



Wimbledon may be most associated with another sport altogether but, as Barry Heathcote discovered, the golf club which carries its name is building a reputation for itself in its own right

**Wimbledon Park Golf Club has just completed the first phase of works that will transform the course.**

Course Manager, Dave Langheim has been the driving force behind a project which will see the complete renovation of the course and installation of a state-of-the-art Toro Links irrigation system.

Dave moved to Wimbledon, across the road from the famous All England Club, in 2008, having previously been Course Manager at the Bernhard Hunt course at Foxhills.

"Wimbledon Park was looking for a person to improve the course and during my first few months I put forward a five year plan which took account of the members concerns with the inconsistency of the greens tees and bunkers."

He also put together a proper



Course Manager,  
Dave Langheim



labour structure, took on an extra member of staff and turned the mechanic's role from part to full time.

"A programme of general good practice was put into place to improve the playing surfaces of greens and tees and a major emphasis was put into machinery purchase with an investment with Toro machinery to ensure the correct machinery was available to carry out the works required," said Dave.

He also initiated a wildlife and environmental plan working closely with the wildlife and wetland trust. In addition a tree planting programme.

Within year three of the five year plan a course audit was put into place.

Initially the club decided to appoint a Golf Course Architect and after a process of interviews with a number of qualified architects, in February of last year Thomson Perrett and Lobb was appointed to





undertake a full design review of the course.

Part of the brief was to strengthen the finishing holes of the course and add further interest for the members. Adding interest for members is often the greatest challenge for a golf course architect as the ability and expectation of golfers vary enormously. Tim explained that expectations of golf include the competitive challenge of the game on the one hand to a social walk as a form of exercise and catching up with friends. Therefore creating a golfing experience which is fun and challenging is a difficult thing to achieve.

With that in mind Tim began the process of undertaking a full strategic review of the existing course. He made numerous visits to the club, walking the course and discussing the issues with members of varying playing ability. This helped to solidify some of the initial design concepts Tim wished to adopt. One of the overriding observations he made from the course analysis was that the existing course frequently punished the higher handicap golfer. This was prevalent from some of the bunkering being situated quite a distance from the

green, penalising the more inaccurate shot.

Tim's initial concepts were presented to the club and following a process of discussion with the board and membership were approved.

The course is built around a 85,000m<sup>3</sup> lake and a number of the holes are low lying.

It was apparent that ground water may become an issue, particularly with drainage outfalls and potential depths of the proposed new bunker bases. A detailed GPS survey was carried out to the entire site. This provided a contour plan that assisted Tim with his proposals and design.

"That survey enabled us to plan accurately the works and have a logical approach to drainage and outfalls. Interestingly within the final design the net sand area of bunkers was reduced from the existing course and the team were happy with the proposed placement of the new bunkers," explained Tim.

The final design and tender package was completed during the summer of 2011 at which time the tender package was sent to three approved contracting companies. Following tender submission each

IMAGES: Bunkers at Wimbledon Park Golf Club showing various stages of completion







ABOVE: A renovated bunker under construction at Wimbledon Park Golf Club

company was invited to attend a meeting to discuss their bid.

Profusion Environmental Ltd was chosen and awarded the contract. Dave felt that it was clear during the interview that Profusion had a passion and approach to the project which impressed the committee.

While Profusion is a new name in this sector the people behind it have a level of experience second to none. Nigel Wyatt, Simon Hatcher and Ian Martin have been working in the golf construction industry for 30, 20 and 40 years respectively.

Nigel was delighted with the appointment saying that this opportunity will be invaluable for Profusion, this being the company's first major course reconstruction.

"We were pleased to have the opportunity of working with the club, Tim Lobb, Dave Langheim and his team to achieve the club's goals," said Nigel.

The site was mobilised and the works commenced last October on the first phase of the works which included holes 1-3 and 12-18 a total of 10 holes. Tim worked closely with Ian Martin, Profusion site manager in order to achieve his design philosophy in the build.

Bunkers were rough shaped initially and then tweaked following Tim's visits. The site is made up of London clay, which not only is challenging from a drainage point of view, is enormously difficult to shape. Having completed the final shaping a sand line was sprayed within the bunkers and a ledge created for the revetted edge. This revetted turf edge gives a very distinctive appearance and really helped the new bunkers be visually striking.

Knowing his course and problems that had been experienced with the existing bunkers Dave recommended that the club install a bunker lining system, something that would prevent sand from being contaminated with the clay, associated problems with drainage and other issues. He trialled a number of bunker lining systems and found that the best solution was Blinder.

Penny Long, a director of The Blinder company, said that working with prominent Course Managers and industry professionals Blinder has been created to provide the perfect solution to consistent playable and easy to maintain bunkers.

Blinder enabled Tim to design very steep faces up to an angle of 45°

as Blinder has proven to minimise sand wash from the faces. Blinder uses environment agency approved recycled rubber granules mixed with a binding agent throughout. The rubber granules are placed in a pan mixer together with the binding agent which gives the product great consistency and strength.

The mixed product is wheeled into the bunker and laid by hand trowelling. This ensures consistency of depth and allows the product to be laid on steep faces and intricate shapes created by the golf course architect.

"The product drains effectively throughout and once it has cured is durable and resistant to club strikes. Importantly being a rubber based product will not cause damage to the golfer or the club," said Penny.

Phase One of the works has now completed and Dave is delighted with the results.

"The Profusion team have been excellent in what have been some extremely trying conditions."

Phase Two commences this October and while Dave will be having the course to himself over the summer is very much looking forward to completing his five year plan.