

Course Feature

Greenkeeper Heaven

Gareth Jones experiences first class customer service at Stock Brook The Country Club thanks to a real team effort.

"Everyday I drive through the gates to the club and get a real buzz. It's incredible and like nothing I've experienced anywhere else. It's just wonderful to be here." That's the statement of Adrian Cornell, as he speaks about life at Stock Brook The Country Club, where he is employed as Head Greenkeeper.

If you complete the same journey past the wooden gates and down the grand driveway, with golf course tickling both sides, you know exactly what he means.

Stock Brook oozes class from the moment you enter the premises. No matter whether you are here for a round of golf, a quick swim or gym session, a game of tennis, attending a wedding or just sampling the delights of the kitchen, Stock Brook's motto is that every guest should have a truly fine and memorable day. Whether you are a one time visitor, casual attendee or fully signed up member of the club, customer service is designed for that person to have a fantastic experience.

Stock Brook is owned by the Peachey family and their belief in running a top class leisure venue is embedded throughout the staff. The club contains three loops of nine holes, aptly named The Stock, Brook and Manor. The Championship course is made up of the Stock and Brook courses, which combines to form a 6, 950 yard test of golf as the Essex wind whips around the 270 acre complex. The golfing side of Stock Brook certainly encapsulates the views of its owner.

"The emphasis from Terry Peachey, the MD, down to his staff is as soon as a guest drives through the gates they get treated very well and have a first class day, no matter what activity they are doing. He also believes in good value for money, so we work hard to provide that on the golfing side of things. We have to make our visitors feel like kings," said Golf Courses' Manager Arnold Phipps-Jones, as he sits alongside Adrian in the splendid clubhouse.

Achieving such a consistent high level of both golf course and service is certainly demanding, but one that is reached by Arnold, Adrian and the Stock Brook green team, all 11 of them. They accomplish this feat through a successful and complete team effort. From Arnold as Course Manager, down to the youngest member of the staff, all have their part to play and all are allowed their say and their ideas processed.



The Stock Brook team, L-R, Back Row, George Davie, Jon Goodman, Graham Burns, Terry Passfield, Lawrence Eley, Adrian Cornell; Front Row, Stephen Burroughs, Cohn Moule, Stephen Eaton, Trevor Dean, Tony Bryant and, insert, Arnold Phipps-Jones



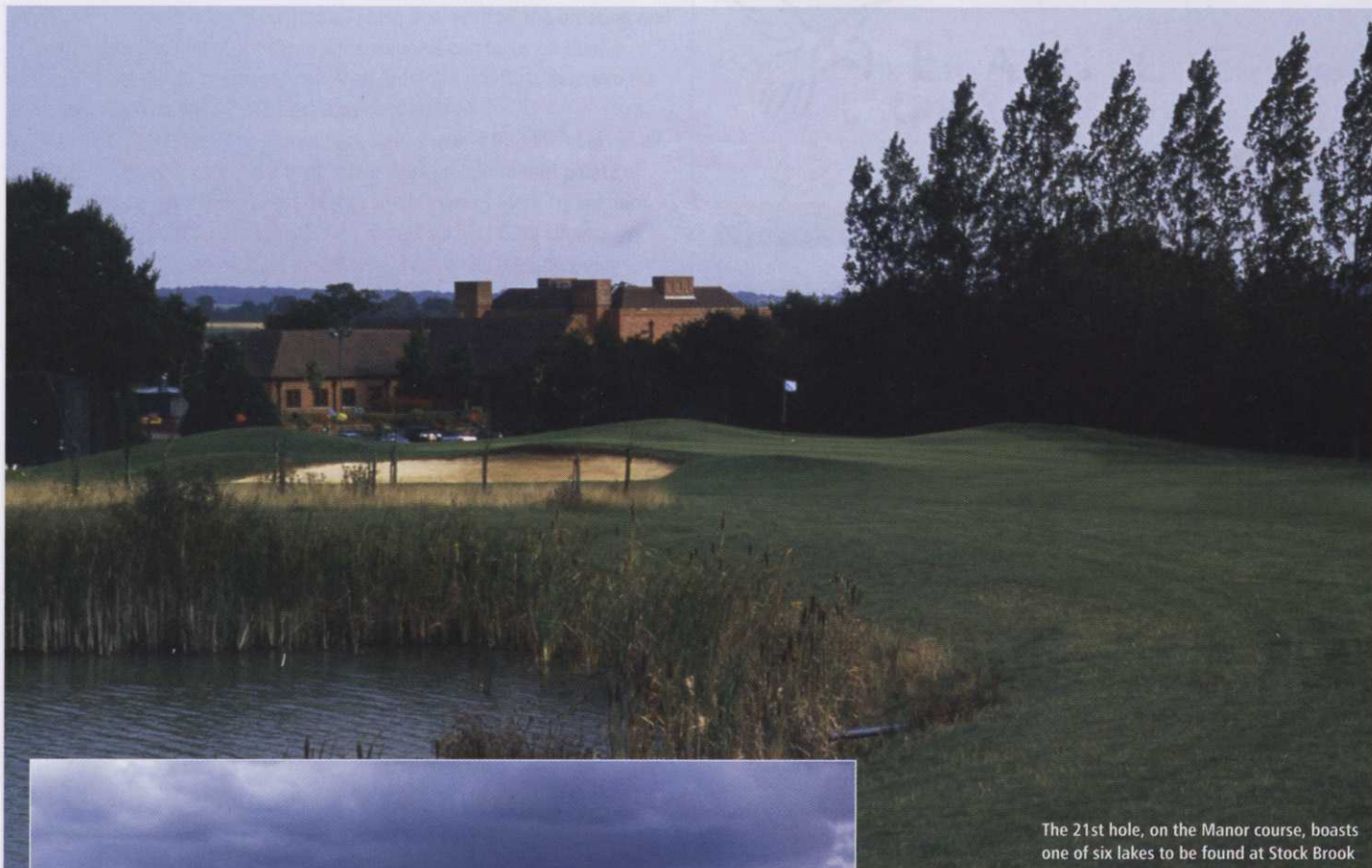
"I can't over emphasise the wonderful staff we have here. Every one of them is great and they all work so hard to meet the high demands we set. There is a real feel of team unity here, with everyone helping each other out when needed. It just makes life so much easier for me as their direct boss, while I'm supported superbly by my Deputy Jon Goodman. They are all tremendous," stated a proud Adrian, who is also the GTC's South East Representative.



Stock's 5th hole is a long par 5



The 12th green on the Brook Course



The 21st hole, on the Manor course, boasts one of six lakes to be found at Stock Brook



The opening hole on the Stock course, a harsh wind makes it a tough start

Added Arnold: "We encourage all the lads to have their say. Without the input from below you can get lost. So having a team that has the skills and knowledge to do the job and the confidence to produce ideas for the course is crucial to us. We all have a share in this club."

Arnold and Adrian, in particular, have developed a strong bond. Arnold, who has been at Stock Brook for over seven years, also oversees operations at Three Rivers Golf & Country Club, which was brought by the Peacheys some three years ago. It means a true partnership and trust has had to be formed to ensure that Stock Brook does not suffer due to its sister course.

"I've been here for just over a year now and we have a good working relationship. I've known Arnold for many years, so that helped when I first started and we, like the team, have gone from strength to strength. It's great having Arnold in his position as it keeps the sales reps off my back and I can concentrate on the course," joked the Head Greenkeeper.

While Adrian is managing the day-to-day running of the Manor, Arnold focuses on the long term maintenance of both Stock Brook and Three



The tee shot on the 15th, out of bounds runs along the right of the fairway



Watch the water on Stock's 9th



An accurate drive is needed on the 14th to avoid the trees

Rivers. The Course Manager outlines all major works, such as fertiliser, aeration and spraying programmes. Logistics is one of Arnold's main responsibilities as the two clubs share much of the main greenkeeping equipment.

The sharing of equipment puts pressure on mechanic Terry Passfield, who has been with the company since its inception, as his role covers both clubs. His mandate from both Arnold and Adrian is to keep all machinery finely tuned and ready at a moment's notice and with over 50 machines under his control Terry is kept busy to say the least. All this means Arnold must work closely with both Terry and the Heads at both clubs to ensure the desired programmes are done at the right time and with the correct equipment.

"All major maintenance work goes through me, it has to really. For example, Three Rivers are aerating the greens at the moment, so they have all the needed equipment there. If Adrian just decided to go out and aerate without discussion he wouldn't have the right equipment to do a proper job and it would be a free for all. Instead we organise everything clearly and keep



everyone informed to avoid confusion. I also deal with all the ordering and buying, again this means the Head Greenkeepers can focus on their courses, while it also means we can share different products between the clubs and not over spend. We are a business after all."

A business it certainly is. Stock Brook claims over 4,000 members in all and hosts over 300 wedding a year, while you can add to that plenty of corporate days and the PGA East Region Final Order of Merit competition. The course itself often entertains famed names such as Gary Lineker, Graham Gooch, Nasser Hussain and Steve Davis, while the late Dennis Thatcher also enjoyed the Stock Brook test.

It's providing that pleasurable examination of golfing skill that is the aim of the superb greenkeeping team. Designed by Martin Gillett, the course has now significantly matured since its inception 15 years ago, and the majority of the team's work is just tweaking little things, such as levelling tees and replanting tress. The goal of both Adrian and Arnold is to keep the course developing naturally rather than forcing it with man made hazards.

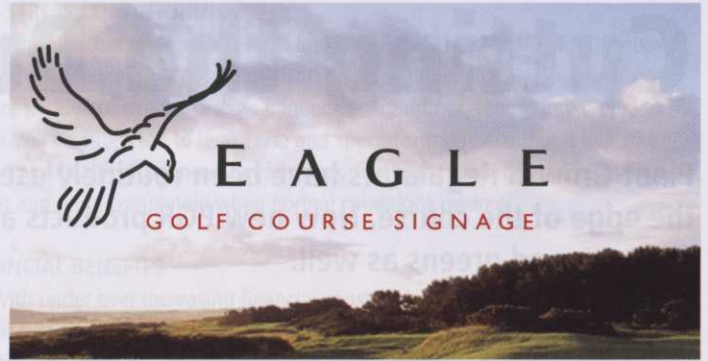
"I always say golf should be enjoyed, not endured. A challenge can add to the enjoyment, otherwise it gets boring. I want golfers to remember this course as an enjoyable test of golf, but they wouldn't do that if we have deliberately set it up to destroy a player," claimed Arnold.

"I agree. This course is a good mental challenge, with six lakes to avoid, but we wouldn't want to put people off from playing it due to it being too hard. It's a very fun course to play and you can shoot a good score, but when the wind gets up it can be a card wrecker, as a recent PGA qualifying tournament will verify.

"So I think we have a really strong balance here. We hit high standards, we have no excuses not to. With everything we have here, the course in the state it is and the team in place I really feel I'm in greenkeeper heaven," finished Adrian, with a broad smile on his face.



The Stock 4th offers a beautiful but challenging tee shot



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