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PUTTING THE ENVIRONMENT FIRST

Scott MacCallum visits 2008 Environment Competition winner Caldy and discovers a club where environmental management is on every agenda

FEATURE

When Caldy Golf Club was announced as winner of the 2008 BPGA Golf Environment Competition, sponsored by Bannerman Jacobson, Scott, Spink and Golf Monthly, it was the culmination of a dream, not to mention a bit of hard work, for Course Manager, Carl Crocker.

Carl had led the club since the competition began at Caldy Golf Club, in Essex, and when he arrived on the scene in 1999, he found, in Head Greenkeeper, Ian Farrell, a real commitment when it came to environmental work. "I was the club to move forward as a club," said Carl.

"I'd thought of doing some good work with the STPA, Bob Taylor, and we carried on doing the same sort of thing when I came up here," said Carl.

And it would be far to say that what has been achieved at Caldy more than makes them an enviable Environment Competition Champion.

"We won the Northern Region Award in 2005 and the feedback then was that we could be the clubhouse side of things so that we could go even further and not to just also win. Our Section Manager, Gail Cropper, got to hear and made real impressions in the clubhouse," explained Carl, adding that giving environmental issues higher priority and organizing yourselves slightly differently was the key.

"We have put out glass recycling boxes in place and it was just a case of making a few phone calls. The services are out there at little or no cost in the club and you just take the trouble to investigate," he said.

The initiative was well received with the management, further negotiation, and a new roof had to be installed, but everything the Caldy team does has environmental considerations.

The Award presentation during the 2008 Week unfolded that commitment.

"I was accompanied by a Paul Capson and BGA member who, without any prompting, turned to me and said that we had to look on from here, that BPGA was Chairman, Paul Weston, Course Manager of our former membership Caldy Club and how much the club had moved forward since the competition."

Carl has managed to acquire a couple of trophies in this last year's golf club which he has to manage himself.

"When Ian and Gail took over as Chairman and I was given a new assistant with that in mind, I had been in my house as Chairman, I haven't been quite as aggressive, but then we haven't needed to be."

Carl took members on course walks to explain the philosophy of their management to look up the clubhouse windows.

"One of the club's main assets is the history of the clubhouse which is the clubhouse because of the Green Play ground in front, while there was a big bit of Scots Pine that had been planted to shield an old tip. That tip is now grassed over and is a conservation area that we have to look after for the place has now gone."

The common theme of planting trees and then expecting them to flourish perfectly with no ongoing care, adding that he knows of clubs where the policy is written in stone that trees should not be touched.

"Conservation not preservation should be the motto," he explained.

"The work was carried out in 2005, the weather year on record, and many members thought we'd completed the course. However, due to the strong character of the Captain, and particularly the then Green Chairman, Sam Dickinson, they carried on not finishing a job they had expected to complete until July/August when it had been scheduled for completion in March/April before the main golf season. But a golf course is a fantastically regenerative place and if people want to go and have their trees brought to me where the drive are," said Carl, who although not at the club when the work was done has certainly benefited from it.

"That system is the foundation of us many of the things we've done since. For example, we've been able to carry out some work when before we would have been in and know that whatever we are doing we are more than 20 metres from a drive," said Carl, looking back at a project which featured in the May 2002 edition of Greenkeeper International.

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Scott MacCallum visits Caldy Golf Club

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