

## Brits Gaunt, Marnoch team to take on world

LONDON — Two of the younger British golf course architects have teamed up to form Gaunt & Marnoch Ltd. Jonathan Gaunt and Steve Marnoch have known each other since their days at Leeds Metropolitan University and have been competing with one another ever since. With their office in London's financial district, they are ideally placed to discuss the financing of golf courses, especially considering that they share a building with PGF Group and GDG Acornbridge Ltd. — both specialist financial consultants to the golf course industry. GCNI caught up with them in Gaunt's London home during a lunchtime trifle-eating session, a fact which does much to define the characters of these two thirtysomethings.

**Golf Course News International:** Why did you join forces?

**Jonathan Gaunt:** We were at college together back in 1985 and when we left we both went to work for Brian Pierson in Scotland. Ever since then we have had aspirations to work together as a design team. We went our separate ways in 1987, me to Golf Landscapes and Steve to another contractor. I set up on my own in 1990 and Steve did likewise in 92 having worked at Caseys, we have competed with each other for six years now and Steve always seemed to get the job.

**Steve Marnoch:** We proved that, as individuals, we can do the job and survive in the marketplace. Currently, the work is getting harder to obtain and there is a downward trend in the market with more golf course architects and trainee architects out there. Obviously, when we arrive on a short list of three, with myself and Jonathan included, it is quite ridiculous that we are actually competing with one another. But that's not the only reason for joining together. Working alone, in separate offices up and down the country you can feel isolated in a very competitive market.

**Gaunt:** I've employed people on an ad hoc basis to do work as and when required. Steve has had someone in his office for the last three or four years. He's not really been able to keep him occupied full time. Now that we are working together we can keep that person busy all the time.

**GCNI:** Are there any areas in which you feel that you are going to clash?

**Marnoch:** We've certainly clashed in the past. I think that our personalities would still clash if we worked in the same office together. But we have been friends for 15 years and that does make for good understanding.

**GCNI:** Do you plan to have such a geographical split in the work which you take on?



Jonathan Gaunt, right, and Steve Marnoch eye projects abroad.

**Marnoch:** Ideally it would make sense, but we are going to find, I think, that there are exceptions to that rule. When we consider Scotland for example, might be quicker for Jonathan [London] to jump on a tube, get to Heathrow and fly to Scotland than for me [Derbyshire] to spend two hours getting to Manchester Airport then flying up. We are going to look at each job individually and sensibly and then make our decision.

**Gaunt:** I've traditionally done a lot of work in the Northeast and have often spent a long time doing the ground work. So yes, I will continue with these jobs. But if a new job comes up in the North it would obviously make sense for Steve to deal with it.

**GCNI:** What other benefits will come from your merger?

**Marnoch:** Client contact. Covering for each other at holiday times, etc. We both have secretaries now, but being in the office while the other is on holiday makes more sense and gives better client satisfaction by being personally available to speak with clients.

**GCNI:** Are there any negatives to your partnership?

**Marnoch:** Yes. We eat and drink too much.

**Gaunt:** I have been asked why we would want to join forces, some people say that I'll just have to split all the fees that I earn. To be honest, that doesn't bother me. You can only do a certain amount of work yourself and if you go beyond that threshold the quality of your work starts to deteriorate. I would much rather do two jobs less in the course of a year, do them properly and get a reasonable fee. I just want to go out, do the job right and earn a reasonable living. I don't want to make millions of pounds out of this.

**GCNI:** What long-term aims does Gaunt & Marnoch Ltd. have?

**Gaunt:** Basically we are looking to go worldwide. We are currently looking at jobs in Canada, Malaysia, the Caribbean and

Continued on page 46

## 'Ecological resort' envisioned in Belize

BELIZE — A "world-class ecological resort" is envisioned by developers who plan to develop the first-ever mixed-use destination resort in this Central American country.

Wall Street Financial Corp. has hired a team of urban planners for the resort, which will boast the country's first golf course. It will be at the corporation's Mayan Salt Creek Estate, a plantation of 31,423 oceanfront acres less than 10 miles north of Belize City and the country's international airport. A subsidiary of WSF, the Trust Corp. of Belize Ltd., is the sole trustee and asset manager of the estate.

According to Gerhart W. Walch, chairman and chief executive officer of WSF, the team will consist of Kevin Connolly, a former vice president with the New York City Economic Development Corp., and Deni Adaniya, a community planner. Both will report to Antoine Gedeon, chief operating officer for Mayan Resorts Development Co.

"Our goal in Belize," said Walch, "is to create a world-class ecological resort... We have the full support of the Belizian government, a conceptual drawing of the hotel by the renown architectural firm of Wimberly Allison Tong & Goo, and are well along in talks with a major international hotel group. With our planning team now in the country, we look forward to moving this project along much faster."

Residences, under construction, are the first increment of a retirement center that will eventually include a medical clinic and health complex. In addition, Walch said, the company has begun implementing a sustainable forestry management program, which includes the harvesting a vast reserve of timber, much of it highly prized mahogany.

## Hemstock opens office in India

BOMBAY — David Hemstock Associates has set up a base in India following its first contract in that country.

Project manager and maintenance specialist Geoffrey Porter is permanently based near Bombay, and the company is looking to extend its influence through him into other new projects and remodeling work. Geoffrey is currently involved with an 18-hole championship course project.

Co-designer and Clubhouse Architect Les Watts is also now working with the company, presently running the design and consultancy work in the Pacific Rim region, but also carrying out design work for the company's European projects.

"We make full use of the globe-shrinking effects of the Internet in order to communicate effectively with each other, with design work often taking less than a few days from inception to transmission electronically to India or Honk Kong," says principal consultant David Hemstock.

The company has launched a video of its work, including an example of a 3D fly-around view of one of its holes, which can also be generated for other existing holes.

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# Q&A: Gaunt & Marnock

Continued from page 45

Turkey. In the short term, we aim to spread ourselves wider in the British Isles. Steve and I have been in business for about 10 years now and we have only done one job in Wales. There is still a massive potential market over here. In that respect, I think that we need to consolidate what we are able to do

over here before we start going worldwide in earnest.

**Marnoch:** We currently have offices in Derbyshire and London but we would like to open an office in Scotland. My roots are in Northeast Scotland, near Aberdeen and I'd like to go back and do some work up there. There's an awful lot of work going

on in Scotland and there seems to be a lack of BIGCA-qualified people handling the work.

**GCNI:** The situation in Asia is tricky right now. How do you feel it's going to go?

**Gaunt:** It's quite interesting actually, you hear about all these big names leaving the sinking ship, but there are consultants out there who don't charge a big fee. I think that there is a big demand in Asia for academy golf

courses. The golf course I did in Turkey last year was a nine hole course with a driving range. It's a floodlit development just outside Istanbul and it's important for them to have it because it's entry-level golf and that is where I think that there will be a big boom. I really think this will be the case in Asia too, and not only there, but steadily throughout the golf course industry.

**GCNI:** Greece is planning 30

courses in the next three or four years, how do you view that?

**Gaunt:** The first step ought to be researching other countries and what they've done, especially what they've done wrong. In my opinion copying the Portugal theme will not work in Greece. In actual fact, I think they're probably doing it wrong on the south coast of Turkey too, there it is all exclusive developments. In Greece I think that they need to get people interested in playing the game, if not they are going to be creating problems for themselves from the very start.

**GCNI:** Ecologically, how can Greece have these courses when you consider that villages still have water tankered in to them?

**Marnoch:** There are ways of getting water when it seems that there is none. I've been looking at possible developments in Corsica and Cyprus and the major problems are water and maintaining the ecosystem. We must look at how best to use the resources that are in the area.

**GCNI:** Is the target of 30 courses in three years feasible?

**Gaunt and Marnoch:** No. No way. Planning problems will be the first of many headaches, a nightmare. They need to look at a much longer time scale to do things properly.

**GCNI:** How do you feel about professional golfers becoming more involved in course design?

**Marnoch:** Of course professionals, especially tour pros, have design ideas they want to put into practice and developer's think that using a big name will be the key to success. But we think that involving a celebrity is only one ingredient of one kind of development. The pros don't have the technical or practical training. Being a golf course architect is so much more than just a bunch of good ideas.

**Gaunt:** What annoys me much more is people from other areas of the golf course industry with no technical training claiming to be reliable golf course architects.

**GCNI:** Is there anything to be said for hiring a professional golfer to do design?

**Marnoch:** Not if he replaces the golf course architect. Some clients are absolutely convinced that it is the right thing to do. We feel that we have a service to offer and that's what we'd like to get more involved in, working with some of the up-and-coming pros. Our role is to show them how their ideas can be made to work.

**GCNI:** What is the way forward for the golf course industry?

**Marnoch:** Good quality golf courses at a reasonable price.

**Gaunt:** I'm very interested in the upgrading of existing golf courses. It seems that golf clubs are beginning to understand that they have to do something to compete with all the courses that were built five, ten or even 15 years ago.

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