



## Greenkeeper Education and Development Fund

Unlock the doors to progress through BIGGA's Education and Development Fund - the key to a great future for greenkeepers, golf clubs and the game of golf.

Golden and Silver Key Membership is available to both companies and individuals.

For details, please contact Ken Richardson on 01347 833800 or via [ken@bigga.co.uk](mailto:ken@bigga.co.uk)

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### Golden Key Company Members

Company	Tel: Head Office
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John Deere Ltd	01949 860491
Kubota (UK) Ltd	01844 214500
PGA European Tour	01344 842881
Rigby Taylor Ltd	01204 677777
Scotts UK Professional	01473 830492
Ransomes Jacobsen Ltd	01473 270000
The Toro Company/Lely UK	01480 226800

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### Silver Key Company Members

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RainBird	01273 891326
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Syngenta Professional Products	0041 613 233 028
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### Silver Key Individual Members

Clive A Archer; Douglas G Duguid; Robert Maibusch MG; Elliott R Small; Steven Tierney; Richard Lawrence; Clive Osgood; Roger Barker; David Robinson; Richard Stillwell; Stephen Dixon; Ian Semple; Paul Jenkins; Robert Hogarth; R Steele; Lee Relf; Raymond Warrender; Nicholas Gray; Trevor Smith; Iain Barr; Richard McGlynn; Alex McCombie; Paul Murphy; Tom Smith.

# Education Update

In another busy month, Education and Training Manager, Ken Richardson, gives details on the Harrogate Week brochure and news on the developing Health and Safety Management Guide.

Another busy month for the Education and Training Department has seen the Harrogate Week brochure printed, the Final of the Toro Student of the Year Competition, the production of a brand new careers' pack, the production of the 2006 Salary Recommendations, the final stages of the BIGGA Golf Environment Competition, the start of a joint BIGGA/AGCS Health and Safety project and the beginning of this year's Regional and Section Education Courses.



Hopefully, you will have seen plenty of information on Harrogate Week 2006 that will run from Sunday January 22 to Friday January 27 2006. Harrogate Week will contain a wide range of activities for greenkeepers, groundsmen, golf club officials, secretaries, managers, etc, including the wide ranging Continue to Learn Programme, BTME & ClubHouse, Women's and Students' Forums, the Banquet and the BIGGA Annual General Meeting, to name but a few.

You should have received a copy of the Harrogate Week brochure with this copy of Greenkeeper International. This brochure gives you an idea of what's on during Harrogate Week with full details of the Continue to Learn Programme that is supported by the GTC. Continue to Learn 2006 will include more than 150 hours of education sessions as compared to less than 60 hours in 2005, with two day, one day and half day workshops, seminars and a mini conference/debate, supported by the R&A.

There will also be a programme of fringe Seminars presented by a range of exhibitors that you can attend free of charge. These seminars will be running throughout the Exhibition and full details will appear in a separate fringe programme. All half day workshops are sponsored by Ransomes Jacobsen. Many of the Continue to Learn sessions have been specially targeted at groups of workers, including greenkeepers and groundsmen, those in supervisory positions, golf course and grounds managers, golf club officials, secretaries and managers.

We have also reintroduced an accommodation booking service for 2006 and full details are given in the enclosed brochure. Places on workshops are limited so it is in your interest to book early.

Another first for 2006 is the introduction of a Student Forum, sponsored by Toro, where those new to the Industry will be able to find out how they can further their careers, how to win an all expenses paid trip to the United States and where they can take part in a quiz to win an iPod.

Some old favourites return for 2006, including the ever popular Careers Fair, which is also sponsored by Toro. Brin and Frank will be there to help you find your next job and to help you to negotiate your salary package.

If you have any questions about the Continue to Learn Programme please contact Sami or me at BIGGA HOUSE.

### BIGGA TRAINING AND DEVELOPMENT MANUAL

The BIGGA Training and Development Manual is making steady progress and should be ready to be launched at BTME & ClubHouse next January. This internet based guide will give greenkeepers and their employers help and advice on training and development of their staff from induction through to golf course management and beyond. Watch out for further details in the next edition of Greenkeeper International.

### TORO STUDENT OF THE YEAR FINAL

The Toro Student of the Year Final took place at BIGGA HOUSE on Monday September 26. Full details of the Final and the Winner of the Toro Scholarship will appear in the next edition of Greenkeeper International.

### CAREERS IN GREENKEEPING

BIGGA and the GTC have cooperated to produce a new Careers in Greenkeeping package. Copies are available on request.

### RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE COMMITTEE FOR GOLF CLUB SALARIES

A copy of the Recommendations of the Committee on Golf Club Salaries (CGCS) is enclosed with this magazine. The recommended increase from the 2005 rates is 4%, i.e. the annual rise in average salaries to June 2005.

The eagle-eyed reader may well have noticed a change in name for the Committee. This has been introduced to reflect the change in role of the Committee that are now considering the salaries of Secretaries/Secretary Managers in addition to the salaries of greenkeepers. Recommendations on Secretaries' salaries will be published in the autumn of 2006.

### BIGGA GOLF ENVIRONMENT COMPETITION

The BIGGA Golf Environment Competition, sponsored by Scotts UK Professional, Syngenta Professional Products, Waste2Water and WRAP, is reaching its final stages. The judges from STRI have almost finished their golf course visits and we should be able to announce the prize winners in the next edition of Greenkeeper International.

### REGION AND SECTION TRAINING

We have almost spent the funds allocated from the BIGGA Education and Development Fund to support Regional and Section Education Courses. Many Regions and Sections have made a bid for courses and/or support for seminars and conferences. Contact Sami or me if you wish to submit a bid for an education course in your local area.

### HEALTH AND SAFETY

BIGGA and the AGCS have joined forces to produce a guide to Health and Safety Management for golf courses. The guide, which should be available in the spring of 2006, will allow golf clubs and greenkeepers to introduce a Health and Safety management system that is standard throughout the industry.



## The Secretaries' View

Keith Lloyd, National Secretary of the Association of Golf Club Secretaries, discusses the cooperation between BIGGA and the AGCS.

I was delighted to accept the invitation of making an editorial contribution to this publication, and am in no doubt that this will lead to another source of valuable interaction and sharing of knowledge between our two Associations.

Over many years, the AGCS and BIGGA have sat together as part of the independent Salaries Committee for Golf Clubs, and the increasing number of clubs now adopting these recommendations has, in my opinion, demonstrated their appreciation of the skills and knowledge displayed by today's qualified, professional Greenkeepers. Long may that continue!

### WORKING TOGETHER

I am pleased to say that significant progress is also being made towards the possible uniformity of creating Generic Risk Assessments for all clubs.

This is a joint venture undertaken by the AGCS and BIGGA, involving a committee of Course Managers and Club Secretaries/Managers, all of whom have had particular experiences with Health & Safety. The AGCS consultant, Brian Butler, will play a key role in the process, and both John Pemberton and I are keen to see progress is made.

The aim overall is threefold:

- To make the task of risk assessments easier.
- Create safer environments for greenkeepers.
- Set Industry standards for all clubs.

It is also hoped that, by creating a safer and better managed workplace, a club's Employer's Liability Insurance premium could be reduced.

### GOLF CLUB MANAGEMENT JOURNAL

All 2,500 members of the AGCS receive a monthly journal, Golf Club Management. This journal is highly regarded as a great source of information, and the inclusion of a 14 page section entitled "Course Work - where the clubhouse stops and the fairway begins" provides our members with direct and practical advice about managing a golf course. That is not to say Secretaries could (or even should) possibly know better than BIGGA members, but more the provision of background information for the non qualified individual.

If you feel you would like to make contributions to this section, or perhaps have a viewpoint on how the relation between the Secretary and the Course Manager could be enhanced, then please feel free to contact us at the AGCS - 01934 641166 or [hq@agcs.org.uk](mailto:hq@agcs.org.uk).

If your Club Secretary is a member of the AGCS, then he/she will receive two copies monthly. Please feel free to ask him/her for an opportunity to look at this material. If your Club Secretary is not a member of the AGCS, please contact us so that we may be able to help you.

# BOOK REVIEW

## A Natural Course For Golf, Compiled by Malcolm Peake

Published by The STRI, Bingley, West Yorks.

Malcolm Peake may not earn his living from golf. He may not even get the opportunity to play his beloved Temple Golf Club as often as he might want, but Malcolm Peake's enthusiasm for the game and particularly for the manner in which golf courses are maintained is second to none. You can also be sure that his knowledge of greenkeeping doesn't suffer by comparison when measured against the top Course Managers in the country.

A Natural Course For Golf is Malcolm's second book, his Confessions of a Chairman of Green, also published by the STRI, received much acclaim when it was launched in 2001.

This time Malcolm has dragooned some of his friends and associates from the golf industry as well as some of his celebrity friends from Temple Golf Club into contributing to a book which looks at all aspects of the game and in particular the maintenance of the course.

A heavyweight group of star names endorsed the book including Sir Michael Bonallack OBE, who wrote the foreword, and Mickey Walker, Colin Montgomerie and Nick Faldo all of whom welcome what Malcolm has achieved over the 88 pages of essays, photographs and cartoons.

The book aims at helping golfers to understand course management techniques and issues and as Malcolm says in his introduction "fuel informed debate and prevent criticism through ignorance" and explain the different types of golf - American target through to the natural British method which provides the book with its title. He also hopes that the book will increase golfers' confidence in their own greenkeeping teams and if he even takes a small step towards achieving that aim he would come close to being sainted by the country's Course Managers.

There follows a series of essays from such luminaries as five time Open Champion Peter Thomson; ex-Goodie Tim Brooke-Taylor, who writes amusingly on "the art of coarse management"; Martin Gunn, Course Manager at Temple GC; BIGGA Chairman, Kerran Daly, who contributes a superb poem "The Golf Course Manager's Lament"; David Oatis, of the USGA; John Duncan, General Manager of Royal Dornoch; renowned Golf Course Architect, Donald Steel; Jeff Parris, Alistair Beggs and Bob Taylor, of the STRI; David Garland, of the

European Tour; Jon Allbutt; Keith Duff, of English Nature; the late Jim Arthur, to whom the book is dedicated; Peter Wisbey, Course Manager, of Woodhall Spa; Chris Haspell, Course Manager of Horsholm GC, in Denmark; David Golding, of the GTC; Architect, Tom MacKenzie; Steve Isaac, of the R&A, and memorably, Terry Wogan, whose writing on "A Golfing Craic".

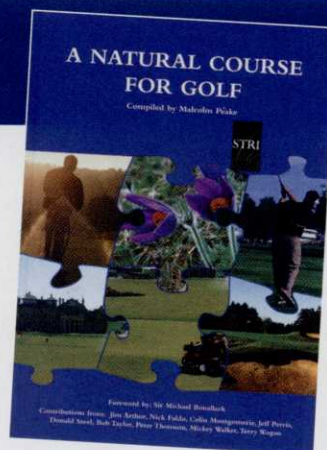
The list of "cast" sums up the book's ability to educate one minute and offer a belly laugh the next, and really that is the best way forward. You won't get the message across in a weighty, worthy, tome, people must want to pick the book up and delve into its pages and they will pick up information despite themselves while laughing at one of Tim Brooke-Taylor's "thoughts" on greenkeeping.

Sample - "Now look here. If it ain't broke, don't fix it. That's what I say to those new fangled course managers - more like coarse managers in my experience. What was wrong with calling them head greenkeepers? Or even 'Hey you'."

There is also contains a Glossary of Terms, some genuine and some amusing including "Green Speed - Not a hallucinogenic drug."

The range of information contained in the book is impressive and a copy placed somewhere in the club lounge or reading room might just have some long term benefits. Malcolm is to be commended for his enthusiasm and tenacity in compiling "A Natural Course For Golf"

The book is available from the STRI Priced £19.95 plus p&p,  
Tel: Linda Gallagher on 01274 518908 or visit the STRI Website,  
[www.stri.co.uk](http://www.stri.co.uk), and follow the links to the Bookshop.



Rachael and Gemma would like to welcome 64 new members to the Association and talk about flexible working as part of the Quick Guide series.

# Membership Update



## BIGGA welcomes...

### SCOTTISH REGION

Scottish Region  
Mark Cook, West  
Ross Gibson, West  
Greg Haddow, West  
Calum Morrow, West  
David Sutherland, North  
Martin Watt, West

### NORTHERN REGION

Bradley Asquith, Northern  
Craig Bennett, North West  
Robert Bould, North West  
Dene Briers, North West  
Ian Brodie, North East  
Andrew Brougham, North West  
David Burton, Northern  
Paul Cushing, North West  
Daniel Donnelly, Sheffield  
Derick Evans, Sheffield  
Philip Gardner, North West

Stewart Laver, North West  
James Leighton, North East  
Jonathan Mooney, North West  
Andrew Moore, North West  
David Mylock, North West

### MIDLAND REGION

Stewart Bentley, BB&O  
Alastair Burt, Mid Anglia  
Nathan Carmichael, BB&O  
Eugene Devenney, Midland  
Paul Frith, East Midland  
Andrew Gardner, BB&O  
Robert Hester, BB&O  
Marc Hutcherson, Mid Anglia  
Mitchell Knott, BB&O  
Robert Maloy, East Midland  
David Marshall, BB&O  
Paul Robinson, East Midland  
David Underhill, Midland  
Martin Wheeler, BB&O

David Workman, BB&O

### SOUTH EAST

Scott Bright, Surrey  
Ashley Fuller, East Anglia  
Mark Hough, Kent  
Richard Kettle, Essex  
Nigel Saunders, Essex  
Gavin Steed, Essex

### SOUTH WEST/WALES

Paul Hathaway, South West  
Darryl Jones, South Wales  
John Meikle, South Wales  
Andrew Moore, South West  
Jamie Smith, South West  
Guy Sowry, South West

### STUDENT MEMBERS

Jason Ahern, Ireland

Derek Besseling, Ireland  
Niall Casey, Ireland  
Gearoid Clifford, Ireland  
Gary Collins, Ireland  
Nigel Foley, Ireland  
Michael Keenan, Ireland  
Sean Murphy, Ireland  
David O'Connor, Ireland  
Mark Piper, Ireland  
John Thompson, Ireland

### OVERSEAS MEMBERS

Scott Young Liddle, Portugal

### ASSOCIATE MEMBERS

Alistair Whitby, Cleveland

### CORPORATE MEMBERS

Clive Nottingham, Mid Anglia  
Alan Roden, Mid Anglia

## RED LETTER DAY WINNER

Members who return their renewal forms before their membership expires are placed into a prize draw to win a Red Letter Day Voucher.

Our congratulations go to Stuart Hooker of Stoneham Golf Club

## OCTOBER'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 a Digital FM Scan Radio/Alarm. The radio can stand alone or can be clipped onto a belt with headphones for when you're on the move. Our congratulations go to Mark Zealander of Dudsbury Golf Club.

# Quick Guide To Flexible Working

Parents of children aged under six or disabled children aged under 18 have the right to apply to work flexibly and their employers have a duty to consider these requests seriously.

### WHO CAN APPLY?

You can apply to work flexibly if:

- You are an employee who has worked for their employer continuously for at least 26 weeks at the date the application is made
- Have a child under 6 or under 18 in the case of a disabled child
- Be either the child's mother, father, adopter, guardian or foster parent or be married or the partner to any of the above
- You make the application no later than 2 weeks before the child's 6th birthday or 18th in the case of a disabled child
- You have or expect to have responsibility for the child's upbringing and the application enables you to care for the child
- You are not an agency worker or a member of the armed forces
- You have not made another application to work flexibly under the right during the past 12 months.

### WHAT CAN I REQUEST?

You can request to change your hours of work, change the time you are required to work or to work from home. This covers working patterns such as annualised hours, compressed hours, flexitime, homeworking, jobsharing, self-rostering, shift working, staggered hours and term time working.

### HOW DO I APPLY?

You have to make a considered application to your employer in writing.

Only one application can be made a year so it is important you think carefully about the changes you are requesting. You must:

- State the application is being made under the statutory right to request a flexible working pattern
- Confirm you have responsibility for the upbringing of the child
- Explain what effect, if any, you think the proposed change would have on the employer and how in your opinion any such effect might be dealt with

- Specify the flexible working pattern applied for and the date the change should become effective
- State if and when a previous application has been made to the employer
- Date the application

### WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

Your employer should arrange a meeting with you within 28 days of receiving your request. This should be enough time for the employer to fully consider the request. You may bring a work colleague employed by the same employer into the meeting with you.

Within 14 days of the date of the meeting the employer should write to you to either agree to a new work pattern and a start date or to provide clear business grounds as to why the application cannot be accepted and the reasons why the grounds apply. You have the right to appeal within 14 days of being notified of the decision.

### WHAT ARE THE BUSINESS GROUNDS?

An application can be refused only where there is a clear business reason.

The business grounds must be from one of those listed below:

- Burden of additional costs
- Detrimental effect on ability to meet customer demand
- Inability to reorganise work among existing staff
- Inability to recruit additional staff
- Detrimental impact in quality
- Detrimental impact on performance
- Insufficiency of work during the periods the employee proposes to work
- Planned structural changes

This information should not be treated as a complete and authoritative statement of the law. For further information go to the department of work and pensions website [www.dwp.gov.uk](http://www.dwp.gov.uk).

# Becoming a Journeyman: A rough guide to working abroad

**Why work abroad? This question is unique to every individual and it is true that there are many benefits to taking the plunge. It could be a case that 'the grass is greener on the other side' or 'travel broadens the mind'. But whatever the case, the temptation as a British greenkeeper to stray from these shores is greater now than ever. Greenkeepers have been always been in demand and more so nowadays when turf professionals are a valuable commodity in many regions of the world where the knowledge to get a golf project off the ground is needed. This is especially true in emerging golf markets or in cases where demand outstrips the capacity of local personnel.**



Many believe that their profession is more valued outside the UK and so can be a part of the on-going debate regarding the perception of 'greenkeeping' within the golf industry. In terms of new courses on the Continent, in most cases they are enterprise owned, operated or run by astute businessmen and managed by a professional team of specialists who may come from a wide range of business disciplines. For example, if it is a resort scenario, a Course Manager/Superintendent may ultimately answer to a General Manager, who comes from a construction background or Resort/Hotel Manager who has worldwide experience of the hospitality industry. Each will have a specialist knowledge and training and rely upon your knowledge completely to set the golf section on its feet.

In some cases the owner of the company, or financial backer, has autonomous control of the project. Enter such ventures with caution. Multi-millionaires can have difficult personalities. It is also true that the Continent is not as 'foreign' as it used to be. A generation ago going on holiday to Spain and the Mediterranean was seen as positively exotic. Now the annual invasion of Brits abroad has changed our perception of the Continent and our involvement with our European partners.

So what makes someone pack-up everything and dare to work abroad, the foreigner in an alien land? Maybe an adventurous spirit or blind faith to think that anything is possible? Perhaps the key word is 'change'. Some people love the buzz that comes from it. A sense of adventure helps and an absolute trust in your convictions is required.

Gaining knowledge on where to look for employment abroad can be done in several ways. Today, Europe has a more integrated approach on this subject and there are several agencies that handle enquiries regarding overseas positions. Greenkeeper International often advertises positions abroad for every level of experience but still the most productive way to source vacancies is through building up a network of contacts.

Potential employers may use a different approach to find the key personnel for a project. They may rely on individuals who bring services to the business from outside greenkeeping to assist in the search. Obvious contacts to pursue may include house designers, construction specialists, consultants and machinery manufacturers that may be dealing with new projects. The wider the net of contacts you have with people outside the country, the better informed you will be of vacancies abroad.

Another method is to establish yourself in the part of the world in which you wish to live and work. This invariably carries more risk and might only be possible if there are no visa restrictions that prevent you from becoming domiciled. But it has reaped rewards in the past and can impress employers as to the level of your determination.

If you are successful in reaching the interview stage, here are a few hints to take it to the next round.

- Do homework on the company, surf the net, research the company's background and, if possible, gain details of their financial accounts. Perhaps both home and away interviews will be arranged, as part of a first phase screening and a second interview abroad. I would stress that it is important to see the site, even if it is in a pre-build stage. Try to understand the geography of the land and what the finished product will look like.
- If possible, spend a weekend with your partner, if you have one, just to get to know the area. Meeting future employers in their own environment also gives

you a better impression of how they react in a working capacity and an understanding on how the company functions.

- Ask what would be the most likely town in which you'd live. Visit the place and get an idea of amenities that are available. What are the prices in the supermarkets? If you have children, are the schools in the area of good standard? Healthcare provision is very important, especially if it is likely that you could have children while abroad.
- What are house prices like, could you afford to purchase or rent in the area? Are prices liable to increase or drop in the future? You must address the situation not as a tourist but as someone who would be living and working there.
- Look at the business objectively: Do the owners/operators of the project show vision and good business acumen in planning a golf course in the location in question? Or could the concept become a 'white elephant' quite rapidly?

I believe you have to look at all angles of the proposal to an extreme, taking into account the political stability of the country you would be entering. The Foreign Office in London is a good source of help.

The contract and how it is negotiated is a big part of how life will be shaped during your working time with the new employer. Here are a few pointers:

The size and complexity of the course will greatly shape the package you will be offered. The title may be stretched to include other responsibilities. As a department head, you may well be involved with the clubhouse to a greater extent than you intended. Crossover activities may mean you have a large garden staff or control of other departments. Overseas salaries may look very inviting to the first timer but working hours and the commitment needed to earn that salary can be more extensive. If you are in a pool of candidates, try to research what your equivalent peers would be earning in the local market.

Be aware if the intended employer asks you to contract your services to them, to set up as a one man private company. It is a way of avoiding tax on their behalf and could see you facing questions regarding the legitimate existence of such a company by the UK Inland Revenue or other authorities. Since September 11 2001, transfers of funds and working practices abroad have come under much closer scrutiny. Their request may also be an indication of how the company views the long-term employment of a foreign greenkeeper. Be cautious and take out the best legal advice from a British legal firm that you can.

Using a nett figure in dealing with salary discussions allows you to continue talking without having to deal directly with the tax issues of that country and puts the pressure on the prospective employer's accountant to gross up the figure. It will be important to use this tool to assess if the package is beneficial to you as you can directly relate it to your net earnings in the UK.

What may be offered to you may not be so attractive when you take out subsistence costs. Even in Europe, there are some vast differences. Accommodation may well be offered as part of the package. In some parts of the world it may be an essential where purchasing a property (or even renting) may be beyond the means of a turf professional. For example, if the proposed golf course is on an exclusive millionaires' resort.

The location of the accommodation may well be important to you in the future. If it is on the property near to the course then this may well mean that you are ideally located to commute to work, but it may have the disadvantage that you are always on call. Being housed in the same quarter/development as other staff members may also bring with it joys and woes.

**Peter Bradburn provides useful pointers on what to consider when making the decision to work abroad.**



Medical coverage is an important factor and should be given some priority. In some locations, medical insurance is compulsory for foreign workers and a valid policy is required. If the new company offers the policy, check out a copy of this before agreeing to it.

Relocation and initial travelling expenses in most cases are recognised as a necessity for a foreign worker but in the case of what to bring with you, bear in mind that rented accommodation usually comes furnished and whatever you take with you will have to be shipped on in the future.

For holiday provision try to negotiate the best deal for you. If you have built up extra leave entitlement with your previous employer, investigate if this current status is transferable. Also, if you were considering going farther a field than central Europe, would it be possible to have travelling days so the leave begins when you return to the UK? Pension companies will need to be informed of your change in circumstances and they will advise on how you can proceed while out of the country.

Your eventual move away from any future employer should be planned before you actually begin work with them. Have termination periods and conditions set out and acknowledged from the beginning. Have a grace period clause set in place so that accommodation and transport use is extended so you have the possibility to seek out prospects of other employment in the region. Have written into the contract that the company is bound to honour repatriation costs for you and your dependents.

A key element in this situation is what does the rest of your family do while you are embarking on this great adventure? If it is not well thought out, it can result in unhappiness for all parties. It is particularly important, if you have a partner, that everything is well thought through from their perspective.

Another key point is to have a fully validated contract from your new employer drawn up and signed by all parties before you leave your current employer. There have been nightmare situations where offers have been retracted. You will need to contact your tax office when you have committed yourself to leaving the country, as there is a process to complete. Towards the end of the first tax year abroad, they will ask you if you wish to pay a set figure for your National Insurance contributions. It is a decision that will affect your National Insurance credit basis in years to come.

There is a false idealism that Europe is now a Union of countries that allows the possibility for member state nationals to work within the community. The reality is that internal visa documentation does exist with most countries and that you will need to go through some official process. It may be prudent to take documentation about your past life, from school to health records. You will be amazed at some of the information authorities want to know.

Blending into a new community is part of the process of making your stay a good experience. One of the biggest mistakes the British make abroad is to develop the pack mentality, because it will not allow you to develop an understanding of the people in the country you are living in. Language will be a great stumbling block to overcome. Local TV can be bizarre and trashy to the extreme but the learning process of hearing the sounds of the words will assist in developing an understanding of the language. Picking up key phrases in the work place will help to get the ball rolling but a package of lessons will eventually be required.

Learning the nature and psyche of the nation's people may take you a lot longer to understand. For example, people in southern Mediterranean countries love to bellow and hammer out their views in a conversation. It is important to get a feel for how your adopted nation ticks. Winning over people will be a major accomplishment in the first season and will need dedication and a lot of one-to-one supervision.

The grow-in stage can be a fantastic time to be involved with the history of a golf course. The decision-making and implementation of management systems will affect the quality and development of a course well into the future.

And finally...An overseas experience does not always suit every individual. It really depends on the spirit of the person and how they can accept and deal with change. Patience and fortitude are two virtues that you will need or have to acquire very quickly to survive. It will be no holiday.

Other nationalities do things differently and may even defy commonsense to an outsider. It is a generalisation, to which I apologise to any European who may be reading, but the further south into the Mediterranean you venture the rate and speed of work tends to slow by several degrees.

The advantages of life abroad are there to be discovered, depending upon the chosen country and the individual. Yes the weather and temperature can be more desirable, the environment to work in challenging and the scenery beautiful beyond belief.

The downside of making the break may be less apparent than first thought. Distance from friends and family can test relationships to breaking point. As time passes, you may view all those things you once held dear, in terms of British society and the way of life, differently. Therefore going back after making the break may be much more difficult than you had thought.

But I can guarantee wherever you go in the world of golf, treating life as a journey across countries through work will be far more interesting than anything you have experienced before.

*Peter Bradburn is Course Director, Aphrodite Hills Resort, Cyprus.*

# Course Feature

## Plenty Bang for its Buck

**Scott MacCallum visits Laleham, a club where the greenstaff makes sure it gets a lot of bang for its buck.**

Some golf clubs can boast a genuinely blue blooded golfing history having hosted famous events and with legends of the game attached to the club in one way or another. Other clubs have a more general, but no less intriguing, history and one of those is Laleham GC, near Chertsey, in Surrey. A glance through the superb centenary book, produced in 2003, reveals a selection of star names connected with Laleham that other clubs could only dream about.

Take Bing Crosby and Bob Hope for starters. Both played regularly when filming at nearby Shepperton Studios. All right here's two more, Joan Collins and Julie Andrews. Ok, now for a couple out of left field - Aviator, Amy Johnson, and singer, Englebert Humperdink. All have visited, and enjoyed their time at, Laleham Golf Club. Oh, and did I mention that the course is built on land once owned by Lord Lucan, and that his infamous disappearance delayed its sale to the members as they couldn't get the paperwork signed? In the game of Celebrity Trumps Laleham Golf Club certainly wouldn't be found wanting.

Should the surviving members of that starry group - Joan, Julie and Englebert, and, you never know, the elusive Lord - pay a return visit to the club in 2005 they would certainly be impressed by recent changes to the course since their day.

At the forefront of those course improvements has been Course Manager, John Ross, his Deputy, Bob Rogers, and some enlightened members who drove through a five year plan designed to sharpen up the challenge offered by Laleham.

"The front nine at Laleham has always been a decent test of golf, but the back nine wasn't quite as challenging - you could be forgiven for thinking that every hole was pretty much the same," explained John.

But there was a potential solution. The club owned three and a half acres of land on the edge of the course which had been left to its own devices and become a jungle - the only signs of civilisation being the old mowers, horse shoes, not to mention a fridge, from when the land was used as a handy dumping ground.

The club had never been able to utilise it properly as the course is laid out on a flood plain, built on gravel with the ground water level just ten feet below the surface. Flooding occurs from the bottom up and the unused area was always the first to flood as it was the lowest point of the course.

"I walked up there with the then Chairman of Green in 1994 and pointed out how we could use the land by building a green here, a tee there and another green over there. He was very keen on the idea and encouraged me to make it happen. On frosty days we started clearing the site of many years' worth of rubbish and dead wood.

"We both believed it would happen one day," said John, who has been at the course since 1993.

In the meantime the team was making an impact on other areas of the golf course in smaller ways - building tees, installing drainage to greens and changing the bunkering from predominately flat bunkers to pot bunkers dug into the gravel, "These were well received by the members so it meant we had a history of undertaking successful projects at the club."

Around this time a Past Captain of the Club, Martin Johnson, produced a dissertation for a qualification he was seeking entitled "The Golfing Challenge at Laleham GC". The conclusion was that the course had not kept up with changes in technology and no longer presented a balanced and varied challenge to all categories of golfer.



The Laleham Team with Bob Rogers, centre left, and John Ross, centre right

"He presented this to the General Committee who accepted it in principle and a sub-committee was formed aimed at improving certain elements on the golf course.

"The Club Pro, Hogan Stott, myself and a number of other members made up the committee and we looked at a five year, costed plan identifying how we could improve every hole on the course, covering the environmental impact; benefits to golf, maintenance and to traffic flow. This was accepted by the General Committee in May 2000 and we started work in the winter of that year," explained John.

The plan added 136 yards to the course, balanced out the nines, and generally had the aim of ensuring players used every club in the bag. For example the five par-3s were altered so that they ranged from between 127 and 214 yards instead of between 156 yards and 178.

The first phase was to dig a pond on the front nine which, in turn, generated the subsoil to lengthen one of the par-3s.

"The culmination of the five year project was the construction of our two new holes, the design of which was left entirely to me as I had this concept in my head as to how they would play," said John.

Undaunted he got hold of an Auto CAD programme which came free with a computer magazine. Using the tutorial John taught himself how to use it.

"I'm sure CAD is very difficult and technical if you are trying to build a house but for landscaping I found it fairly simple. I drew the holes and the Committee accepted the drawings," said John, who was also able to refer to an aerial picture of the course.

Having convinced the Committee the next step was to win over the membership and an open evening was organised where John and the sub committee gave a Powerpoint presentation outlining what was being proposed.

"About 90 members attended and they tended to be the anti-lobby," said John, who noted that some Sub Committee members, who had originally voted in favour of the project changed their minds when it went to the General Committee.

"I had to convince them that the soil was suitable, if we worked it properly, that there was enough of it, explain what hydroseeding was, justify the cost, even explain how we were going to get rid of the rubbish. It went on and on. But fortunately the evening was just a presentation and not a vote, so it was a fait accompli really. We were just trying to deal with members' fears."

One of the main concerns of the members was how John and his team could build two complete holes for what was then £18,000, the final figure was actually £15,000 - when they had been quoted £88,000 by a contractor?

"It was difficult to get them to understand that the major cost in a project of this nature is the importing of rootzones and we weren't doing that. We were importing a minimal of materials, we were completely reshaping the site, constructing the greens and tee using primarily those material. I guess you would call them pushover greens"

"Politics never goes away at golf clubs. I had two Chairmen of Green while the project was on-going and one



Preparation work for the new 13th green



The new 13th is a very attractive dog leg par 4



The fairway was seeded and took extremely well

of them is no longer even a member of the club due to club politics; three Captains from beginning to opening of the project, and they were all brilliant, but I know that on another day at another golf club it could have been different."

Once the go-ahead was given work began in April of 2003 by spraying the entire site with a mixture of contact, selective and residual weedkillers to obtain a blanket total kill and be left with just the mature trees and some remaining rubbish.

"I took the sprayer out and was bouncing all over the place. It was ridiculous but I was able to spray the whole site," recalled Bob.

Then began a task which, had he being doing it at the aforementioned Shepperton Studios, might have seen him successfully audition for cameos in the "Texas Chainsaw Massacre" and "George of the Jungle". For five long weeks he and his chainsaw were as one as he battled to clear the three and a half acre site as comprehensively as possible.

"It began in May 2003, it was hot and I was wearing safety gear," he recalled.

"The guys were bringing buckets of ice with cold drinks down but it was hard, hard work. I was cutting and another guy was pulling out the wood and making piles. We couldn't



The team now look back at their work with genuine pride



The jungle that faced Bob and his chainsaw

see an end to it. I get so much pride in looking what we've achieved now but at one point I was totally sick of it and admit that I wanted to go off and just sit on a mower and forget all about it," he said.

The next job was to hire a seven tonne digger and create two huge bonfires to get rid of as much of the debris as possible.

Having cleared the site ready for action John commissioned John Gardener, from Barreldfields, as a shaper - the only outside contractor used on the project.

"We struck a very good deal which hinged on us being able to find somewhere for John's caravan and we supplied the diesel. We then worked hard to ensure we made the most of his time," said John.

"After he scraped the topsoil Bob was running a dumper for him and we had a digger making sure there was always subsoil available for him to shape. We generally avoided him having to do the silly things which took up time. I told John how I wanted the holes to look, gave him two drawings of the greens and left him to it. He did a superb job."



The 14th was to become a nice looking short par 3



The rootzone all came from Laleham's existing resources



They hydroseeded the new greens

John and Bob had staked out the entire site highlighting the maximum height of the flooding and ensuring that the level of the rootzone was well above it.

"We couldn't take this project on, and then allow the holes to be flooded if the rest of the course was open, because the old holes would only close in the winter if the entire course was under water. The minimum criterion was that they would be able to be played in the winter," said John.

Having done all the preparatory work everything went like clockwork on the 14 week project.

"There were no hidden surprises and we were hydroseeding the greens and the new tee on the day we'd scheduled to be, we used Lance and Heriot on the green and sauvignon fine leaf dwarf Rye on the tee" said John, who added that that particular day in October 2003 was marked by a few beers on site.

The fairways had also been seeded and but for a problem with moles, unhappy that their old stomping ground was now a golf course, everything came on well.

The golf club which is a stone's throw from Thorpe Park theme park is in a strange ecoclimate all of its own. For a 10 month spell from January to November 1, 2003, it did not



receive one drop of rain while there are severe restriction on water usage on the golf course due to the proximity of the River Thames.

John had argued from the beginning that essential to a successful outcome was the fact that the new holes would have to be built in the summer to prevent damage to the soil structure, as it happened the drought of 2003 from the point of view of the new holes could not have been better timed. The severity of the drought was unfortunate though and did impact on the actual golf course to a huge degree. The committee had to handle this issue delicately as all some members could see was a golf course that looked like a moonscape, and the greenstaff working away on two new holes.

"If you were to ask me what the best thing is about Laleham Golf Club I'd say it's that we are on alluvial silt over gravel. If you were to ask me what the worst thing is about Laleham Golf Club I'd say it's that we are on alluvial silt over gravel. The reason we recovered from 2003 was that we were on alluvial silt and it's very fertile, but because we are



Irrigation helped the greens to establish



The new area was prone to flooding so the fairways were raised



Laleham have changed the style of their bunkering

on gravel we burn up every summer although stay nice and firm in the winter. There are positive and negatives."

The reaction to the new holes which enjoyed an official opening in June has been universally positive.

"A huge majority of the membership appreciate what we've done but I don't think they quite realise the magnitude of what we've achieved for £15,000," said John, who said another benefit of the new holes was that four of his team were able to complete all the turf grass elements of NVQ Level 2, through the evidence we accumulated on the site.

One of those guys has since left, but the Laleham team of just five, John and Bob joined by Andy Dennis, Adam Watts and Greg Smith, who was on holiday when Greenkeeper International visited, have done a super job.

"What we have fundamentally proven is that a golf club like us with limited budgets doesn't have to walk away from the fact that redesign is necessary. We have produced two fine new holes which have improved the course for £15,000."

Such is the improved test of golf, any modern day Bing Crosby and Bob Hope might just consider taking The Road to Laleham with their clubs in tow.



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