

Rachael and Gemma, from the Membership Department, would like to wish you all a Happy New Year. 44 new members are welcomed to the Association this month.

# Membership Update



BTME and ClubHouse will soon be upon us and once again both Gemma and I will be on the BIGGA Stand Q123 to answer all your membership queries. Why not visit us and we can answer all your questions to do with your membership package including the recent changes to the car breakdown package and personal accident insurance cover. Samples of our popular merchandise range recently highlighted in the magazine will be available to try on, alongside the usual videos and books for sale.

Rachael and Gemma will be on hand to:

- Collect membership renewal forms.
- Hand out replacement renewal forms.
- Change Personal and Golf Club details.
- Collect new membership application forms.
- Hand out membership information.
- Hand out field guides on production of your membership card.
- Answer questions on your membership package.
- Hand out details of the direct debit scheme and tax relief forms.

## Haztek International launch NEW member benefit at BTME and ClubHouse



BIGGA have joined forces with Haztek International to bring a new Health and Safety benefit to members.

Haztek will be offering a 24 hour hotline offering help, advice and information on all aspects of Health and Safety in the golf environment. If a member's golf club takes up a

three year Maintenance Plan then they will receive a fourth year free!

The helpline will be launched at BTME and ClubHouse and members are invited to visit the Haztek International stand at Q120 (opposite the BIGGA stand) to find out more and pick up a free Health and Safety pack.

## DUE TO POPULAR DEMAND...

The privilege card is back! Last month we announced that we had withdrawn the privilege card, however, such was the response in favour of the card that we have decided to re-instate it.

You will all be receiving a card with your membership renewal as usual.

Why not take advantage of the card over the winter when planning what to do with the children.

Show your card at any Megabowl and buy one game get



one free. This offer is available at any time and is for up to six people.

Visit Vue cinemas between Monday and Thursday and receive discounted rates.

Feeling peckish? Dominos Pizza are offering a 30% discount on collected orders.

All these offers are available on production of your privilege card.

Don't forget to bring your card with you to BTME and ClubHouse and ask at the BIGGA stand Q123 for special offers during the week. For further information and offers call 0800 587 8800.



### BIGGA welcomes...

#### SCOTTISH REGION

Robert Finnegan, Central  
Greg Kilgour, Central  
Stuart Martin, East  
Kevin Neilson, East  
Kevin Simpson, Central

#### NORTHERN REGION

Andrew Merry, North West  
Michael O'Keefe, North West  
David Taylor, North West  
Tracey Woollam, North West  
Andrew Yates, North West

#### MIDLAND REGION

Robert Cass, East of England  
John Cunningham, Midland  
Michael Cunningham, Mid Anglia  
Oliver Hemblen, BB&O  
Chris Meadows, BB&O  
Edward Mutch, Midland

Andrew Ross, BB&O  
Ben Timms, Midland

#### SOUTH EAST REGION

Graham Case, Kent  
Jamie Cushing, London  
Nicholas Morton, London  
Martin Parsons, Sussex  
Aaron Percival, London  
Darren Reed, London  
Gary Turner, East Anglia  
Graham Warn, London

#### SOUTH WEST/SOUTH WALES

James Coverdale, South West  
Steven Gillett, South Wales  
Michael Gulliver, South Coast  
James Keeley, South West  
Daniel Rowlands, South Coast

#### INTERNATIONAL

Lars Friberg, Sweden

Jan-Ake Tyllman, Sweden  
Andrew Dalton, USA  
Stephen Lording, Australia

#### STUDENT MEMBERS

Daniel Smith, South West

#### GOLDEN KEY MEMBERS

Ashley Bennett, North West  
Peter Griffiths, South Wales  
Ian Jennings, South Coast  
David Johnston, East Scotland  
Darren Mugford, Mid Anglia  
Jim Scott, West Scotland  
David Stoner, Surrey  
Andy Ward, BBO

#### ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

Derek Cowell, Ayrshire  
Richard Barter, Devon & Cornwall

## JANUARY'S MEMBERSHIP DRAW WINNER



Just introduce one or more new greenkeeping members to BIGGA and your name will be placed into a draw to win an 0.5 litre isolating flask, suitable for hot and cold drinks and soups. Our congratulations go to Stewart McBain, of Hazelhead Golf Club.

# Course Feature



## Priceless Parkstone

**Parkstone Golf Club is in the middle of a massive heathland restoration project and Gareth Jones discovered how the developments are going.**

With housing values at an all time high and space to build extra accommodation at a premium there is a certain area of land located on the south coast of the UK that is reported to be the third most expensive land in the world. Situated nearby is a golf club that is worth more than all the money in the world to its greenkeeping staff.

Parkstone Golf Club is to be found comfortably nestled in between the numerous multi million pound, brightly coloured houses, most of which you expect to see running alongside a Californian beach rather than Poole Harbour.

However, it is not these glamorous dwellings that catch the eye of passers by, it is Parkstone and the attention to detail and sheer hard graft that is being put into the course is what makes it truly stand out.

The club has a dedicated staff of eight who are undertaking a massive restoration project that has consumed their working lives. The greens staff is currently restoring the course to its original heathland state, which has witnessed the removal of vast amounts of trees from around the entire course.

Parkstone has always been considered to be a heathland but, as time went on, in reality it resembled more of a parkland course. Like all major projects, this restoration programme has certainly not happened overnight, in fact it had been started just before current Course Manger, Bill Garner, joined the club back in 1998.

"This project is important to the golf club. The heathland must not be lost, that is crucial. We are taking great strides to regenerate the heather and it is important we do as much as possible," said Bill.

"I have been at Parkstone for seven years and in that time lots of manpower, time and money have gone into it and the course is now showing signs of all that hard work."

Wonderful shades of heather are now appearing across the course and you get a real sense that there is plenty more to come, and success to be gained, from the project. The team is certainly not resting with what they have and plans are afoot for more trees to be taken out and more of the course's natural heather to return.

The club has had to work closely with various organisations during the



Course Manager, Bill Garner, (right) with Deputy Alex McCombie and, to the right, with their team.

restoration process, in particular English Nature, The Forestry Commission and Poole Borough Council.

"All three have really helped us out and played their part in restoring Parkstone to its rightful state. It was difficult when we first started as we all had different views and ideas and fought our own corner. But now, with the results that we are seeing, we are all pulling in the same direction and it is working well.

"Everyone has agreed that there is a balance needed between heathland and woodland, it is about getting that balance right and I'm sure we are getting it right here. We had our last meeting in early December and as we walked around everybody agreed that the course was looking great."

The club, who's professional between 1957 and 1970 was Ryder Cup player and BBC commentator Peter Alliss, is involved with the Woodland Grant Scheme, run by the Forestry Commission, which has pushed the development further forward with specialist advice available to the club and also helping them gain approval to remove certain trees.

"The whole project is ongoing and we are now ready to move it on to the next step. We have taken out two major woodland areas and now we plan to take out the small blocks, which are dotted around the course. We need to take the canopies back and that will be quite a job, but we are encouraged by the work so far and we aren't going to stop until we are happy," stated Bill, who looked both extremely proud of the work completed so far and excited about the upcoming plans.

Major heathland regeneration work, such as Parkstone's, can never run perfectly, results are not always guaranteed and typically they are influenced by uncontrollable factors. Heather reestablishment is not a certainty and growth from one area to another can vary dramatically. Between holes 12 and 13 the heather has developed significantly more than the area between 11 and 12, but that is something Bill always expected.

"No part of the course is the same, so you are never 100% sure what is going to happen. In certain areas heather wouldn't grow back at all, while in others it will flourish. You don't really know before hand what the result will be. For example, you never know how the ground has been tampered with in the



past and what has been done to it. You just have to work around it and in most cases you have to try and regenerate the seed bed before you can do anything else at all."

Despite the odd problem here and there the project has been very successful, to such an extent that the club won the Outstanding Achievement Award, given by English Nature. The awards have been running for five years and just 10 are handed out each year.

"I believe we are the only golf club to have won this award and it is an honour. Bill and myself went to the Warwickshire Royal Agricultural Show and the Chief Executive of English Nature presented us with the award there," said Alex McCombie, Deputy Course Manager of Parkstone, with a thoroughly satisfied tone in his voice.

"It came out of the blue really. We don't do all this work for awards, we do it for the club, its members, ourselves and most importantly, for the course. However it is always nice to receive accolades like this and it just helps prove we are heading in the right direction and carrying out the correct procedures, it is nice to have that type of backup," said Bill.

The award also endorses Parkstone's credentials as a top 100 ranked golf course in the recent Golf Monthly rankings. With more courses popping up around the country Parkstone briefly slipped out of that top 100, but with all the hard work that has been put into the course from the team, the club is now firmly rooted back in that elite band.

"There are a lot of nice clubs around this part of the world, and there is a major new one being build down the road, but I wouldn't say we feel the pressure of having to compete with them for green fees and membership numbers. We just get on with our jobs and all I ask from my team is that we all





give 100% and work as best we can. You can't ask for more than that and I have found that with that attitude you can't go far wrong," insisted Bill, who benefits from having a solid team and a low turnover of staff.

"We must be doing something right as the lads enjoy their work here and because of that they are happy to stay. This heathland restoration has given them another side of greenkeeping you don't always get on other courses.

"We don't encourage the grass to grow here and, in fact, it doesn't grow fast at all, it is not that type of course. This allows the team the time to experience other areas of golf course management and that is great for them."

The magnitude of the Parkstone project can not be underestimated and to be completed successfully a whole number of factors have had to be right, from staff to machinery the club has had to get it spot on.

"The club is very good, the staff are very good and the machinery is very good. Everything has had to be top notch in order for us to be successful. It all combines to make the job easier and the results better. There is no point having good staff but poor machinery that is not up to the job, and vice versa. The club recognise that and do what they can to make this project as successful as possible."

Parkstone, which is a 6,254 yard par 72 course, keeps Bill and his team up to date with all the latest machinery, and if it is needed then it is brought, while also providing numerous education and training opportunities for the staff. The club's team of eight boast two qualified assessors, with Tim Rockey, who is bound for the US in early 2005 as part of the BIGGA Delegation trip, supported by Bernhard, to the GCSAA Show, a NPTC assessor.

"As a club Parkstone has a really positive approach to greenkeeper education. They are always keen to push us forward and enter us on to courses, conferences and seminars, and that is really important and beneficial to all the staff. It is a major reason they enjoy working here," said Alex, who is clearly a big advocate of greenkeeper training.

As well as the restoration programme, the education side of the club has helped the green staff to tackle their other major work, drainage. Parkstone, which is split by a single road, is just a drive and a nine iron from the English Channel and, with some of the course at sea level, numerous drainage troubles have been created. The 11th and 12th, in particular, suffer and located just off the fairways is a waterway that runs down to the Channel. This is tidal, which has caused the course to be flooded on occasions.

"A lot of people don't think we have a problem with drainage, but we suffer quite badly at times. We have gravel banded and also just drilled and filled with Eco Solve on seven of the greens, so that should help us out, even though, typically, we haven't actually had any rain since we did the work," quipped the Head man.

The secret to the course's success is Bill's philosophy of keeping it simple. He keeps a diary of every year of his working life as a greenkeeper, which contains information on all the work he has done on a particular day and he records all

the important stats, such as rainfall. It is this method he then uses to plan what he has in store for his course.

"I don't plan too far ahead, and I don't have a year long planned out schedule that I must stick to. I look back in my diaries and see what I was doing this time last year, and think well maybe I should be doing that again about now.

"We are dictated to by the weather conditions. For instance, it has been a surprisingly dry December so far, so the lads are out there verti-draining. If it was wet, and we had planned some major work, we would just do something else instead and wait until the time and weather is right. We are adoptable here and this kind of approach works very well for us, each course is different and so is each greenkeeper."

Bill, who started his greenkeeping career at Wilmslow Golf Club before moving onto The Grange in Dublin, honed his simplicity method in Holland. Course Manager at the Hilversumsche Golf Club, a regular venue for the Dutch Open, Bill was responsible for testing the cream of the golfing world, while also taking up the education opportunities provided by the developing FEGGA.

"FEGGA put on some good education conferences for greenkeepers and I attended quite a few. The education is strong over in Holland and well supported. Because chemicals are banned over there it puts more emphasis on leaning other ways to cope with disease and things like that.

"That is probably the biggest influence working in Holland had on me, I am more relaxed when we have a problem such as getting a disease at Parkstone. Fusarium is nasty, and leaves a horrible scar on the grass, but we don't panic about it. We just do what we can and get on with it, we don't go over the top and spray like mad," stated Bill.

"We just get on with things here, each day is different, and we all enjoy what we are doing here to make Parkstone as good as possible."

So while the building developers fight it out for the third highest valued land in the world, close by will be a team of dedicated greenkeepers making sure their Parkstone Golf Course remains priceless.

### Parkstone Golf Club Machinery Inventory

3 X Toro GM 3250D  
1 X Toro GM 3200D  
2 X John Deere 220  
2 X John Deere 220A  
1 X John Deere 3235C fairway mower  
1 X John Deere 3245C rough cut  
1 X Greentech thatchaway units  
1 X Greentech vibrating rollers  
1 X Case 580K Digger  
1 X Hitachi excavator  
1 X John Deere 420 Tractor  
1 X John Deere 4600 Tractor

1 X Carrera 6500 Tractor  
1 X New Holland 27hp Tractor  
1 X Richard long flail mower  
1 X Richard long scarifier/collector  
1 X Sisis Litamisa  
1 X Groundmaster turfcutter  
1 X Long equip top dresser  
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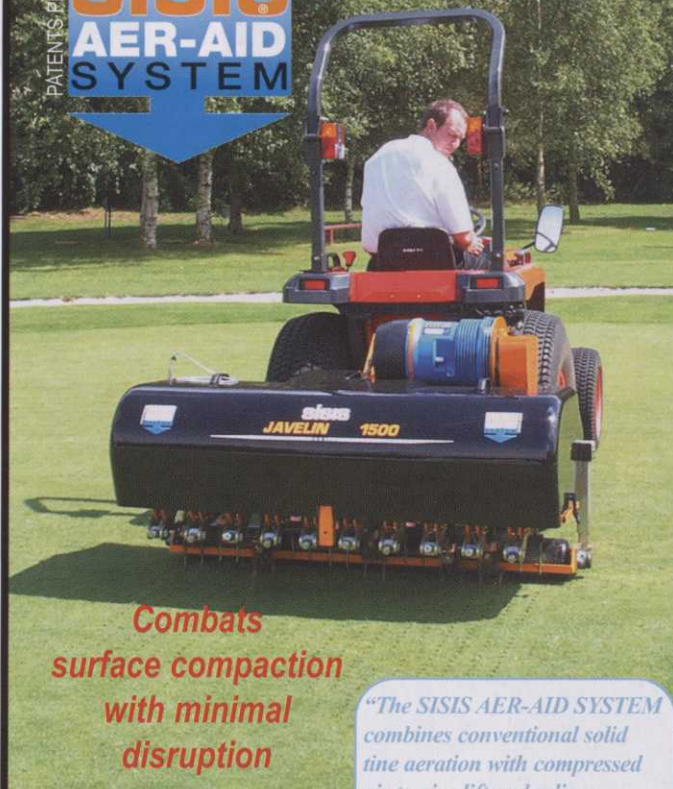


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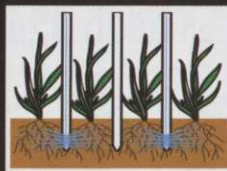


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# An Extraordinary Life in Golf

**The first recipient of the BIGGA Lifetime Achievement Award, Sir Michael Bonallack OBE chats with Scott MacCallum about his life in the game.**

Visit Sir Michael Bonallack's home, near St Andrews, and you can spend a few moments taking in the vast array of photographs which adorn the walls.

Like many who have been fortunate to meet and even play with some of the top players and legends of the game there are pictures of Sir Michael in the company with all sorts of notables, including several Open Champions.

However, unlike the rest of us who have been lucky enough to have had our picture taken in the company of celebrities, in Sir Michael's case it is just as likely that those very stars have the same image on their walls. The fact is that they are just as anxious to have their picture taken with him as we would be with them.

Sir Michael Bonallack OBE is a man who has reached the top in two spheres of the game. As a player he has been described as the finest British amateur of the 20th Century and a player who could hold his own when measured against the top professionals of the day. As an administrator and, more specifically, Secretary of the R&A, it was his hand on the tiller as the game developed and increased in popularity through the 80s and 90s.

Just a mild probing of his life uncovers a man who has dined with Bobby Jones; played in The Masters with Ben Hogan; The Open with Gary Player and Lee Trevino; won five Amateur Championships; been Playing Captain of a winning Walker Cup team.

He also had another celebratory Walker Cup winning dinner interrupted by a US Sheriff serving him a writ for over \$100 million. He was also Captain of the R&A in Millennium year.

While most lives tend to be humdrum with the occasional splash of excitement this particular life can only be described as extraordinary.

There can therefore be no more deserving first recipient of the BIGGA Lifetime Achievement Award, which is presented by the Association in recognition of Sir Michael's achievements within the game of golf and his contribution to the greenkeeping profession.

A 60 year involvement in the game began on a Devon beach close to Saunton Golf Club during the summer holidays, when Mrs Bonallack sent the sports mad Michael, 10 at the time, and his brother on to the sand with some clubs and balls.

"We seemed to take to it pretty well and when we got home my mother and father, who was just back from the war, made us members of Chigwell Golf Club," recalled Sir Michael.

Often success can be traced back to being in the right place at the right time and, in the case of the young Michael Bonallack, Chigwell certainly seemed the right place.

"It was a remarkable club, extremely forward thinking, particularly when it came to junior golf. We had our own committee, our own junior Captain, organised our own competitions and had our own organised lessons every week with the Pro, Bert Hodson, a Ryder Cup player from the early 30s," he explained, chuckling that his long committee room service had actually begun at the age of 12.

When Bert Hodson left Chigwell the lessons continued under Eddie



Whitcombe and when Michael joined another exceptionally enlightened club in Thorpe Hall, Cecil Denny made his contribution to the development of the Bonallack swing.

His golfing hero as a youngster was Bobby Jones, widely regarded to be the greatest amateur ever to play the game... if not the greatest full stop. However, the man who had clinched the original Grand Slam in 1930 was not all that he seemed to the young Essex golfer. Bobby Jones had a shock in store.

To be honest, it was nothing like the baseball star, Shoeless Joe Jackson, banned for life for betting on the game, who had to listen to a young fan memorably plead with him, "Say it ain't so, Joe". But to Michael, while he never actually uttered the words, "Say it ain't so, Bobby", it was a shock nonetheless.

"I always thought he was English. It wasn't until my mid teens that I suddenly realised that he was American," said Sir Michael, who had the honour of sitting beside the great man at the traditional Amateurs' Dinner held during The Masters.



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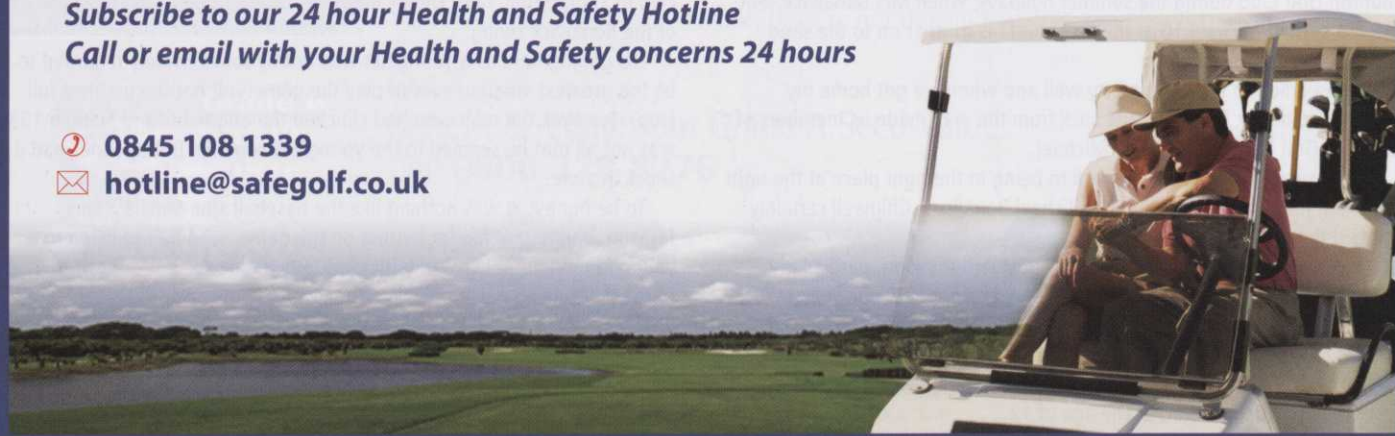
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"He was very sick by that time (he endured a degenerative spinal complaint from a relatively early age) and could only drink soup through a straw, but his brain was 100% and he had great recall," he said of an occasion that will stay with him forever.

Michael started to win junior competitions at Chigwell and Thorpe Hall and then, aged 13, won the handicap prize at the Essex Boys' Championship when was still playing off 15 or 16.

From then on his handicap came down very quickly. He became Essex Boys' Champion and played in his first British Boys' in 1951 at Prestwick, being knocked out in the second round."

The real breakthrough came the following year and in Sir Michael's own words it was a bit of a fluke.

"I'd always played many sports, and in particular cricket, and just before the British Boys' I was playing for my school at Lords against Cheltenham.

"I then travelled straight from Lords to Formby, but I hadn't played golf for the entire summer term and I was terrible. So I went to nearby Birkdale and met with the pro, Bobby Halsall, who gave me a couple of lessons.

"Back at Formby I just concentrated on keeping the ball in play. I had a good short game and suddenly found I'd won the British Boys'," he explained.

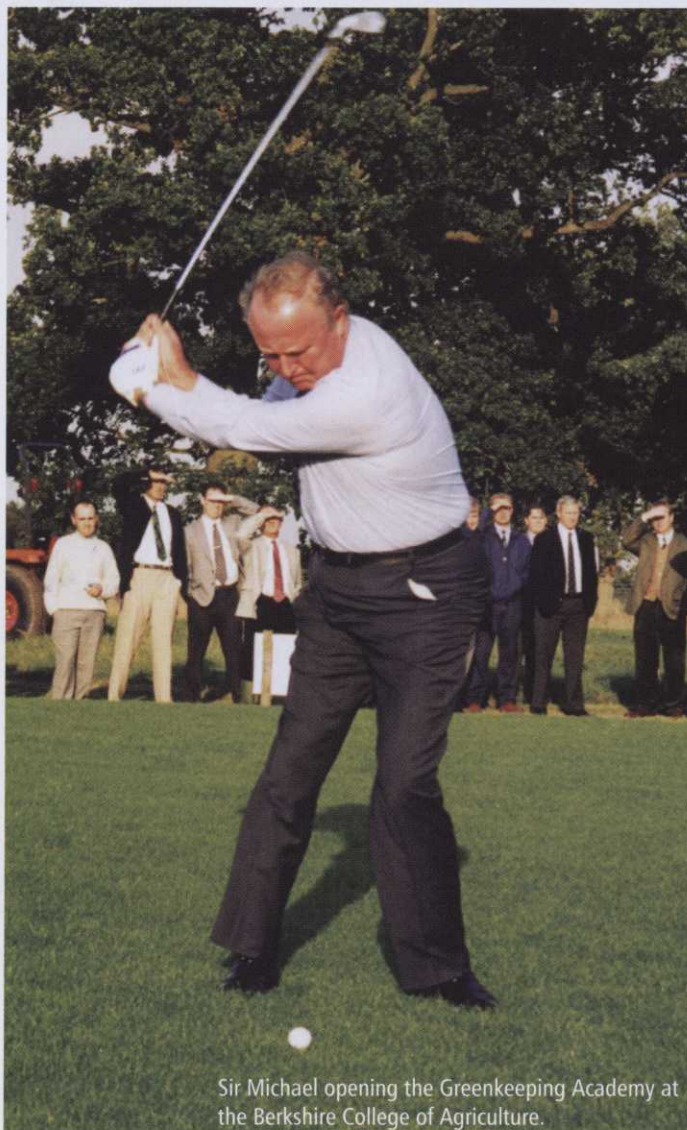
With cricket now well and truly overtaken, his golf, based on a mercurial short game, went from strength to strength.

"I never thought about missing a putt. Now I never think of holing one! I was just able to see a line on the green and then play the ball along that line," he explained, making it all sound ridiculously easy.

"We used to chip and putt a lot as youngsters and that sharpened up my short game. Thorpe Hall was a narrow course with very small greens so if you missed a green you had to have a good short game to score."

The roll of honour is long but the obvious highlights of his playing career are five Amateur Championships - Turnberry, 1961; Royal Porthcawl, '65; Royal Troon, '68; Hoylake, '69 and Royal County Down, '70 - and playing on nine Walker Cup teams including St Andrews in 1971 when, as Player Captain, he led his team to a first win for 33 years.

He pinpoints his first Amateur Championship win, at Turnberry in



Sir Michael opening the Greenkeeping Academy at the Berkshire College of Agriculture.

1961, as particularly significant and also that Walker Cup success in 1971, against a team which included Tom Kite and Lanny Wadkins.

"Ever since I'd played amateur golf my ambition had been to be on a winning Walker Cup team and to win it for the first time in 33 years, at St Andrews, as playing Captain, made it even more special."

Pushed on any particular Amateur Championship memories he recalls the final of the 1965 Championship at Royal Porthcawl, where he was pitted against former BBC commentator, Clive Clark.

"I was six down after 12 holes of the 36 hole final but got it back to three down by lunch when, just to pass the time, I started sticking sixpences into the fruit machine.

"On about the fifth pull I won the jackpot. I made sure Clive knew about it. 'Must be my lucky day' I told him," he said, smiling at the memory of the eventual 2&1 win.

Then, as now, winning The Amateur Championship brought an invitation to the Masters; that dinner in the company of Bobby Jones and partnering Ben Hogan during the opening two rounds.

"That was a tremendous thrill. He was very pleasant to play with and spoke with me on the way round, not excessively, but you wouldn't expect him to particularly during a Major."

Asked if he ever made the cut and he just laughs.

"Nowhere near it. In those days you didn't play golf in the winter. In fact the Masters used to be my first competitive round since the Home Internationals the previous September. I had no chance."

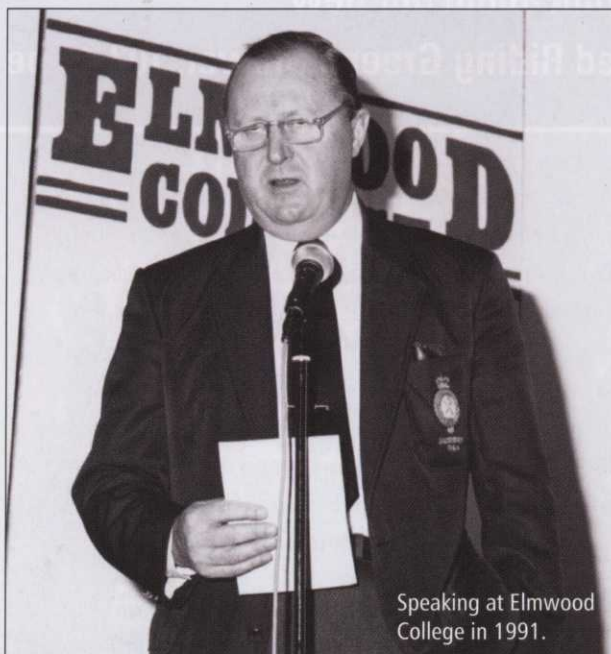
It wasn't quite the same in The Open and he won the Silver Medal as leading amateur on two occasions.

He was actually in the hunt for the Claret Jug itself on the final day a couple of times.

"My best finish was 11th, at Muirfield in 1959, but I'd been second equal going into the final round.

"I was also close at Carnoustie in 1968 when I was lying third with nine holes to go but took three to get out of a bunker at the 10th and had a horrendous back nine," said Sir Michael who also played with Lee Trevino, the eventual winner, at Royal Birkdale in 1972, during another fine Open campaign.

Sir Michael had become a member of the R&A in 1960 and as his playing schedule reduced he sat on an increasing number of committees and became



Speaking at Elmwood College in 1991.



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There is always a better way. Take our new 2500E Hybrid Tri-Plex Greens Mower. By coming up with an industry exclusive design that drives the cutting units with electric reel motors, we've eliminated 102 potential leak points by removing all hydraulics from the cutting unit drive circuit which mean less potential for damaged greens. As the industry's first hybrid greens mower, the 2500E is more than just an electric mower. It operates on a diesel engine, not a battery, so it can be used for greens mowing with all attachments, even verticutting. Since the 2500E is not dependent on battery power for run time, it can keep the same frequency of clip on every green and complete an unlimited number of greens. To see the difference a 2500E can make on your course's greens, call your local John Deere dealer today. [www.johndeere.co.uk](http://www.johndeere.co.uk)



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