

Scott MacCallum ventured to the outer limits of East Anglia and found a golf club being woken from its slumbers...

Sleeping Beauty



There is nothing more satisfying than to see something restored to its original splendour. It can be a classic car or perhaps a piece of period furniture but in the case of one little corner of East Anglia it's a golf course.

Thanks to the combined efforts of committed new owners, the Course Manager and his team and the club pro, Thorpeness Golf Course is being returned to the quality envisaged by the great James Braid when he designed it 75 years ago.

Although now known as the home of the Sizewell Nuclear Power Station - which offers a unique backdrop to the 10th hole - Thorpeness itself was built in the early part of the century as a holiday village for diplomats who had spent time out of the country but who, on their return, could enjoy some time in retreat taking advantage of the sailing, fishing, walking and golf offered by this little oasis on the eastern edge of East Anglia. It is still an ideal retreat for anyone wishing a quite, relaxing break.

Sleeping Beauty



Above: The 10th hole with Sizewell Power Station in the background

Below: The Thorpeness team with pro, Frank Hill third left, and Ian Willett, third right

Far right: The 18th hole with the unique House in the Clouds

"It's like going back in time" is a comment regularly heard by the locals and when you visit you can appreciate why because the pace of life is certainly a couple of notches down from the hustle and bustle of the rest of the country.

Thorpeness also boasts one of the strangest homes to be found anywhere in the world. "The House in the Clouds" is a perfectly normal looking building but for the fact that it is perched on the top of a water tower overlooking the 18th green.

The golf course is a little treasure. Described as a Maritime Heathland - not near enough the sea to qualify as a links but not far enough inland to qualify as heathland - the course offers up images of the great heathlands of Berkshire and Surrey while providing more than enough bracing sea air to fill lungs for the duration of a round.

"When I arrived in October '96 the Co-Owner and Managing Director, Tim Rowan-Robinson, gave me five years to get the course back to its best and we've made good progress, particularly in the last 18 months," said Course Manager, Ian Willett.

Ian's arrival at Thorpeness followed close on the heels of that of the new owners and heralded an end of a period when the course had suffered from a lack of investment and as a result become a little careworn.

One of Ian's first initiatives was to begin delegating duties to the rest of the staff who had previously been limited in their roles within the club.

"It was like watching flowers bloom and morale increased straight away," said Ian, recalling the time with a satisfied smile.

With none of the staff involved in formal education Ian then spoke with Tim Rowan-Robinson about putting that right.

"We decided that we'd aim to have all our greenkeepers trained to Level 2 while money was made available to further my own education which I extended by undertaking a Training Development Course.

"It was a bit daunting when I started as there was only me and some of Otley's own teaching staff. For the first couple of weeks I wondered whether I was doing the right thing but once I got an understanding of the course it was great.

"I'd previously got D32/D33 at Melton College and the assessor at Otley College asked me to do the D31 as well - writing the assessments for the assessors to use. I'm also just about to start piloting Otley's Level 4," said Ian, who

admits that as he lives away from the family home in Thetford through the week it has allowed him to throw himself into his studies.

"The team regularly come back to my bungalow after work so their diaries can be kept up to date. I take photographs of them carrying out the actual jobs then they write a report on what they do. We put these into their portfolios and Anne Twose, from Otley College, comes out and assesses the work and gives me an update on Ewan Hunter who is the one staff member who is on a Level 3 day release course."

As well as organising the staff training, Ian gave initial priority to writing a course policy document as well as a health and safety policy document which was also taken up by the hotel itself.





Out on the course itself Ian and the team instigated a policy of regular hollow tining, top dressing and over-seeding to improve on the 99% Poa infiltration on the greens.

"Root growth was only down to three quarters of an inch so it wasn't going anywhere. Last year we over-seeded with 20 bags of seed and this year it's been 16.

"Some mornings, when there's just a tiny breeze, you can see a thin leaf of grass blowing in the hollow tine hole and you know it's taken. It's very satisfying," said Ian.

On the advice of David Stansfield they are aiming for 50-50 Poa/Bent greens as David feels it would suit the course and the amount of play it gets.

"It's an acceptable target but I know I can get better than that. I can get it down to 60-40 possibly 70-30

but it is going to take a long time," said Ian, speaking with a conviction which says that any failure will not be from a lack of effort or know how.

The entire course was awarded SSSI status last year as it is an excellent breeding ground for the Woodlark and the Nightjar. It also recently received a Countryside Stewardship Award and is entered in the BIGGA Golf Environment Competition, in association with Amazone and Grass Roots having been mentioned in dispatches last year.

Being a "Maritime Heathland" does present Ian and the team with some problems.

"Some holes are only 400 yards from the sea and can be affected by salt spray in storms or if there is a north east wind whipping over the

North Sea. The 10th is the nearest thing we've got to a links green."

Another problem they are currently working to resolve is the infestation of Mountain Ash.

"It has been there a while but lower than the gorse but last year was a really good growing season and up it came. In the winter we didn't notice it but now it has come into leaf you think 'Good Grief' and we've put in place a programme of going round and thinning them out."

Ian's CV includes some of the best known clubs in the country and he's worked under some of the finest Course Managers around.

"I started back at Swinley Forest before going to Wentworth where I spent 14 years, 10 of them as Deputy Head on the East Course," said Ian, who then moved to Thetford as

Head Greenkeeper before beginning his time at Thorpeness.

On the back of this experience he has developed a managerial style out of the relaxed, rather than dictatorial, book of how to do it.

"I'm a qualified trainer and I train my staff so I know that if I send someone out to do a job he is competent enough to do it without me standing over him," said Ian, who is always quick to pick up on any job which needs doing.

"I disagree with the philosophy that I'm Course Manager so I don't get my hands dirty. If there is flymowing to do I'll do it."

One job that he always does himself is the application of fertiliser and the spraying.

"If there was a problem I can turn round and say 'I did it wrong. I'm

Sleeping Beauty

Equipment Inventory

Ransomes 160D Triple
 John Deere 2653 Triple
 Toro 3000D
 Greensmaster
 Two Ransomes 20 inch Super Certes
 Ransomes 728D Rotary Front Deck
 John Deere 26532 Tees and Banks Mower
 Tri-King
 Cushman Truck
 Cushman Topdresser
 Ryan GA30 Aerator
 Sisis Fairway Slitter
 John Deere 1140 Tractor
 John Deere 855 Compact Tractor
 Kubota B2400 with Front Bucket
 Team Sprayer 250lt
 Trailer



Right: The picturesque par-3, 6th

sorry'. I don't really want to put any of the staff through that at the moment."

He's not the sort to get hung up on something if it isn't 100% right every time and he's happy for people to point out areas of concern on the course.

"I'm not Superman and as far as I'm concerned this job is a team effort. I can't be expected to know everything that's happening on the course all of the time. If someone sees something on the other side of the road and tells me I'll shoot out and have a look.

"I encourage my staff to have input. If we're doing a bunker or redesigning

a tee we'll have tea breaks and sit down and discuss it."

He also has a close relationship with the pro, Frank Hill, with whom any course alteration is discussed fully.

"We bounce ideas off one another. He's been responsible for building a few nine holers and he's got a good eye for landscaping bunkers," explained Ian, who also finds time to be the East Anglia Section Secretary.

"Thorpeness is a great golf course, one of the best in East Anglia," said Frank.

"For that reason I don't think you would ever want to change Braid's

design but what we are looking at is putting in half a dozen new tees to change the angle of some of the holes to take account of the club and ball technology which has improved so much from Braid's day," he explained.

"It will stretch it a little but not too long. For the new millennium we could turn one of the par-4s into a par-5, and that would balance the two nines and bring the par up to 70."

With the effort of Ian, his team and everyone at the club, Thorpeness is well on its way to regaining its place as one of James Braid's best little courses and an East Anglian gem.

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Bug eyed?

Many, if not all of you, will have heard about or read articles on the Millennium Bug, Year 2000 (Y2k) problem or the Millennium Time Bomb. Opinions vary about what its effect will be from nothing at all to the most cataclysmic event since the advent of automation.

What is the Millennium Bug?

The problem is very simple but what gives it a world wide impact is that almost all organisations and individuals use or are dependent on micro processors (chips). If all chips had been manufactured to today's standards there would, probably, be no problems. Unfortunately, there are many electronically controlled devices containing older chips that could cause problems.

The problem concerns the way that chips store dates. The normal date has three elements ie day, month and year. Most chips, in the past, stored only the third and fourth digits of the year eg. 99 instead of 1999. This was for two reasons. First it saved computer storage space and second, manufacturers did not think ahead and foresee the problems that the year 2000 might bring ie. if the computer adds 1 to 99 the year changes to 00, but is it 1900 or 2000 or even 3000.

Many people feel that the Y2k

Ken Richardson gives some valuable advice aimed at lessening the risks of the dreaded Millennium Bug



Y2K SPECIAL

problem has been exaggerated by the media, by consultants and by the manufacturers of computers and other systems. There is an element of truth in this, but until you assess the impact that the Y2k bug will have on you there is no way of knowing.

Will I be affected by the Y2k bug?

The answer to the above question is maybe. If you do not use a computer at home or at work, do not have an automated irrigation system, do not use a microwave oven, drive a car, fly off on holiday, use a cash point, rely on traffic lights, use the telephone nor use anything that contains an embedded chip or chips then the answer is no. If however, you use or operate any device that contains a chip or chips the answer, again, is maybe.

How do I find out?

In theory, the answer is simple. Identify all the systems, devices and programs which have date calculations and advance the date and see what happens. This sounds easy but when you start to assess how many chips are used in the home and at work, the problem becomes massive. Some estimates show that between 30 and 40 billion chips have been sold during the last few years with 7 billion chips sold in 1998.

Action 2000 has been set up, by the Government, to help all businesses in the United Kingdom, to deal with the Y2k problem. The Action 2000 seven step plan was designed to help you to apply project management methods to assess if you have problems and how to fix them.

The seven steps are:

1. Understand
2. Prioritise
3. Assess
4. Plan
5. Implement
6. Test
7. Install

Step 1: Understand

If you are reading this article then you have started the process of understanding. Further information can be obtained from Action 2000, PO Box 1999, Stratford on Avon, CV37 9GS, telephone 0845 6012000.

Step 2: Prioritise

Create an inventory of all computer hardware, software and embedded chips in your organisation, which might be affected. This could contain:

A list of software, both applications and operating systems.

A list of computer hardware

A list of devices containing embedded chips eg machinery, irrigation systems, telephones, fire and intruder alarms etc.

A list of all suppliers, sub contractors or agencies whose failure, due to the Y2k problem, could adversely affect your business.

If you are in any doubt whether a device may be affected then add it to your list.

Step 3: Assess

Once you have completed your inventory then you need to assess if the system will have Y2k problems and what impact any failures may have.

Assessing operating systems and general software packages usually means contacting the provider. Information on software packages can be found on the Internet eg Microsoft have a site at www.microsoft.com/year2000.

Assessing computer hardware can be a simple process and more details will be given later.

Assessing embedded systems can be a problem but the manufacturer/dealer who supplied the system should be able to give you the answers. Alternatively, use the Internet eg

www.mitre.org/research/cots is an A-Z list of companies and product information.

Step 4: Plan

By this point, you will have decided what equipment and which systems need fixing their priority and the cost implications. However, you may have decided that your systems are compliant and that you do not need to progress any further.

If you do need to take action then you can apply the 5R strategy to the problem. The 5 Rs are:

Repair it
Retire it
Redeploy it
Renew it
Risk it

Some people say that there is a sixth R which is Run Away!

Once you have made the decisions on the way ahead, you need to formulate a plan of action. Remember that 1 January 2000 is just over 200 days away, which does not leave you much time. You may also want to look at contingency plans to be used as a safety back-up in the event of an unforeseen system failure.

Step 5: Implement

If you do have to buy new hardware



Bug eyed?



or software then you should insist on a written guarantee of compliance with each purchase and ensure that the guarantee answers your organisations requirements for compliance.

Step 6: Test

You need to produce a test plan which not only details when testing will take place but what you are testing for and what test data will be used. For embedded chips, the first and easiest test for any piece of equipment is to contact the supplier or person who maintains the equipment and ask them if the equipment is Y2k compliant.

Computer Hardware Problems

First the good news. Macintosh computers are not affected by the millennium bug as their years are held as four digit numbers. The bad news, however, is that most PC type computers could be affected.

PCs hold the date in three distinct places ie. the Real Time Clock, the BIOS Clock and the Operating System Clock and a problem with any or all clocks could cause a problem. Another date problem could be caused by the fact that the year 2000 is a leap year. A leap year is any year that is divisible by four and not by 100 or is also divisible by 400 where

the last two digits are zeros eg. $1996/4 = 499$ but $1996/100 = 19.96$ therefore it was a leap year but $1900/4 = 475$ but $1900/100 = 19$ and $1900/400 = 4.75$ therefore it was not a leap year. However, $2000/4 = 500$ and $2000/100 = 20$ and $2000/400 = 5$ therefore 2000 is a leap year. This could be a problem if you have a system that needs to calculate days in a year eg. if your computer does not recognise that 2000 is a leap year the number of days in 2000 will be calculated as 365 instead of 366.

Additionally, all dates after 28 February 2000 will be wrong but they can be reset.

If you do not use the date function on your computer you may think that you are safe. However, some software uses the date function to check that your licence or password is still valid if the software sees the wrong date then it may not allow you access. If you use a networked system you have even greater problems as a date problem on one machine can transfer the problem to other machines on the network. If you have software that is licensed to a future date you should not advance your computer held date beyond the licence expiry date as you could be locked out permanently.

Testing BIOS

It is estimated that 50% of all PCs

sold in the past four years have a non compliant BIOS. Tracing the BIOS used in a PC is not easy as two 'identical' machines bought on the same day could have different BIOS. There are two ways to test your PC ie. Manual and Software.

Manual Test

The Real Time Clock can be checked by setting the system time and date, through DOS or Windows, to 23 58 on 31 December 1999. After leaving the computer for a few minutes, the date should read 1 January 2000. However, you should also check what happens if you set the date and time as above ie to 23 58 on 31 December 1999 and then turn off the computer, leave for three minutes and turn it on again. If the date is shown as 1 January 2000 then you are one of the lucky few. Remember to check that the time reads 00 01 as some computers roll over to 20 00. Unless your BIOS chip is year 2000 compliant then you may find that the date now reads 1 January 1980 or some other date. As I said above, if you do not need to use the date function within your applications then there may not be a problem. However, if you do use the date some programmes will obtain it from the BIOS clock which will probably return 1 January 1900 and others will obtain it from the Real

Time Clock which will return 1 January 1980 ie the date when all computers were 'born'. Check that BIOS recognises that 2000 is a leap year by changing the date and time to 23 58 on 28 February 2000. Shut down your computer, wait for a few minutes and then switch on. The computer should show the date as 29 February 2000.

Software Test

A variety of programmes are available that will test your computer automatically. However, some test packages are of dubious quality. Free downloads are available on the Internet and several sites review test and fix packages, eg. www.solace.co.uk reviews fix software packages, www.span2000.com is a PC fix software site, www.gmt-2000.com contains Check 2000 software plus a host of other information.

Computer Software Problems

Information on Computer Software compliance can be obtained from the manufacture/supplier. Microsoft has massive site on the Internet at www.microsoft.com/year2000. All TRIMS for Windows and TRIMS for DOS Systems (including Tree Inventory) which are at Version level 3.1W or 3.3 are compliant. All TRIMS 97 Systems are compliant as

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is their new product TRIMS 2000 (available for release June 15, 1999). More information on TRIMS compatibility can be found on the Internet at www.trims.com

Step 7: Install

This can be the installation of new systems or the installation of fix programmes and/or new chips.

Fixing BIOS

There are several ways to fix the problem caused by BIOS. These are:

- Enter the date manually the first time that the computer is switched on in 2000
- Update your BIOS
- Install a software fix
- Install a new BIOS chip
- Install a new Real Time Clock chip
- Update your operating system
- Buy a new computer

None of the above are guaranteed to fix the problem and detailed knowledge of computer hardware may be needed to remove/insert new chips. Microsoft recommend manually resetting the BIOS the first time that the computer is used in the year 2000 and later versions of Windows NT include an automatic fix. Future 32 bit versions of Windows will also include an automatic fix.

Unfortunately, some computers with non compliant BIOS will need to be reset each time the computer is switched on.

What do I do next?

If you have not considered how the Y2k problem may affect your business then you should take immediate action to Assess all of your electronic equipment to see if the Y2k problem will affect you. If you are certain that none of your electronic systems are date reliant then you need not worry about the Millennium Bug. If, however, you find that you may have a problem then you will need to find out what can be done. Most Training and Enterprise Councils have been running Test and Fix and Assess and Manage Courses for some time so check with your local TEC/LEC.

Search the Internet, it contains a vast amount of information. Talk to others in the same situation. Finally, where necessary, employ a consultant.

Do not panic, as I said above, the Y2k problem may have no effect on your business or home life. However, if you do nothing now, you may have severe problems at the start of and during the Year 2000.



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