

Course Feature

On the Up

Scott MacCallum visits Trevoze Golf Club, where the arrival of a big amateur event in 2008 is a tribute to the on-going course work being carried out.

Cornwall is known for many things – pasties, cream teas, surfing, tin mining – the list goes on and on, but one of the things for which it isn't necessarily associated, is its golf.



Neil Taylor (left) and Nick Gammon (right)

Sure there are some fine courses in the county. St Mellion for example, has hosted European Tour events in the past, but the royal and ancient game isn't something that you particularly link with Britain's southern most mainland point.

However, that may all change if the great work at Trevoze Golf Club continues. The club has already attracted one of the amateur games top events in 2008 in the shape of the Brabazon Trophy, while Course Manager, Neil Taylor, has his sights set on bringing even more prestigious events to the picturesque club on the North Cornish coast, near Padstow.

Neil took over as head man at Trevoze four years ago, thus fulfilling a lifelong ambition, while at the same time Nick Gammon succeeded his father, Peter, as Managing Director of the club. Together they shared a vision of improving the Harry Colt-designed course so they could attract such major amateur events and they set to work.

"We had a six year plan to get Trevoze back to where we felt it should be," explained Neil, after he had driven me around the course and revealed the stunning views of the Cornish coastline and layout.

"However, since we got the Brabazon we are trying to cram three years worth of construction into one winter," he said, smiling at the very thought, rather than being weighed down by the prospect.

"We will be building more tees, levelling and extending others, continuing bunker renovation, extensive fairway programs while the roughs natural marran grasses are being transplanted and promoted throughout the course."



The Trevoze greenkeeping team

Neil and his 2-handicap playing Managing Director, are fortunate to have Harry Colt's original blueprints to work from, plus the original charts and course planners which ensures that whatever they do is in keeping with the original intentions of the great architect.

"From the yardage charts you could see that, for arguments sake, the tee shot off the 1st was expected to go an average of 140 yards, bearing in mind they were using the equipment of the day."

They discovered that the bunkers that were built to trap the original second shots are there for the tee shots, now thus meaning that they haven't had to make as many major alterations as might have been the case.



Trevoze golf course and Constantine Bay

Neil, one of only three Head Greenkeepers in the history of the club and a genuine lover of the game, has to pinch himself that he is involved in making changes to such a fine layout on a course and since reading about Harry Colt, whose CV carries the names of some of the most revered courses in the world – Sunningdale, Wentworth, Royal Lytham and St Annes, Muirfield, Ganton and Pine Valley in the States to name but a few – he has come to appreciate some of the intricacies of the great man's work.

"Colt never placed an even number of bunkers on each side of a fairway or green. It is, for example, either two one side and one the other or three one and two the other. He felt that was the best way to introduce a risk and reward element to the game. He would always have several small bunkers rather than one large one."

Neil and his deputy Ashley Noyce, manage a team of seven greenkeepers who are responsible for the Championship 18, a nine-hole Headland Course, opened by Peter Alliss in '95 and a Short course aimed at beginners (along with the accommodation grounds) – have worked particularly hard to ensure that the bunkers are one of the main features of the course.



"We have revetted the faces of them but have been careful to ensure the faces are of an angle which players of all abilities can enjoy the difficulty of them. From your tee or fairway shot these can look particularly imposing not being able to see the sand, this adds a psychological factor to your game."

The club also welcomes many professionals who enjoy staying at Trevoze so they can use the practice facilities while also fine tuning their Links golf games, among regular guests are Australian golfer, Rodger Davies, and European tour pro's Richard Boxall and Jeremy Robinson.

Neil, originally from Clevedon, first visited Trevoze as a youngster in his



being kept in a traditional manner and we are being rewarded for it." summer holidays and joined as a country member. He started his career under former premier greenkeeper of the year Ian Harrison. Neil kept in touch with Peter Gammon who in turn followed his career with interest.

The arrival of the Europe's top amateurs for the Brabazon is a fine opportunity to tighten up the course.

With the improvements to the layout of the course well under way Neil, who describes himself as a greenkeeper who enjoys taking risks, is continuing his agronomic policies aimed at ensuring Trevoze retains a traditional links look.

"I firmly believe that people are prone to overfeeding and we haven't fed the greens here for about three and a half years. Instead we work hard to improve the root system. We keep greens tight and lean with our winter height being four mil going down to two and a half in the summer.

"I'm not saying this would work for everyone, as Cornwall has milder weather than the rest of the country. Having said that we did have frost and snow last winter which we haven't had in 20 years and we kept the same cutting regime without any problems. I think the grass just got used to growing at that height."

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Course Feature



17th hole

Neil talks enthusiastically about looking at the grass and working out what its needs are. "It gets its food from down through the roots so all we are doing is making sure the root systems are healthy. The pH level on our greens is 8.9 and we have some of the highest lime contents anywhere in England because we are built on a dune. In all honesty grass shouldn't be growing, but it is, without me putting anything on. If I did alter things I might change the indigenous grasses and that is one reason why I don't feed."

"My aim is to keep the natural links greens, true, consistent and fast year round. When our greens have a pale and slight shine to them, that's when I am happy." Neil paid tribute to Hoylake and this year's Open as being a great boost to British greenkeeping as they achieved this superbly.

"A lot more people are now accepting a dry fairway and a crusty green which is great."

While the Old Course the previous year also boasted magnificent links conditions, Neil believes it is the incredible heat that really brought the issue to the forefront at this year's Open.

"We stuck a thermometer in the ground when we got back from The Open and it read 42 degrees celsius and was killing off the grass. Hoylake was burnt up even more than we were, so when members were asking us why we weren't using our irrigation they were then seeing the best players in the world playing on burnt up fairways."





Having installed a state of the art Rainbird irrigation system not long after he started, which he designed with Roger Davey of Irritech, this has enabled Neil to monitor the local weather and balance the irrigation to suit the course needs. This has enabled Neil to read the ET rates and keep the course alive throughout the summer months, without losing any of the Links qualities.

Neil is pleased that, in conjunction with Nick Gammon, he has licence to look after the golf course as he sees fit and feels that Course Managers at many members' clubs suffered for a lack of flexibility imposed by the members.

"Season wise our winters are changing and we are now getting germination up to December. However, a lot of people are still working to their original yearly programmes and can't change because jobs have been booked into specific times of year and can't be moved because of club fixture lists. We have got to be able to look at how the seasons and changing and adapt to the times."

Neil and the team are hoping that when the Brabazon Trophy arrives at the Club – it is being played in May which Neil believes is when the course is looking and playing its best – it will act as a springboard to other major events and his dream is to one day host a Walker Cup at Trevoise along Open Qualifiers.

"I'm so proud to have got the Brabazon and to have achieved what we have here and getting a top amateur event is a credit to the course as they are given to club's on merit. I want us to be known as a great golf course being kept in a traditional manner and we are being rewarded for it."



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