





A Warm Welcome Awaits

Burnham and Berrow plays host to the BIGGA National Championship in October and, as Scott MacCallum found out, it is sure to leave a lasting impression on those who attend.

The traditional Burnham & Berrow clubhouse has acted as a perfect backdrop to photographs of some of the country's finest amateur golfers holding silverware aloft.

Those who have won around the stunning Somerset links have certainly earned the plaudits as it is without doubt one of the best courses to be found anywhere.

It has hosted half a dozen English Amateur Championships and the course identified players of the quality of Sir Michael Bonalack and Warren Humphries as Champions, while the final of the 2006 English Amateur saw Ross McGowan and Oliver Fisher, both now making names for themselves on the European Tour, contesting the final.

This October, BIGGA's Champion Golfer will have similar photographs taken as Burnham and Berrow Golf Club hosts the two day event for the very first time.

This year, during the week of The Open Championship, the Tillman Trophy will be played at Burnham and as a counting event for the Amateur World Rankings it has attracted a quality field of 120 with the high handicap being scratch and the low handicap +5.

"We've got the Brabazon and the R&A Boys' Championship in

we sat in the clubhouse looking out over the 1st tee and 18th green.

And Richard certainly does have a lot of friends in the industry as he made a big impression on everyone he met during his year as BIGGA's National Chairman in 2006.

While he always has time for everyone and generally gives an impression of being a glass half full kind of guy, when it comes to his golf course, Richard has an attention to detail that a course of the quality of Burnham and Berrow desires.

To that end the work that has and is being carried out with regard to bunkering, overseeding and pest control has all contributed towards improvements being made to the course.

Burnham and Berrow has had input from three of the all-time great architects – Herbert Fowler, Harry Colt and Alister McKenzie while the more recent work has been carried out by Martin Hawtree.

The course is cut between some monster dunes with tough pot bunkering and large sloping greens. The four par-3s are particularly challenging and the last two holes, consisting of a 200 yard par-3 and a menacing par-4 445 yard closing hole, especially tough.

"We are a traditional out and back golf course – if you lose on the 10th green you've got an unhappy three mile walk back to the clubhouse –

"I'm looking forward to meeting all my friends during the week and hopefully, after the event, they'll still be my friends,"

Course Manager,
Richard Whyman.

2011, one in June and the other in August so it will be a manic year," said Course Manager, Richard Whyman.

"But that's the reason I came here in 2003. I could have stayed at Bude & North Cornwall Golf Club, which I'd been at for 18 years and which I still love dearly, but I always wanted the challenge of preparing a course for large events. You might not always think it is such a good idea a week before but, hopefully, the week after you've had a real buzz and thought it was the best thing you've ever done."

It will no doubt be a similar feeling that Richard and his team will be hoping to get when they welcome the field for the BIGGA National Championship, in early October.

"I'm looking forward to meeting all my friends during the week and hopefully, after the event, they'll still be my friends," joked Richard, as

and as a result all our bunkers on the way out are south facing and they used to just fry and crumble," explained Richard.

"One of the great things about BIGGA is the networking! I was at The Open Championship at St Andrews in 2005 when I was Vice Chairman and I met Chris Watson, whom I'd never met before although he works not far from here at Sherbourne.

"He put me in touch with Andy Church of Lancashire Turf Supplies up near Birkdale and we've been using their revet turf ever since. It's been really successful. We used to keep the grass on the faces of the bunkers but now when we revet the bunkers we keep the grass off the faces and it's working well. We also have sprinklers in all the bunkers facing south," explained Richard.

The overseeding policy has also reaped its rewards with a higher

ABOVE: The dune structures at Burnham & Berrow are quite outstanding



percentage of fescue now apparent on many of the greens.

"During the growing season we overseed four greens every Monday morning. It's something we started last year and it's worked really well.

"We go across with a vertidrain then brush the seed in by hand before going over with the triple brushes. We used to do it twice a year but I believe that there is less waste doing it this way and by starting at 6am and finishing at 10am no-one knows we've been out and there is no disruption to play. Our fescue percentage has increased quite a lot especially in areas which have always struggled during dry conditions said Richard with some greens increasing by 30-40%," Richard, has also overseen a 50% cut in fertiliser and pesticide in recent years

The other area where strides



have been made in improving the course is that of pest control and it is a vindication of the decision to employ a pest controller on a full time basis.

“Go back through the old minutes of club meetings and you’ll see that rabbits have always been a huge problem at this golf club. We tried every thing from professional rabbit shooters to Joe Bloggs down the road who was ‘the best rabbit shooter ever’ but nothing worked. Our rabbits don’t sit still,” explained Richard, who added that the course is on a SSSI site with a nature reserve at the bottom end of the course.

“The new policy became possible when my deputy and ex Head Greenkeeper Mick Dodd retired it freed up some resources to employ a trainee and create a trail post of a full time pest controller. Mickey

was a real gentleman who showed me all the ins and outs of Burnham said Richard; he also thanked his immediate predecessor, Paul McDowell, who put many management controls in place which have been integrated into today’s management controls.

“It was actually the Chairman of Green’s idea to appoint someone full time to control the rabbit problem. It was a 12 month trial initially with the proviso that if the problem was sorted out we wouldn’t get rid of the post.” Peter Golledge, a trained gamekeeper, has now been with the club for three years and the improvement to the course has been dramatic. It has meant that at the bottom end of the course which was devoid of rough now has rough again

“Peter starts at 4am shooting rabbits, then has a break around 7am.



Richard, fourth from left, together with his team, are looking forward to meeting everyone in October.

He then goes out and fills in any rabbit scrapes which have occurred overnight. Later he’ll go out and check the permanent rabbit fences and our electrified rabbit fence.

“The most important thing is that the person who does the job is trustworthy as you are not always there at 4am to check that he’s out doing the job. Peter is excellent and really dedicated and we only hope that the members have long memories and recall what the course was like before we employed him,” said Richard.

Burnham would not be the course it is today without the excellence of the greenkeeping team which consists of seven including Richard and has over 96 years experience of working this wonderful links between them, with Richards Deputy Paul Dunn being the longest serving member of staff with 39 years of service followed by Andrew Briggs Mechanic/ greenkeeper on 24 years.

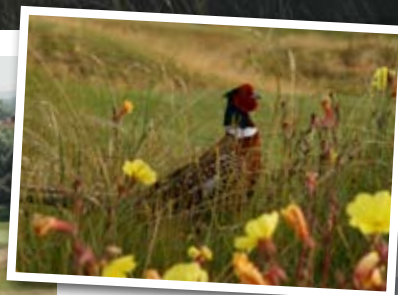
A traditional members club Burnham and Berrow 18 months ago moved with the times and scrapped the large committee structure in favour of a slimmed down five man board of management.

"I don't have Greens meetings any more but regular meetings with the Chair of Green and our Managing Secretary, Michael Blight. It's critical if you have a small board that you get the right people on it.

Board members are elected on a three year team and can be re-elected after their term of office.

The Board is very aware that the club must continue to go forward to enable Burnham to continue to be recognised as one of the finest links courses in England.

"We are really looking forward to welcoming BIGGA to Burnham and Berrow and I'm sure that those who come will meet a very warm welcome and a tough challenge on the golf course.



Please select the relevant category:

- Full Member
- Affiliate Member

The entry fee of £80 includes all golf fees, lunch both days and dinner on Monday evening. Please note that there is no accommodation provided.

Name

Address.....

.....

..... Post Code

Mobile.....

E-mail.....

Membership Number

Handicap.....

BIGGA Section.....

Payment method (please tick)

- I enclose my cheque made payable to 'BIGGA' value £80
- Please debit my Mastercard / Switch / Visa / Delta card with the fee of £80

Card number.....

Start Date

Expiry Date.....

Last 3 security digits

Issue No. (Switch/Delta only)

Signature.....

Date

Or E-mail your details to:
sandra@bigga.co.uk
 Ensure you receive confirmation of entry by return email.

Deadline for entry is 11th September 2009.



Completed entry forms should be sent to:
BIGGA National Championship, BIGGA House, Aldwark, Alne, York YO61 1UF

The main tournament for the Challenge Trophy will be played over 36 holes, medal play, with the best overall gross score producing the BIGGA National Champion, who must be a greenkeeper member. The greenkeeper player with the lowest nett score will be presented with the BIGGA Challenge Cup.

There will be prizes for 1st, 2nd, 3rd over 36 holes in both the nett and gross categories, additionally after each day of 18 holes there will be prizes for winners of handicap divisions. The BIGGA Regional Team Cup and prize will be calculated from the 8 best nett scores over the first day of play. If you have a poor first day an alternative Stableford competition will be held on the second day of play.