Scotts. If it were not for the support of these environmentally progressive companies, the Competition would not be sustained as the most prestigious annual environmental event in golf.



Guildford Golf Club, Surrey



The Grove Golf Centre, Herefordshire



Co-sponsoring the competition for the first time this year are Course Care and the company are proud to be associated with BIGGA and sponsor the Environment Competition.

They see environmental issues as a priority and do as much as they can to protect the environment by recycling, taking their environmental responsibilities seriously. They manage a Waste Transfer Station at their Keighley base and are fully licensed by the Environment Agency (licence No. EAWML/65417). They operate in an environmentally responsible way and, for instance, have installed purpose made plant and equipment to process and recycle much of the collected waste. Currently 95% of the waste collected from golf and turf management customers under their Waste Away scheme is recycled. This includes the many thousands of plastic chemical containers. Instead of taking them to landfill, they are turned into chips, which are re-processed and turned into useful rot proof items for use around the course; fence posts, seating, walkway, sleepers etc. Many other products are recycled and include; waste oil, aerosols, filters, fluorescent tubes, batteries, redundant plastic wheelie bins and window frames, old oil tanks, etc.

With the advent of the new WEEE regulations (waste electrical and electronic equipment), they have expanded their waste management services to include items such as old fridges, computers, TV's and monitors, printers, radios and phones etc. They are encouraging waste reduction through recycling and composting by customers too. Their new composting machines will turn grass clippings, twigs, branches, leaves, green kitchen waste and all that cardboard from the pro-shop into compostable material.



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