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ON THE COVER: Chief executive Bob Williams All GCMA Conference images: Kate Jackson Photography

# **WELCOM**

ISSUE NINE | DECEMBER 2017

or those of you who managed to attend the 2017 Conference I am sure you will enjoy seeing some of the images within this month's magazine. You will have returned to your club looking to either implement some of the ideas that have come your way or, at the very least, maintaining your enthusiasm from listening to a particular presenter or speaker. There will be a number of members who did not manage to join us and, while I totally understand it is not an event that every member is going to attend, I would be interested to hear your reasons for not coming. Encouragingly, the initial unsolicited feedback from those in attendance has been extremely positive, and I would welcome the thoughts of those who made the decision that this was not for them

You will also read about the winners of our Golf Club Management Awards. I would like to add my own views on the quality of this year's awards. There are a number of ceremonies within the golf industry but I believe the judging process we employ makes ours rather special.

Once we've shortlisted the candidates, a site visit is made by the judges. That is followed up by a secret shopper and culminates with a weekend - with the other nominees - before a final Dragons Den-style interview. From my own personal involvement. I can say that while the winners are extremely worthy of the titles, there were no

losers. The quality of all the finalists was of the highest order and I commend all of you for the work you have been carrying out at your clubs up and down the country.

To finish, I would like to bring your attention to the launch of the Women's Golf Leadership Group. We have decided to run a couple of pilot meetings, following the increase in the number of female members within the association These will be held early next year with venues announced soon.

May I take this opportunity to wish you the compliments of the season and a most prosperous New Year

## Bob Williams - chief executive



"The quality of all the finalists was of the highest order and I commend all of you

# for the work you have been carrying out

at your clubs up and down the country"







# What you **NEED TO KNOW**

Relevant **news, opinion and expert insight** from around the industry. Plus what's happening around the UK in the world of the **GCMA** 

# The month in **PICTURES**



Our three-day
Conference got off
to the perfect start
when we were treated
to a sprinkle of star dust on
Sunday night. Iain Carter, BBC
golf correspondent, regaled
the audience with tales from
his years of covering the
professional game before he
conducted a question and
answer session with Paul
Armitage, general manager of
Le Golf National, which hosts
next year's Ryder Cup.



There wasn't anyone who travelled further to attend Conference than Nicholas Amoah.

The manager at Tema Country Golf Club arrived at Mercedes-Benz World from Ghana and quickly became a hit with delegates and suppliers, and also got the chance to meet The R&A's chief executive Martin Slumbers.

Nicholas has completed the

Introduction to Golf Club

Management course and plans to
do the Diploma next year.



Who goes to Mercedes-Benz World without getting behind the wheel of a fast car? Delegates put their skills to the test in an F1 simulator.

Conference may be about learning some new skills in the break-out sessions, but it is also about networking and some firm new friendships were formed over the three days in Weybridge.





Calderfields' director of golf, Jamie Cundy, took centre stage just before the Golf Club Management Awards on Conference Monday night. Jamie, a PGA professional, has become the first graduate of the Diploma in Golf Club Management, having completed the modules and workshops in just under a year. Jamie was presented with his certificate by a trio of chief executives - the GCMA's Bob Williams, PGA's Rob Maxfield and BIGGA's Jim Croxton.

# Meet the **GCMA**



Neil Annandale GCMA North West regional manager

**Giving a voice** to the people behind the scenes who help to run your **Golf Club Managers' Association** 

hat is your role?
As regional manager for the North West I serve two customers; our regional members and GCMA headquarters.

I organise valuable and informative meetings, along with great networking, as well as providing ad-hoc mentoring and support for members who have a problem they've never overcome before.

For headquarters, I help disseminate information and inform their decision making to ensure any developments best meet my members' needs.

# How did you become involved with the GCMA?

When I met my wife, a no transfers rule at work (I was a detective constable in the police) forced me to return to design engineering and self-employment.

That led to significant roles within local enterprise agencies, providing help and support for a wide range of small businesses.

Shortly after I completed a major project for Business Link, the manager's position at Penwortham (which was my golf club) became available. Within eight weeks I was at my first GCMA meeting and I've been helping people with the information, inspiration, shortcuts and connections I make at each of those meetings.

I have barely missed a meeting since.

# What do you enjoy most about your role?

It comes down to this: I know how hard it was for me when I was a golf club manager.

It felt like the goalposts were

"Often, I don't think we've shouted enough about **how much is available for members**"

always moving.

So I get a real buzz helping folk out - whether that's directly assisting them or passing on a gem of information that helps out later.

# What opportunities lie ahead for the GCMA?

Our environment is really changeable at the moment and I'm excited to be able to help the

GCMA's commitment to become more proactive and help our members stay ahead of the game, inform and advise.

Often, I don't think we've shouted enough about how much is available for members so I'm looking forward to helping show members what is in it for them, and where we can help them nip any potential problems in the bud.

# How would you like to see the GCMA develop?

The potential here, to support the entire golf industry, is a huge opportunity.

More cohesion and collaboration between the various golfing bodies and GCMA could really help club managers and support the business professionals who work alongside them to help the wider golfing businesses thrive.

Also if, as Bob Williams' (GCMA chief executive) mission statement suggests, we exist to increase expertise in golf club management, then it's not just about the club manager.

We must also include food and beverage managers, committees, along with secretary managers.

We must engage others in terms of the advantages of membership.

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Peter Hickling, General Manager, High Post Golf Club

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# Captain's corner **HOWARD WILLIAMS**

his was the seventh Conference I've attended as a member of the GCMA – my first was 2005 in Liverpool – and over the last few years we have got bigger and better. It is more professional. The quality of the speakers, this time, was exceptional.

Linda Moir wowed everybody when she talked about customer service and you can't get any better than the chief executive and the director of rules at The R&A.

This was my third or fourth visit to Mercedes-Benz World. It's definitely got the wow factor, because of its size and facilities. and I do like cars

In my year as captain, there have been three major plusses for me. We launched the Diploma with our colleagues in the PGA and BIGGA and that has been an outstanding success.

Secondly, we launched the magazine. We are now on our ninth issue and everyone I've spoken to is impressed with it. Even those who aren't golfers, who I have shown the magazine to, have found the articles interesting and realised the spread of the association now and the impact it's having in the golf world.

It has helped us develop as an association.

The icing on the cake has been the fact I am national captain in the year of a Conference.

This Conference endorsed the professional approach we are now Conference was a huge success and that only bodes well for the future of the GCMA...



taking in all aspects, whether it's a one-to-one helpline issue with a club manager or whether it's trying to put somebody across the Diploma programme – and we've seen the variety of people who have been engaged in that.

We also recognised achievement within the Manager of the Year, Team of the Year and the Newcomer of the Year awards.

There were many good stories, many different people who could fit into those categories, but the winners were extremely worthy and I am pleased that we had a more consistent approach to the competition this year then perhaps we have had in the past.

Our ambition, going with a biennial conference as we do at the moment, is to move each one forward to make it bigger and

Speaking very personally, I wish we could have reached even more golf club managers with the stunning content and inspiration served up at this year's event

Generally, though, I do think the success of this Conference bodes really well for the future. The exhibitors I spoke to were very positive and I think that will only enhance our reputation as an organisation.

Our Conference organisers, Sovereign Conference, have been first class. We've been planning this for 18 months. There's only a short gap before we look at where and when we hold the next Conference

We can't wait to get started.





# This GCMA club is famous for...

There's something in the water at this course run by Martyn Bonner MBE...

round 150 years ago, some believe the Virgin Mary appeared to a poor shepherdess called Bernadette and commanded: "Go drink at the spring and wash yourself there." So was born the cult of Lourdes.

Golfers looking for similar miracles may find salvation with their own splash of water just off the eighth tee at the wonderful Notts Golf Club.

For at the Kirkby-in-Ashfield venue, almost immediately to your right as you pick up your tee after hitting your opening shot, lies the 'holy well'.

A golf course is probably as good a place as any to ask for a religious intervention.

Be careful, though, what you wish for

The spring that runs down away from the tee box picked up its saintly name because it's where the monks from nearby Newstead Abbey came to pick up their water.

With the area now known as The Hollinwell, you can taste the remarkably pure water to this day – club chiefs leave a big cup down there for players to quench their thirst.



But, if you do, be prepared for the consequences.

Members say those who drink from the well will see their round change – whether for good or bad.

The spring is the same temperature all year round and secretary-manager Martyn Bonner says the source is unclear.

Once you've marvelled at it, take a 60-second detour from your round, and follow the spring round a corner. You'll catch the sight of the fresh water bubbling up through the sand on its way to the well

It's an amazing feat of nature. To get to The Hollinwell, you'll have first negotiated the impressive Robin Hood's Seat.

This rocky outcrop, behind the second green, is where the legendary outlaw is said to have watched the road below and waited for fresh victims to pass by.

Who is Robin, though, without his Maid Marian?

Work at the back of the green at the 16th uncovered a large stone, which some of the members have taken to calling Marian's Bed...

What is it that makes your club special? Every club has something that makes it unique, that sets it apart from everywhere else. Why not let us know what it is? Email s.carroll@sportspubs.co.uk

# TURF MACHINERY ACQUISITION SPECIALISTS

# The GCMA Conference

was an exciting time for TMA's Paul Copsey who enjoyed a very productive couple of days at the successful seminar event held at Mercedes Benz World recently. "It was great to catch up with former colleagues and meet new contacts to discuss the current trends and challenges that they are experiencing in the industry" said Copsey.

TMA is a golf course consulting company, recently launched by Copsey, that can help clubs achieve financial savings and formalise their resource management processes in the area of capital spending on machinery assets.

One of the main topics of discussion was around whether to tie in with one supplier either on a lease or preferred supplier agreement of to be a "free agent" and chose each product type

based on its individual merits. With Copsey's background TMA are experienced with both approaches. "During my career as a buyer of equipment I have operated both systems - group purchasing and sole supplier agreements which can be effective, but have also used the approach of picking each machine individually and then negotiating terms one at a time. Whichever route one choses the key to success is having formalised policies and procedures in place and truly evaluating the needs (not wants) of the individual club" said Copsey. "The reason that I started TMA was that there was so much opportunity to reduce spend and become more efficient in this area and nobody was offering this type of service. We are so confident that there are savings to be had that we have set the structure up that if TMA deliver no savings then the club pays nothing, that is how confident we are that the savings are there to be had".



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# A look back AT CONFERENCE



wo hundred and five delegates, 32 exhibitors, one conference – our biennial bash at Mercedes-Benz World was a huge success.

A host of top-notch speakers from the world of golf and business dazzled amid the backdrop of

finely tuned engines.

BBC golf correspondent lain Carter and Le Golf National general manager Paul Armitage kicked off proceedings on Sunday night before the Conference proper got under way with an inspirational presentation from Linda Moir. Having led the massively successful volunteer Games Makers at the 2012 London Olympics, she had a packed house buzzing with ways to improve customer service at their own clubs. She was followed by some excellent speakers, including The R&A chief executive Martin Slumbers. The devil was in the detail, meanwhile,

Mercedes-Benz World was the scene of three days of inspiration, information and education. As the dust settles, we look back at our 2017 Conference and talk to those who were there...





# **MY CONFERENCE**

"My first impressions of Conference were very good and it was a great opportunity to network with the golfing industry. The highlight was Linda Moir's keynote session – understanding it is the little things that matter. "Following discussions with software companies, we have decided to install Open Solutions in

March 2018. I also took away the 'no problem'



culture for our staff, picked up from James Burns, at Milltown Golf Club, and many other little gems."

- Ray Chilten, club manager at Newport Golf Club

during a variety of break-out sessions, which had something to appeal to all managers. From putting together a successful food and beverage operation, to the dark arts of political intelligence and how to navigate the personality jungle, there was much to be learned. The glittering Golf

Club Management Awards took centre stage on Monday night and director of golf at Calderfields, Jamie Cundy, shared the limelight. He was presented with a certificate after becoming the first graduate of the Diploma in Golf Club Management. His celebration was followed by that of St Ives' general

manager Gordon MacLeod, who was named Newcomer of the Year.

Pyle & Kenfig were awarded the Team of the Year prize and an emotional Amy Yeates, director of golf, spa and leisure at Fairmont St Andrews, was the recipient of the Manger of the Year award. Who can't wait for 2019?



# THE KEY THEMES TO SECURE GOLF'S FUTURE

Martin Slumbers revealed to Conference delegates his key themes for ensuring a bright future for golf.

The R&A chief executive gave the closing keynote speech at the three-day event at Mercedes-Benz World and stressed that family golf, shorter forms of the game and the need for golf to become more accessible, and affordable, were vital.

"All the research shows that we are time poor and that weekends need to be more about family," he told his audience. "The other way at looking at this is: Can clubs adapt their structure to be more family friendly? But, more importantly, does the club welcome families or simply just tolerate them? How does a club place families at the heart of the club?" Slumbers also said increasing the number of women playing the game had to be a major part of "all our strategies for the future."

He added: "At The R&A we are completely committed to increasing the number of women working in golf, and playing golf.

"We've been working with a wonderful group called Women Ahead, and we'll be launching a Women in Golf charter in the coming weeks. We've created a number of initiatives to support it and I would strongly encourage you to be part of this new charter."

On establishing shorter forms of the game, Slumbers again stressed that "time really matters if we want to have a future for our game."

"Do we have enough 9-hole competitions?" he posed. "Do we have to think about reserving early weekend tee times for the younger members who need to be home early? Do we really do enough to speed up pace of play, or do we just tolerate our members continually complaining? Have we tried Ready Golf?

"Do we provide things to do all year around, and do we genuinely offer flexible memberships to be able to encourage parents and children to join?"

Accessibility and affordability was the final strand of Slumber's message and he argued that golf was short of facilities." I don't mean more golf courses, but I do mean driving ranges with proper tuition, short par 3 courses and short game facilities," he explained.

"On my travels around the world I've seen so many lost opportunities to attract more players because of the lack of accessibility to play golf, and to have fun doing it. I'm very excited about the future of golf, but we do need to drive change if we are to garner that opportunity. I see absolutely no reason why we shouldn't be able to attract new players, new families and new facilities."

# **MY CONFERENCE**

"Linda Moir was the highlight of the Conference – such an inspirational, witty and fascinating lady. It was a very enjoyable and enlightening experience. Being my first GCMA conference I had nothing to compare it to but I enjoyed the breakout sessions. "My key takeaway is that good customer service is key and, to get that, you have to treat your staff with respect and show an appreciation and interest in them and their ideas and input. A simple 'thank you'is worth a lot..." - Beth Williams, club administrator at



Hindhead Golf Club

# **BOB WILLIAMS HAILS "VERY POSITIVE" CONFERENCE**

GCMA chief executive Bob Williams hailed a "very positive" conference at Mercedes-Benz World but pledged the improvements would continue with 2019 in mind.

He said he was thrilled with how the three-day event was received by delegates and suppliers. He added, though, that there was always room for development.

"The feedback that we've had has been overwhelmingly positive," he explained. "But there's room for improvement – I am always aware of that "

Williams added: "I believe there's certainly room for more golf club managers to come in and share a learning experience. There's a little bit of me that's disappointed we don't get more of our members to one event. I totally understand

when people say they can't take the time out of the office – or whatever reason. But if we talk to those 200 golf club managers that were there, not many will have a bad word to say about it."

Williams said Linda Moir's speech on customer service was among his highlights but added watching delegates come together to share knowledge was his greatest joy. "The networking of golf club managers is always a big plus," he said. "I talked about communities in my presentation, and you look around the rooms and you see lots of communities forming.

"There will be people at conference who will stay connected for a long time."

Williams also hailed the calibre of candidates for the Golf Club

Management Awards and was thrilled at the development of the process from two years ago.

"Two years ago, we didn't get it right. This time, I think we got it absolutely spot on," he said.

"The thing that really does inspire me is the quality of people that were nominated for those Golf Club Management Awards.

"The quality of the managers, the teams and the newcomers was excellent. It bodes well for golf clubs when we know there are people like that at the helm."

With planning under way for 2019, Williams said a group was already evaluating and looking ahead. "We'll start to look at what we got right, and what we got wrong, and how we can move it forward for the next stage."



# **MY CONFERENCE**

"It was another very good Conference and it was quite **right to mix up the location and style** given that we are a diverse community. I thought the



keynote programme was book-ended very well with Linda Moir and Martin Slumbers.

"The key takeaway was we have a lot of work to do on GDPR and can't afford to leave it to the last minute or hope that Brexit will remove the problem altogether."

- Paul Beresford-Green, secretary at Royal County Down

# Team of the Year SPONSORED BY GOLF HR **PYLE & KENFIG**



hey are going to need a sturdy new cabinet at Pyle & Kenfig after adding yet another award to their trophy collection.

The team of secretary Simon Hopkin, professional Dylan Williams and head greenkeeper Paul Johnson scooped the Team of the Year prize following a stunning couple of years that has seen them make improvements and developments at every level of the Welsh course.

Whether it was investing in junior golf, or installing a massive new irrigation system, the team's work means top tournaments arrive on a regular basis and sees members

flooding to sign up.

We spoke to Hopkin about the award and how Pyle & Kenfig plan to build on their success...

# Pyle & Kenfig - Team of the Year. How does that feel?

We haven't stopped talking about it. I had emails from all the general committee members and congratulations from a lot of the members. It is tremendous and a huge pat on the back for everyone involved with Pyle & Kenfig.

The Welsh clubs that attended the awards really got behind vou when it was announced vou had won. There seems to be a real sense of community in the

## Wales region...

There is. I'm a past captain and one of my remits was to try and get business/networking orientated within the clubs. So if somebody had a problem, somebody wanted some advice, they could just pick the phone up or just pop round to the club. It's an absolutely fantastic region. You have that community spirit. When you go into the regional meetings, everyone shares the same experiences, has got the same set of problems and the same staff issues. It's great and you're just proud that your fellow peers are giving you support.

What does this mean to the team as whole?

It means everything. One of the questions asked (during the judging process) was 'what does it mean to you? How are you going to promote it?'

To be recognised by your association, by your fellow peers, is always the pinnacle of what you aspire towards.

We hold big tournaments here, we have got full membership, our renewal rates are very high and you can see – in your key performance indicators – that you're hitting your objectives and all the targets that you try to achieve as a manager.

But it's always nice to get that huge pat on the back from the association and you can shout it from the rooftops. It's just fantastic.

# It not only validates the work you've done, but tells you you're on the right track and gives you confidence your strategy is working...

Absolutely. I came away from the 2015 Conference with a couple of key objectives that I wanted to implement into the club – as far as branding was concerned and community spirit.

That's exactly what I did. It went into our strategy of how we were going to move the club forward, together with forming the junior committee and attaining the golf certification from Golf Development Wales, as it was then.

We were the first club in Wales to do that. With the growth of junior coaching, membership and the development of that, we won the Bonallack Award at Wentworth in May, which was wonderful.

At this year's conference, I picked up another two or three customer focused issues that I want to concentrate on. It's quite strategic now. I go to these conferences with things in mind that I want

to do and who I want to meet. It's how you pick up those little action points you can bring back to the club, implement them, and move the club forward. It's hugely benefiting and rewarding.

# What's next for Pyle & Kenfig?

I've always believed in continuous improvement and empowerment of the staff.

We're always looking at bringing tournaments to the club.

Next year, we've got the Welsh Amateur. I've just also secured the 2020 Women's Team Championship for Wales and in 2022 I've got the Home Internationals here, which is going to be fantastic.

The next four to five years are busy in terms of tournament play.

We're then looking at our centenary in 2022 so we are building up to that as well.

We've got a number of projects we want to implement in terms of the clubhouse, lounge development and dining room.

We will continue to improve the product and facilities within the clubhouse. We are also continually looking at ways to improve the golf course.

# What the judges thought...

The team have had a huge impact at the South Wales club. Green fees have increased year-on-year by 7.5 per cent – and the club receives consistently strong customer feedback. Some 65 new members arrived as a result of strong marketing techniques and the club has created a pathway that has resulted in a significant increase in junior membership.

# What the sponsor said...

"Pyle & Kenfig have managed to motivate and enthuse not only the members and the committee, but also the local community behind their goal of delivering excellence in welcoming newcomers (ladies and juniors) to the game of golf, and helping them to get started, grow in confidence and stay in the game."

Carolyne Wahlen, Golf HR

# **MY CONFERENCE**

"It was an excellent educational experience as always and Linda Moir's inspirational tale of heading up the London 2012 volunteer effort was the highlight. My key takeaway was



the superb presentation from fellow manager Martin Robinson regarding management structures at a members' club "

- Ed Richardson, general manager at Broadstone Golf Club

# Newcomer of the Year SPONSORED BY COLT MACKENZIE MCNAIR GORDON MACLEOD



ordon MacLeod was a member at St Ives for five years before he switched from a career in the defence industry to the role of club general manager in July 2016.

His desire was to bring a period of stability, following a period that had seen a succession of managers come through the doors of the Cambridgeshire club.

MacLeod has certainly done that. His skilful stewardship has brought real results, both in membership numbers and building partnerships with organisations such as England Golf. It saw him become a popular recipient of the Newcomer of the Year award

We caught up with him to talk about his award and discuss what's next for St Ives...

# Congratulations on being named Newcomer of the Year. Was it a surprise to you?

It was. I knew I was up against a strong contender (Theydon Bois' John Reeder) and, being new to the industry, it was difficult to gauge the job I was doing in comparison to what I'd done previously.

I am absolutely delighted to win and it vindicates my personal decision to change – halfway through my life – after a successful 30-year career in the defence industry. It also illustrates that people from outside the golf industry, who have had no previous experience, can bring something to the industry.

# It was a risk for you to change careers. You had a comfortable life but you put that to one side to help your golf club...

I had never seen it like that before. I was at that stage in my life. I was well remunerated but that's irrelevant to me because of the quality of life I've got now in doing something that I love so close to home. You can't put a figure on that.

I feel like I've won the lottery, quite frankly, in landing this job and my efforts thus far being recognised.

# You're clearly passionate about St Ives. It must give you great satisfaction to be rewarded for that by the GCMA...

It does but – and I would say this - this isn't just on me. I am blessed with having a fantastic course manager, a terrific bunch of greenkeepers, hospitality and pro shop staff right down to Barbara the cleaner. We've got a fantastic team at St Ives and that's something I am looking to move on to (developing) next.

I'll admit I've not given them the due focus that perhaps I ought to have over the past year because we've had higher priorities in getting the golf club back on a level footing.

The next period will be focusing on the staff - retaining them and training them and getting them to buy into the vision as well.

# It feels like these are exciting times at St Ives. You can look forward with confidence...

People should really keep an eye on us. We are never going to be anything more than a very high quality regional golf course. We don't have delusions of grandeur. However, we have the potential to open some eyes and build upon our relationships, first and foremost with Titleist – with the National Fitting Centre – and develop our

corporate partnerships.

We are in a thriving area, infrastructure and housing-wise, and it really is very exciting.

# What do the next couple of vears hold for the club? When we come back to Conference in 2019, what will you hope to tell us?

I would like St Ives to be seen as a place where golf is recognised as being part of the entertainment industry and as being a fun sport as well as a recreational pastime.

What we're going to try and do is dovetail the sporting and fun aspects with the social aspects. We want to regenerate a club ethos, which encapsulates not just the members but the staff as well.

# 2019 Manager of the Year - how does that sound?

I would much rather see us put forward for Team of the Year, rather than as an individual!

# Do you have a word for John Reeder? You were on the same introduction course together...

John is just one of life's gents. He's on his second career and I'm delighted that it's working out for John as it is for me. Frankly, we're splitting hairs between his achievements and mine. He's done an outstanding job with significantly different challenges to me.

# What the judges thought...

Gordon's energy and attention to detail has brought huge results. Membership rose 14 per cent between February and July, he established regular contact with England Golf and developed partnerships with local media companies to spread the word about the club. With the club also the home of Titleist's National Fitting Centre and, with a centenary on the horizon in 2023, St Ives are moving from strength to strength.

# What the sponsor said...

"I was hugely impressed by the overall standard and congratulations to all those nominated for the Newcomer of the Year award. St Ives is in safe hands and there is clear direction as the club moves forward. Gordon is to be congratulated for what he has achieved in his first year and is a deserved winner. He is a great example of someone who, with the help of the GCMA, was able to change the direction of his career path." Richard Wood, director, Colt Mackenzie McNair

# **MY CONFERENCE**

"Linda Moir was a fantastic and inspirational speaker that set the right tone for the week. I really enjoyed the experience with a wide range of

seminars, speakers and exhibitors.



The key takeaway was good governance and working on my political skills, while trying to reduce the stress with a bit of mindfulness!"

- Scott Patience, secretary/manager at West Surrey Golf Club

# A Matter of Opinion CHANGING TIMES



hen we think about an archetypal private members' club, what naturally comes to mind? It's a fair bet that committees and sub-committees are one of the first things to come into your head.

But at three clubs, they have thrown off the cloak of the conventional to move to something they feel is much more suited to a modern business.

You don't get too much more traditional than Royal Norwich, Parkstone and Worplesdon but the trio have embraced their contemporary structures and are reaping the benefits.

So how, and why, did they do it? What was the reaction of members and what can we all learn from their success?

**Peter Todd:** Royal Norwich was a very traditional members' club. It was pretty much dying on its feet,

really. They make no illusions about that.

They've had the opportunity to move to a new golf course – very unusual for a Royal club with a 125-year history next year – and a lot of the reasons they were dying on their feet were lack of investment and lack of income.

Their clubhouse was an old building and they couldn't afford to knock down and rebuild.

It's a very tight site and there was nowhere to increase tee length

# It's not easy for traditional clubs to let go of time-honoured structures.

But these three clubs all changed their way of working and are now reaping the benefits. Our three panellists talk about the switch...

and hole length. They had very limited opportunities to rebrand and relaunch. The opportunity to sell the site to construction for housing was a new lease of life for them

Had it not been for that, I don't think they would have survived. So they have made the brave move to go to a limited company, get away from committee structures and be run by a board of directors, which are made up of nine.

Five of those are members and (the remaining) four are made up of two employees, the general manager and myself, and two non-executive directors who are experts in the golf industry.

Pretty much, it has been left to the industry experts to run the golf club with a check and balance and a business strategy from the five member directors

Chris Lomas: It sounds a great set up.

Michael Sawicki: Yes, it does, I'd kill

**CL:** We have moved away from the traditional golf club set up. We have changed our governance to a similar sort of set up, without the external influence – the golf industry experts as it were. It's effectively seven members and myself.

MS: We have five so it sounds like we are all in a similar spot.

CL: We've got away from the committee structure at a typical golf club.

MS: And all the endless sub committees and things. It's just one committee at Parkstone That's that Brilliant

PT: Is that a general committee? MS: It's five elected - the two captains sit on it. That's the only meeting. I (also) get a quarterly captain's committee meeting. I had endless sub committees that used to drive me insane

I love my new role because my job is to make sure the club is moving forward and I remember, as a course manager, I used to spend money and now I've got to make it. That's the big difference.

I know the crown jewel is the golf course. That was my passion but

now I've got to take a step back from that, let them get on with it, but I know he's (course manager) going to be banging on my door asking for all shiny new things to make the place better.

So you've stripped away the committee structure, where captains ruled the roost and there are all these sub-committees. How did that change go down with members?

MS: I inherited it. I was lucky. We had a very strong chairman at the time – it was a few years ago now - who was a top businessman. He had the vision to drive it and the brains and the courage to drive it.

You have to be unpopular for a while. He had to go to meetings and tell the ladies they were not running their own section any more, that we were abandoning all these sub-committees and putting a professional in charge.

The structure is there to make it work and it works brilliantly. CL: We were the same. We had

## MEET THE PANEL



Peter Todd Head of estates and board member at Royal Norwich



Michael Sawicki General manager at Parkstone



**Chris Lomas** Secretary at Worplesdon

"Royal Norwich was a very traditional members' club. It was much pretty much dying on its feet, really. They make no illusions about that" - Peter Todd



a strong chairman who had the vision, along with myself. It was about saving so much time in committee meetings so it was a no-brainer.

He saw the benefit. I think the members then realised 'we're turning over £1.5 million a year. It's not a social club anymore. It's not just a bit of fun. It's actually a business.

We have 27 full-time employees and we need to care for them and make sure they are employed but also safe in their employment. We weren't running this business that could go bust at any time.

It had to be communicated well but, on the whole, the members bought into the philosophy and the reasoning very quickly. MS: That's the key for me communication. It's absolutely everything. No matter what you do, whether you are giving them bad news or good news, as long as you can communicate so there is not shock.

If they turn up with their guests

and there's a temporary green on the third, they are not going to be happy. I can understand that with the kind of business we're running. They need to know why – why we've done that work - and why you are doing everything is critical.

I think if you communicate well enough, at least they can say 'we knew it was coming.

You can put a reasoned argument for everything. Let's face it, all our clubs are much more successful due to that change. **CL:** We've got time to concentrate on other things.

MS: Absolutely and we've got time to add value to membership and put those little extras on that makes it worthwhile. It's not rubbish work, it's good work and we've got time to do good work instead of 'oh, I've got to do another set of minutes that won't see the light of day.

By the sounds of it, we're all quite similar and that's why our clubs are probably successful.

PT: It's interesting that you mention

strong characters in terms of chairman and driving it. Norwich had, and has, a chairman that's the FD of a major company. 11 years ago, he initiated the whole idea of Royal Norwich moving. They knew the city had crept out to their location, they were hampered by housing and the road crossing the golf course. There was nothing they could do about that.

The club was in the country when it was built in 1893. He drove the agenda of 'let's look at the opportunity to move' and the recession of 2008/9 halted the plan. But he still drove on and, over an 11-year period, has driven this whole agenda of the golf club moving.

Then he realised that in order to embark on this journey he would need to change the type of people supporting the club in the move. All these people were voluntary on the committees so he employed Phil Grice as the general manager and he has been driving it.

His idea for getting me on board was to assist with the specification of the project in advance of awarding the contract.

They did their research to make sure they got everything right. It's interesting that we speak about a chairman that drove it because that also seems to be a common theme – having someone very strong in the club otherwise these things don't move.

Particularly if they (committees) are voluntary.

MS: It's really true. You can try and go in as a general manager and get a strategy but you do need a partner. You need someone out there who's got the same vision. It's got to come from someone. It can come from you but you need a strong member/chairman, whoever it might be, to keep pushing it forward.



"The one thing that really resonates with me over change of governance is that it's allowed us to plan for the future far, far better. Actually, we're getting projects done now. We've got a five-year plan, which we've never had. It was year-to-year" – Chris Lomas



That's quite a selfless act from that person, isn't it? They are voluntarily giving up power they aren't going to get back. If you take the stereotypical view, committees are meant to be full of people grasping power...

CL: The one thing that really resonates with me over change of governance is that it's allowed us to

Actually, we're getting projects done now. We've got a five-year plan, which we never had. It was year-to-year 'the captain wants this done, this captain wants that done.' You never got anything really done.

plan for the future far, far better.

Now we've got proper goals in place, we have got 10-year plans in place, so we know where we are going. The course manager knows where he is going, he knows what projects he can start planning for. All these big projects, like you're doing now (at Royal Norwich), all

take years to plan. If we're doing the bunkers, or irrigation, they take quite a lot of planning.

There's no point in going down that road if you know that next year you're going to be going in another direction. So governance has really helped us recently, with planning, for the betterment of the golf course, which is our only asset.

MS: We know what we are spending in five years' time on machinery. Things change. We kind of know what we're going to be spending years down the line. You can almost start naming your subscription rate – as long as things go to plan.

There are bumps in the road and peaks and troughs but, generally, you know where you are. You know where you are going and that's a nice feeling. The staff want to know where you are going.

When you are employing good

staff, your course manager wants to know that this place is going somewhere, that he has got projects and it is exciting. If you are sitting there and saying 'well, we're not sure where we are going to be in a couple of years' time' you are not really going to get good staff.

They are going to be thinking 'I don't really just want to cut grass every day. I want to get my teeth into projects. I want to improve this place. I want to put my stamp on it.'

PT: You are certainly not going to encourage dynamic staff.

MS: No, you are not.

PT: If you have an un-dynamic club you'll attract un-dynamic staff. It's interesting, with the Royal Norwich model, because I think there was a reality check. 'How do you run a more than £10 million project with volunteers?' The reality is you can't.

Someone has got to make daily decisions about construction detailing, heating systems, and ventilation systems. That isn't something you can do on an ad-hoc voluntary basis. I think reality hit home with the members themselves – 'we need to get a professional team to run this project' – and, with the governance structure that was in place, that was never going to be in the interests of the club itself.

I think, actually, it has been a relief to the members. 'We don't have to make all these pressured decisions. We've got professionals. We'll leave it to the professionals. Yes, we are going to be there to oversee, suggest and that kind of input, but not get involved in the minute detail of the project.' It's not, necessarily, their expertise and they haven't got the time commitment on a voluntary basis.

So I think there has been a certain amount of relief and, of course, the members voted to become a limited company and go to that governance structure. When you raise the subject of 'was there much opposition' – clearly the majority went for the option of moving to a more modern, sustainable, type of structure. Running that level of project just wouldn't have been feasible (without it).

In traditional committee structures, captaincy is very important. In your structure the role is different. Does the captain still have an important role to play or it merely a symbolic role?

**CL:** It's social but it's an important role to play in many respects but not in a business. That's the chairman. The captain's role has changed but the beauty of it is we are now seeing younger captains coming in. They can afford the time to be the captain, when before it was so onerous being a captain

because you were driving the ship. You were captain of the ship for a year and there was a lot more to do.

Now, you are head of fun. MS: I totally agree. Our captains are still really important. It's very much the social side of it but a good captain will be there when he needs to be, see people off and things like that. They are on our board, they do add to that, but they don't get a vote. It's non-executive. Basically, I think it is important they know what's happening because so many people will still go to them.

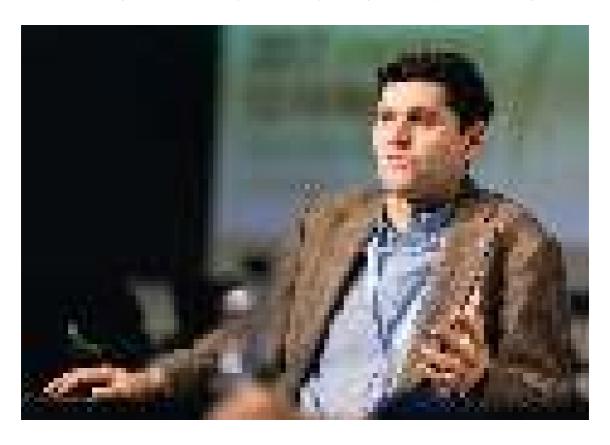
They are used to it and they will still go to the captain to find out what's going on, so it's still really important they are up to date with what's happening and communicated to.

But, like Chris said, the business is done by the five elected members. They know what they are doing

and it's good.

PT: Our situation echoes what Chris is saying. The captain's role has changed in that they are that communication between the members and the management team. They are a very good conduit for feedback but the manner of that feedback is less formal. They submit reports and the feedback they have received but it's much more a communication conduit and not directing – 'this must be done, or that must be done. It's more helpful communication.

They are there as well to encourage members to take part in more events and focus more on that connection and encouraging members in activities - rather than directing management to anything in particular. Yes, they have input but it's far more about membership, competitions and communication than about projects and other things.



# The interview **AMYYEATES**



on being named
Manager of the Year.
How does it feel?
My initial feeling was
absolute shock when
they read it out. I honestly didn't
think it was going to be me. Stuart
(Gillett, Golf at Goodwood) is
incredibly good and he has been
in the game a long time, Alan
(Davey, Pyecombe) is a stalwart of

the industry and Martin (Robinson, Fairhaven) does a lot for the GCMA.

I sat there waiting for someone else's name to be read out. When it was mine, I went into a bit of shock about it all.

The process was so rigorous and so detailed and was a lot more than I actually thought it was going to be. I know the other candidates thought the same way. I think a lot of us thought 'well,

they are just going to come and visit us and have lunch, a quick chit-chat and go home. It wasn't that at all.

I remember, after the visit, being absolutely knackered because they were asking probing questions. They met three of my team and it was super rigorous and detailed.

The biggest take home I had from the whole process was it actually gave me an opportunity

# Fairmont St Andrews' director of golf, spa and leisure was thrilled to be crowned Manager of the Year 2017, sponsored by intelligentgolf, during Conference at Mercedes-Benz World. She tells Steve Carroll about her reaction, her team and being an association ambassador for the next two years...

to talk about what I'd done and reflect

You don't really get an opportunity to do that because you are constantly saying 'I'm late on that, this person needs this" a stakeholder needs a board meetina'.

You actually don't ever take stock of what you have done. We have team meetings and we talk about what went well and what didn't go well but, for you personally, you don't ever look inward.

You should. All the management books say 'you should'. But it's hard to find time to do that. That's what I got out of the process.

I spent a day with Niki Hunter (GCMA education coordinator) and Jamie Abbott (of intelligentgolf) talking about me as a manager, what we do and it was really quite thought provoking and it made you sense-check where you were. That was great.

# You got quite emotional during the speech...

I did. I didn't really expect it. I'd scribbled down a couple of notes. I'd asked Stuart 'are you writing a speech?' and he'd said he was writing a couple of words down. During one of the breakout sessions (at Conference), I wrote a couple of words down. I knew I wanted to thank my family because we are a really strong unit - even though I live in Scotland and they live in Sussex.

I didn't expect to react the way I did but it happens.

We've now had back-toback winners that are PGA professionals. I imagine when you started your journey in golf, you probably didn't see yourself winning Manager of the Year...



I think it's really great. Listening to Rob Maxfield (PGA chief executive) at Conference was exactly what I needed to hear as a PGA professional. He hit the nail on the head and was so refreshing in what he said.

He said 'at the moment, I don't think your affiliation fees that PGA pros pay are worth it. But this is what I'm going to do, this is where it's wrong and this is how I am changing it.

I honestly took it out (PGA professional status) because I was a female in the industry, I was relatively young and I knew I needed something to make sure I had that certain amount of premade respect.

There were a few people (at the awards) who said 'you're a PGA

pro?' and were quite shocked about it

I started it back when I was working at The Belfry in 2007 and, at that point, it made complete sense. It's lost its way a little bit but now it's coming back.

I have remained a PGA professional even though my career has gone more into the GCMA and golf club management side of things and had Rob not come and been so refreshing I possibly would have considered (changing that).

The industry does seem to be changing in that sense of more **PGA** professionals becoming managers. It seems that management is changing. Is that something you welcome?

Traditionally, if you look back at the role of the PGA professional, they had to have amazing people skills because they were having to teach and get people to come back for another lesson. They had to have the ability to build rapport and the ability to get someone to like them

The innate personality traits of the PGA professional are still there but I think that's massively changed. I remember when I first went to the introduction for the PGA and they asked the guestion 'who's turned professional? Who's done that to carry on playing?' I would say 95 per cent of the people put their hands up.

Even in 2007 – even though it feels a long time ago it's still

relatively recent – the people taking the PGA course were doing it because they had this dream of being a player. I don't know the answer but I would guess that, in those meetings, now it's made quite clear that the majority of the people that are there are probably going to be golf club managers, directors of golf, head professionals, retail managers and a smaller proportion of them are there to be your traditional coaching (pro). They want more for it, which is great.

really do much yourself. That was a real learning curve for me.

I was assistant manager at Goodwood and I had maybe three or four direct reports but I always had the comfort blanket that I wasn't really at the helm.

This was my first 'in charge' position and it was a big one. I was given the spa, and so on, and I had spent my whole time fighting for that position and that accolade.

I'd come from a sales and marketing background so I had that competitiveness in me. I positions, at all the different clubs I have been at, and I remember thinking, or hearing about somebody, 'what do they actually do? They just walk around or drink coffee.'

You don't realise, until you get to that position, that's exactly what they should be doing. You don't see that. Now, the communication needs to be a bit better and that's what I try to do because I remember what it was like to be one of my team.

I remember having those thoughts of 'what do they do? They are not actually doing anything, they are just getting us to do all the work'.

Actually, it's the way you do it. The biggest difference is to get them to make the decisions.

# So talk to us about your team. Explain why the ship runs as smoothly as it does...

Firstly, I'm lucky that I can do what I need to do with my team. The general manager, who I report into, gives me the autonomy. That's number one for me. If you don't have the autonomy, it's very difficult to make changes as quickly as I've been able to.

I've got Andrew Dyce, who is my golf operations manager. I attended the personality trait session at Conference and they talk about the quadrants and making teams and saying that you need to make sure you have a mix.

I'm in the action quadrant, which is all about getting things done as quickly as possible and concentrating on the process and the task.

Andrew is on the logical side and he's more introverted than I am. But it works because I know that the way he works is to look at spreadsheets and pre-plan meetings. He is my right-hand guy



People always say 'awards are for their team' but that is really true in your case, isn't it? Because of the way you manage, your success is reliant on your team being successful...

I have 11 direct reports. I know that I am in a minority and I know a majority of the golf club managers at Conference don't have that luxury – although there's two ways of seeing it.

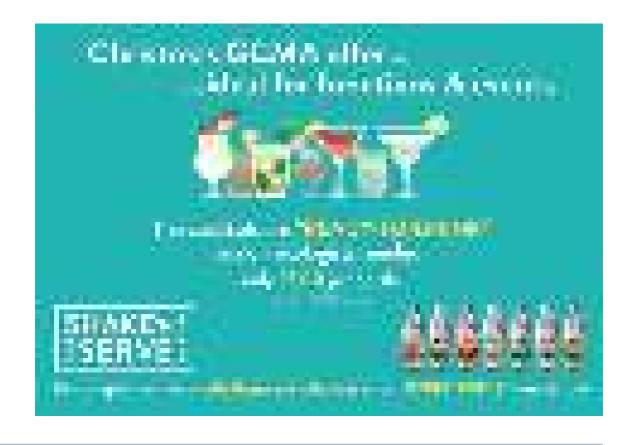
I am in a different environment. I'm still running a golf club but just on a different scale. So when you have 11 direct reports, you can't went to university in America. That whole competitive spirit – and wanting to be the best and do the best that I could – was always in me.

The last eight to nine months I've realised that I need to be doing the complete opposite. I've realised that the less that I do, and the more time I spend with my people, the better that we become.

It's really hard. We've all had people, and we all see people, that we say 'well, what do they do?' I didn't want to be that person.

I remember being in those junior

# Mobile ready business solutions for golf dubs rate manders, and over pr There is not because the relating tips the ACCOMPANIES AND RESIDENCE AND RESIDENCE AND integrated, some platform based bulletings. opensolutions Performance Association for the company of





who can do pretty much anything that I need him to do.

I've got Fraser Liston, who is golf operations supervisor, Dan Bones, who is golf events manager and Ashley McLean in golf sales and a core of the golf operations team.

A lot of people don't realise that we concertina in the winter in golf. We might go through four or five people (in the winter) and then we concertina out in the summer and bring new people in.

We have to really get them on-board quickly. They are usually students. We like to handpick. We pick one from Florida State University, because Troon Golf have got a relationship with them, one from Birmingham, one from Bournemouth and one from the

University of Highlands and Islands.

We try and spread it out. They are different people each year and they usually start in the middle of May so they hit the ground running.

They've got to understand and be on board with what we are trying to do.

# You must have to be really careful who you pick and how you get them on board with your mission?

But we've learned that as well. A couple of years ago we took three guys on from the same place. It didn't work because they all knew each other.

Now we pick one from each place and, for them, it's like starting

a new job. We all start a new job really well. So they all come on board and they are absolutely keen as mustard. That is our platform.

# What people might not realise is that you're really busy in summer. That brings a lot of pressure...

Almost like chaotic! We staff up for it and we know the experience we have to deliver. To sum it up, it's an American experience.

So we have the meet and greet and the bag drop and the club cleaner. We do staff up for it but I didn't really understand it (how busy it would be) when I got there.

You just try to run it as you have before and then you soon realise





#### WHAT THE SPONSOR SAID...

her team, I have no doubt that she is

that it's a completely different beast and it's like running two businesses.

In the summer, we operated at around 97 per cent occupancy in the hotel. Now, a lot of them will play golf but a lot of our trade for golf doesn't stay in the hotel.

You then have the general footfall of people walking in your shops, coming down for a putt and all that kind of stuff.

#### It's very significant to be Manager of the Year. You're effectively going to be the face of the association for the next two years...

Absolutely. They ask the question in the Dragons' Den-style interview - 'if you were to win, what would

it mean to you but, from an ambassadorial point of view, what does that mean?'

I said, and I still believe it, that regardless of whether I won or not I was on board with the GCMA. I think what they are doing is amazing and if I can help in any way I will do.

Now. I tick a few boxes. I am a woman and they've just launched the Women's Leadership Group so I suspect they would probably like me to be involved in that a little bit.

I am in the Young Managers' Group and, regardless of winning or not, Mike Hyde and I had already arranged a trip to come up to St Andrews, stay and for me to present in February next year.

I think, in general, I am happy to

do whatever the GCMA need me to do. There is a certain amount of giving back to it.

I don't see it as a chore. I honestly would have done it anyway if they'd asked.

#### As you say, you're already involved and went to Le Golf National with the Young Managers' Group...

That was amazing. It was so rewarding to sit with the younger managers, and those who were assistant managers, and talk about their problems, talk about their chairmen and - not coach them have a chat about it.

It was great. I am more than happy to talk. I think where I can help is to bring my knowledge of



#### WHAT THE JUDGES THOUGHT...

"The judging panel was particularly impressed with the way Amy helped to drive through a new flexible membership scheme at Fairmont St Andrews, while providing inspirational leadership for her team. Amy's inclusive style helped her build and motivate her team through trust and empowerment, which resulted in steadily increasing revenues and green fee yields – all the more impressive considering the highly competitive area the club operates in."

how you run a hotel into how you run a golf club.

So how does a hotel yield manage? How have we brought that knowledge into how we run our tee sheet?

What do we do with our average room rates? What different channels do the hotel switch on and off depending on the business mix?

October half-term in the hotel – we have to make sure we get that business mix right, otherwise it's a car crash.

The October just gone at Fairmont, we had far too many families – or what we would call transient business. When you fill your hotel with one business mix, not all the outlets can cope.

You can take the same principles to golf courses. You cannot just fill your golf course with corporate golf days.

You cannot just fill it with members – unless you are in the luxury of the high percentile that have waiting lists and so on.

You have to look at lots of different ways and I'd like to investigate that a bit more and share my knowledge on what you can learn from the hotel industry and what we can learn from the commercial side of things and how, actually, that can be transferable to the members' section.

It's just on different scales. So I am super-excited about getting involved and however they want me to I am delighted.

### What a great couple of years lie ahead...

Yes. The last two have been a bit of a blur but I am looking forward to it. I am really proud and it's nice for me to spend a bit of time reflecting on the fact that the last two years have been pretty good.

The GCMA offers a recruitment service for golf clubs to advertise management vacancies, as part of the association's commitment to providing career opportunities for its members. The GCMA journal and website are trusted channels for golf club management vacancies.

#### **ADVERTISING PACKAGES:**

Magazine adverts include website listing for duration of vacancy

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 ½ page advert | £1450 (+VAT)
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To apply, email generalmanager@ashleywoodgolfclub.com.

**Region:** Wessex Salary: Competitive

Closing date: January 31, 2018





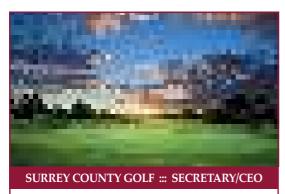
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The ideal candidate will have experience in managing both an organisation and employees and volunteers, while dealing with professionals within the game.

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To apply, email secretary@surreygolf.org

**Salary:** Attractive

Closing date: December 31



Warrington is a thriving and very successful club, boasting a recently redesigned course, around 1,000 members and a waiting list. You will have experience in the robust management of multi-disciplinary teams in a service led environment. It is essential you are experienced in financial management and employment and health and safety legislation.

To apply, email Andrew Evans, at The Recruitment Management Group, on andrew.evans@rmg-uk.com or call 07885 513166 for an initial discussion

Region: North West Salary: Competitive



# Good PRACTICE

Advice on golf club management issues – from finance to clubhouse rules and employment law to staff morale – from our panel of experts

# What will 2018 bring for the GOLF INDUSTRY?

#### THE INDUSTRY FIGURE

BIGGA chief executive Jim Croxton says greenkeeping will become more challenging next year – and communication is key to managing golfers' expectations



One of the great opportunities we have is that the education structure for greenkeepers is changing, particularly in England, currently, but I think it will permeate to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland in time.

It's all wrapped around the apprenticeship drive that the Government introduced a number of years ago but what it's doing is really enabling us to ensure that the education structure for new greenkeepers coming in – and those that are trying to progress in their career – is really fit for purpose.

It's stronger and the standards are higher.

For example, we've introduced pass, merit and distinction.

Before, it was pass or fail and no one really failed. There was no opportunity to excel.

We live in a world where we need to be able to excel and celebrate excellence

We've been really a big part of that. We think it's really important for the future of our industry. In our bid to strive to ensure that greenkeepers are respected, and appreciated, we need to ensure they are professional and they are excellent in their roles.

This education structure really is important and gives us a chance to do that. I think it's appropriate because, whether we like it or not, greenkeeping is getting more challenging.

There are a number of key reasons for that. We are seeing change in regulation around the use of chemicals in turf and the amenity sector in general.

We are seeing a reduction in the number of chemicals and the types of action that are available.

We are also seeing a reduction in efficacy of toxicity of the chemicals.

What that means is that turf managers, and by extension the clubs they work for, are going to have to be more preventative, plan more and invest in having healthy turf so they don't reach for the bottle.



#### We'll soon be singing Auld Lang Syne and welcoming another New Year.

We've got our crystal balls out and asked three figures, representing different strands of the industry, what their big issue is likely to be as 2018 unfolds...

That reaching for the bottle is not because people are lazy, it's because getting really healthy turf in place takes a massive long-term vision.

It takes investment in drainage, investment in machinery and resources and potentially seeing deterioration in playing surface for a period until it comes back to a healthy surface.

Those are long-term decisions that a lot of golf clubs, probably in the middle sector of the industry. haven't been able to take -

> because long-term for some golf clubs is 'are we busy this weekend?'

Fortunately, for the absolute long-term health of the sport but, unfortunately for now, golf clubs are going to have some challenges, particularly around the control of pests like chafer grubs, leatheriackets, worms and some turf diseases, while we move from where we are now to a world less dependent on chemicals. Not every club is in that boat,

but a number are. That's going to be a real challenge and education is going to critical - because our members are going to need to know how to

keep turf healthy.

That education is a huge thing. It's education of the practitioners themselves: the turf professional, the greenkeeper, the course manager.

But it's also them, alongside their club manager, alongside their employers at the club, helping to educate the golfer to understand what it is they are seeing on their Saturday morning or Sunday afternoon game.

We are trying to do a great deal with this. We have produced some posters and some factsheets.

We are producing videos on our website

A whole section of our website will help the golfer to understand greenkeeping and what's happening on the golf course.

There's a massive role for our members there. They've really got to get out and communicate.

Whether that's through verbal communication - face-to-face often is the best - but certainly through blogging, social media or writing reports to the members and trying to give them an understanding.

We live in a world now where if your expectations aren't managed, as a consumer in any world, you find yourself being disappointed.

We've got to be really careful about managing golfer expectations.

We've got to explain to them what is happening on their golf course, why and what to expect.

That is a big challenge for an industry that has predominantly been about producing the product and not shouting about it.



### THE GCMA BOARD MEMBER

## Phil Grice, GCMA board member, says 2018 will be a big year for the association

I am incredibly proud of the fact that we have honestly looked in the mirror and looked at how we can do things better and how we can improve. The board recognise there are structures in place that need attention. We have gone back to our national committee and gone out to the regions and we haven't stopped evolving over the last four years.

You can't force a revolution. We have created a natural evolution. If you come up with something like the Diploma, you can't just instigate it overnight.

You need to mediate with people

and you need to make it work and make it happen. Then you need the skills to put it in place. I think the principle of the Diploma is what we are trying to do right through the whole organisation. We are actually looking at everything and saying 'how do we create something that's different, better and is exactly what our members need?'

We have done it in leading the organisation into a limited status. We are more or less a skills-based board. We have got some really good younger people who bring a fresh look at things.

We will launch the Strategic Review (in 2018) and we have challenged ourselves. We are aware that we have to be in a change management and improving scenario. We are acknowledging that and, in the meetings we have been having with regional managers, that's coming through loud and clear. We have had time to think about where we want to be going and some of the positive changes we can make: regionally and how we can help professionalise the support that we take to the regions. I think that's fundamental.

It's very difficult in an organisation like ours. Some people want to manage it from the top down and others want to manage it from the bottom up.

In truth, you need to find a mix of both. The need for change is out there as is our ability to deliver change and deliver more professional services. We need to acknowledge our heritage but we've got to embrace the future.

#### THE GCMA MEMBER

Kingsdown's general manager Gareth Morgan says membership recruitment and retention will dominate his 2018

It's been a good year and membership has gone from strength to strength. It's growing all the time, because we are such a dry golf course.

But I wouldn't say what we are going through here is being replicated across the regions.

Within this region, there are still clubs that are struggling a little bit. We do feel we are picking up other clubs' members a lot.

We don't feel like we are getting people joining us that weren't members elsewhere else. I don't think it's ever something you can sit back on. When I first joined the industry - you'd expect to lose about 30 members a year with renewals. Ten years before that, you'd actually want about 30 to leave because you would get new members who were all paying whopping joining fees.

Now, in the last five or six years, anything less than 60 and you've probably had a pretty good renewals period. People don't pay joining fees on their way in and members are more likely to leave after a short spell of time because they don't feel like they have lost their investment.

It's too easy to go somewhere else. In South Wales, where I used to work, a lot of people seemed to jump from one club to another every year or two - chasing the best special offer.

So I don't think it's something we can ever sit back on.

We would like to get ourselves to the point where we feel we are at capacity but we are not there yet.

You have got to be very careful about capping membership



because you're saying 'hang on. In four months' time we're in a renewal period and we already know 60 to 90 members will leave, statistically.'Why would we cap it

now, or turn away 20 people in the next four months, because we know we're always going to be short at the end of every year at renewals?

# Tackling data protection CHANGES

**The General Data Protection Regulation race is on** and clubs will have to comply. In the first of a series of articles on this tricky subject, Joanne Bone, of employment law specialists Irwin Mitchell, outlines what will happen in 2018...



10 00 10 e all know we have a duty to protect the personal data of our customers and clients. But the way in which businesses process data is changing significantly.

Time is running out to get up to speed with the new rules and the penalties for non-compliance are potentially huge.

All businesses that use personal data have up until May 25 next year to make sure they are adhering to the new General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) legislation.

Those who don't comply could be punished with potential fines of up to €20 million, or 4% of annual worldwide turnover, whichever is larger.

Don't expect Brexit to make a difference, either.

Even though the GDPR

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is European legislation, the Government has confirmed it will still be implemented.

So the clock is now ticking for businesses to ensure they are ready ahead of the May 25 deadline.

GDPR will apply to ALL businesses that process personal data - information about individuals – and it will affect those firms more than they might have first thought.

In a YouGov survey for Irwin Mitchell, of the 2,129 senior decision makers within business who took part, only 38% were aware of the new GDPR rules.

Over a third believed it was not an issue for the sector they work in.

There is a perception that it will only apply to consumers.

But it has a far wider application than that - also applying to the use of personal data in HR and IT as well as in a business context, if you deal with any suppliers or customers who are sole traders or partnerships, for example.

It's not all doom and gloom.

You can use your compliance to build trust and confidence with vour customers and clients.

If you get the right permissions, you can also shape your offering to clients and take advantage of Big

Data, making your data work for your business.

It could possibly even save, or make, your business money.

What are the key changes that are going to be introduced?

#### Compulsory notification of data breaches

Data breaches which impact on privacy will have to be notified to the Information Commissioner's Office and individuals affected within 72 hours of it happening.

Breaches can range from a customer database being hacked to putting a letter in the wrong envelope. You will need to monitor your systems to know whether or not there has been a breach.

#### Consent

The need to ensure that any consents are compliant and refreshed appropriately. Consents must be explicit and freely given. Each purpose needs a separate consent and individuals must be given simple easy-to-access ways to withdraw their consent at any time.

Recent draft guidance issued by the ICO indicates they will take a hard line with consent and it will not be easy to obtain.

This is a key area for businesses to look at.

#### **Transparency**

A key provision of the GDPR is the obligation to be more transparent with individuals as to how their personal data is used – this requires a review of your privacy policies and fair processing notices.

An individual should be informed of every activity and purpose for which their personal information is used, as well as being provided with information on anyone who you may be sharing the data with.

The information must be provided in any easy to understand and accessible way and must be tailored for its audience.

#### Increased rights given to individuals to access the data held on them

Individuals already have a right to access their data under the subject access procedure.

Under the new changes you will not be able to charge a fee for these requests and will have to respond in a shorter timescale.

#### Right to be forgotten

The introduction of new rights including the right to be forgotten,

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which can require you to erase an individual's information from your systems, and the right to data portability, where individuals have the right to receive their personal data from you in a commonly used and machine readable format.

The right to be forgotten is not as wide ranging as you might think and businesses need to understand its scope and be prepared for any requests they may receive.

#### **Obligations on suppliers**

Obligations to ensure that tighter contracts are in place with businesses who process on your behalf the personal data you hold on individuals.

#### One size does not fit all

Compliance for each business will look different in that the data they collect and how they use it will be different.

One thing which is common to all, however, is that virtually all businesses need to take action in relation to this reform, and soon.

Businesses will be in a far better position if they have proactively tried to implement procedures to comply with the GDPR rather than bury their heads in the sand.

## Businesses really need to be looking at this now and the action points to consider include...

- What personal data do you have and are there any rogue (and non-compliant) databases in the business?
- How do you collect personal data and what are the individuals told about how that data will be used? Is the information given sufficiently transparent?

This will involve a review of

privacy policies and fair processing notices.

- What is the legal basis of using the personal data? Can the business bring its use into one of the lawful purposes laid down by the GDPR?
- Where any data is processed on the basis of consent, the consents will need looking at to make sure that they comply with the GDPR and the new (currently in draft) guidance issued by the ICO.

This will make consent tough to obtain, particularly where data is to be shared. As drafted, each third party the data is to be shared with will need to be named.

 Retention policies need to be reviewed and updated.
 The retention periods for data need to be looked at, as does how often consents are refreshed. 10 ( 10)

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 Businesses should review how personal data is kept, whether this is by paper or electronic files, and how secure these systems are.

- Data breach policies and procedures as to how a data breach would be detected and dealt with need to be put in place.
- Processes need to be put in place to deal with the enhanced rights individuals have e.g. the right to be forgotten.
- Reviewing contracts relating to data processing including contracts with cloud providers, mailing houses and analytics businesses.

The GCMA plans to publish industry specific guidance on complying with GDPR, in a bid to assist member clubs, in the near future.

#### DON'T KNOW WHERE TO START? IRWIN MITCHELL CAN HELP...

We understand that achieving GDPR compliance may seem overwhelming. Every business is unique and so a one size fits all approach won't work.

We have specialist lawyers who are already advising businesses on how to become compliant.

We will work with you to understand what your business needs are and agree a pathway to compliance.

In view of the potential fines, you need a true specialist to help you navigate through to compliance.

General advice in this area will not be enough, GDPR compliance should be treated like a marathon, not a sprint, and compliance requires long term planning and preparation.

Don't leave compliance to the last

Get in touch with one of our data protection experts and we'll be with you every step of the way.

Joanne Bone can be contacted on **0113 218 6429** or by emailing joanne.bone@irwinmitchell.com

Joanne Bone is a partner at Irwin Mitchell advising businesses across all sectors on intellectual property and IT issues both nationally and internationally.

She provides specialist advice in relation to IT contracts, e-commerce and data protection.



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## **Denis Pugh, renowned coach and Sky Sports Golf pundit,** tells Steve Carroll that what we wear on the course, or in the clubhouse, **should not matter**

here was a club a few years back – and I'm talking 15 or 20 years back – that had a rope that separated the casual bar from the formal bar."

Denis Pugh is delivering his coup de grace to what he views as the ridiculous notion of dress codes at golf clubs.

"It was the sort of rope you'd see in a VIP area at nightclubs. If you were one side of the rope you wore your golf clothes, if you were on the other you wore a jacket and tie."

If this seems an extreme example of a club's dress code policy, and you're relieved times have moved on, then think again. It remains as emotive an issue as ever.

Pugh receives plenty of stick, his Twitter profile swamped with indignation each time he has posed the very simple question: why does it bother you what I wear?

We spoke to the European Tour coach, and Sky Sports Golf pundit, to explore his views and see whether we might be reaching a tipping point...

# You've been very active on social media about dress codes and critics think you're prescriptive on the issue. But that's not the case, is it?

My view is just based on the fact that I find it inconceivable anyone else's dress would affect how you would enjoy your game.

It's the game of golf that we play

and if someone wants to play it in a pair of underpants and a string vest that's his problem. It's not my problem and it's his choice.

He may look like an idiot to the rest of the world but if he wants to display that he's an idiot, then so be it. I am happy that he wants to play golf, personally.

If I am playing golf I don't find what someone else wears at all distracting. But people clearly do and they are very snobby about it.

## Do you understand why people get so passionate and upset about maintaining dress codes?

Yes, I do. Basically, they are snobs – in the purest sense of the word. That's not a derogatory term. They just think their opinion is better than others. It always comes down to it on Twitter – 'I'm not a snob, but...'

As soon as you go 'I'm not a snob, but...' then you're a snob. You are putting across that your opinion is better than someone else's. It's not. Every one of us has got the same right to be here and some of us choose to dress a certain way.

This is in no way to benefit myself. I am a conservative 63-year-old man, who dresses in a conservative way because I choose to. I don't even own a pair of jeans, or a pair of trainers.

T-shirts are what I wear underneath golf shirts when it is cold outside

It's not a self-serving thing. It is more to serve golf and I think that the game is much better than that - or it should be. But people want to impose their ideas.

It comes down to something like going to a restaurant. Would you rather go to a restaurant where the food was fantastic but it was very casual dining – which I have done in America where people have come to great restaurants basically in their beach clothes – or would you like to go to a poor place where everyone dresses smart? That's the old school golf club argument.

#### When you see a golf club website and it has a list of rules about what players can and can't wear, how do you feel about that club?

It disappoints me but I have been around golf for 50 years now so I am used to it. It disappoints me that those things still exist and it is not just in the UK.

My wife is actually a Supreme Court Judge in Germany – you can't get a more establishment figure. She was told, while we were on holiday in Florida, that her shorts were too short.

They had to be a stipulated length above the knee and she'd gone about an inch higher.

She was wearing her Munich golf shorts and that clearly offended the lady serving behind the desk at a golf club in America.

We've had practical experience (of this) and you just think'that's so sad that people are worried about those things' and golf clubs preaching their split down the middle figure where the guy on the left is correctly dressed and the guy on the right isn't.

There are little signs that say 'socks wrong colour,'shorts too short.'Polo tops are okay but not football shirts.

If you look at some of the designs of football shirts – with a collar that's got, say, Carlsberg, on the front and there's a golf top with Tommy Hilfiger or Ralph Lauren printed across the front - but that's okay.

Some clubs I've seen (are saying) that no logos are allowed on a shirt above a certain size. You start thinking 'Why? What are you trying to do here?'

#### I remember the days of the Tiger Woods turtleneck when you could buy the top in the golf shop but couldn't wear it on the course...

That's the classic, isn't it? When Tony Jacklin won the US Open in 1970, he wore a shirt that would be banned at most clubs. It was a T-shirt style. Gary Player won the USPGA in a black one.

Now Nike athletes have got a button top – which they leave unbuttoned. There's no real collar on the T-shirt and it's pushing it to the limit.

I'm not Nike sponsored but I think it's brilliant the way they are pushing boundaries to make sure young people enjoy dressing that way.

## Clubs often cite standards and tradition as a reason for dress codes. What is your view?

As soon as someone comes up with standards they have lost the argument, really, but they are just trying to prolong it by saying 'well, you've got to have standards'.

Why are your standards better than my standards, his standards or her standards?

That standards argument is the old 'oh, well, but...' I love the 'but' in an argument. It usually comes up with no reasonable thing and 'you haven't changed my mind because I'm so fixed in that mindset.' I've actually stopped doing it on Twitter because it's pretty pointless.

You can find four or five different things I've learned on Twitter – dress codes being one of them – where people aren't going to change their minds even in the face of all sensible logic.

#### Do you think golf has got bigger problems – people who don't repair pitchmarks or rake bunkers, for example?

That is the standards, if you want to use that word. Those sorts of ideas are to protect the game, not the individual.

That's a different thing, where people say 'if you don't maintain standards you won't maintain the rules of the game'.

Well, I've played with people who cheat who are wearing perfectly good clothes.

I've played with others, who are pretty casually dressed, and they still repair pitchmarks and rake bunkers and observe the rules of the game – while having fun.

## Do you think dress codes are harming clubs? Do they prevent potential new members coming through the doors?

It's debatable as to why the game is not growing. It's pretty clear to me that one of the reasons would be that youngsters don't really want to dress like old farts like me.

I quite accept that and I think that's just one of the many factors. People would say: speed of play, cost of the game, rules are too complicated, it takes too long. There's a whole list of reasons but



"I find it inconceivable anyone else's dress would affect how you would enjoy your game" – Denis Pugh





dress codes are one of them.

If we had no dress codes and said 'come as you are, enjoy your golf' - that may not grow the game, just because of the other factors, but it would help.

It is one of several steps that I think are needed.

#### Allowing people to wear jeans on a course, for example, isn't necessarily going to mean that people wear them either...

I can't think of a worse garment to play golf in than a pair of tight denim jeans, but if someone wants to do it - go ahead.

Have fun. Enjoy the game. It's a great game.

It seems there are more and more clubs that are now loosening their dress codes. Are

#### things changing?

I know they are at The Wisley, which is a modern golf club that was founded only 25 years ago. Some of that has been done by prompting and prodding but we have relaxed it down to common sense. I'm still not 100 per cent sure they have got it right.

There are some 'standards' that the older members cling to but it's quite okay to wear jeans in the clubhouse now.

Golf shoes look like trainers. trainers look like golf shoes. So what's the point in arguing that one for too long?

I think we are reaching a point where when the top clubs, or the perceived top clubs, do things the ones that are struggling might follow.

What I mean by struggling is

that I can't imagine the number of clubs that appear to be struggling financially - losing members trying to say 'we need stricter dress codes. Which they do. I can't think why.

I think they'd rather see it close than accept regular people: not their type, as they would put it.

It is almost Terry and June for people who are as old as me going back to the 70s situation comedies. The standards of that time.

I get abuse on Sky for wearing my diamond sweaters.

They are quite nice. I'm not following fashion but I quite like wearing them.

Who cares? It's my choice. People love to tell other people what to do – instead of just letting them do it and play the game.

# Why do clubs have A DRESS CODE?

## **Richard Penley-Martin, secretary of Ganton**, tells Steve Carroll **why they have their place**

here aren't too many clubs more traditional than Ganton.
The championship course can look back on more than 125 years of golfing history. The great Harry Vardon won the first three of his six Open titles while professional at the North Yorkshire club.

Ganton have held a triple crown of Ryder Cup, Walker Cup and Curtis Cup and the tough blend of links and heathland is still a perennial host of many of golf's top amateur competitions.

The private members' club employs a dress code and both visitors and members are told exactly what's expected – and acceptable – through the Ganton website

The general principle is that the "best of golf standards" are conformed to both on and off the course.

Specifically, while smart causal golf wear is acceptable, jacket and tie must be worn in the Vardon Room at all times and in the dining room after 10.30am.

While many clubs are starting to loosen their dress codes, in a bid to become more accessible, Ganton have stood firm and their members recently turned down the chance to introduce 'short

socks' into the regulations.

But why have a code at all? For secretary Richard Penley-Martin, it's about being different.

"It differentiates us from everywhere else that has turned round and said 'conventional wisdom says we should make ourselves more accessible and the way to do that is to get rid of the dress code;" he explained.

"We try to hit the balance.
Obviously we have, like a lot of golf clubs, an ageing membership. We do have a bit of uniqueness in that we have a lot of farmers, who don't normally wear jacket and tie and when they come to their golf club they actually like to dress up.

"The interesting thing that we found out recently, because we went through the thorny problem of do we go to short socks, was that it was the younger members who turned round and said they didn't want it.

"It wasn't the old guys who said 'no, we want long socks and shorts'. It was the 30,40-somethings, who said that it differentiates us from other places and makes Ganton what it is."

What does it matter what socks you wear? Critics of dress codes, including Denis Pugh, decry the answer of 'standards' – arguing those who use the term have

already lost the argument.

Penley-Martin, though, believes it is about teaching youngsters how to behave and he says, through specific experience, that what happens when clubs relax their codes can sometimes create problems.

He added: "It goes down to teaching the youngsters standards – because you tell people 'this is smart and you won't offend people if you dress like this.' After that, people can go and do their own thing and if they want to wear bright shirts or plus fours at least they have been taught a norm and they can take it from there.

"One of the issues I have when you dress down – and my previous club was a classic example of this – is golf clubs have a complete range of people in them. I would say that probably applies to every single golf club.

"You might have your local plumber or your electrician, right the way up to multi-millionaire self-made business people and you have a range of what people might consider acceptable.

"Unfortunately, this club made the decision to say 'come in whatever you like. We're still going to have one (dress code) for the golf course but, in the clubhouse,



you can wear whatever you like.

"What happened was that all the builders turned up, straight off the building site in their jeans with paint and plaster. Then you are putting the staff in a difficult position of saying 'sorry, we don't want you sitting on our nice furniture dressed like that"

Ultimately, Penley-Martin believes it's not unreasonable when going somewhere of your own choice to follow the 'rules of the house'.

The key, for him, is how you communicate that to people and how you deal with those who don't meet the club's aspirations.

"The thing that upsets me when people get annoyed about a club's dress code is that if I go to your house and I like to have a cigarette and you have a no smoking policy in your house, I don't smoke in vour house.

"I don't say to you 'why do you have that silly rule?'I just say'I respect that that's your choice.

"It's why it always amazes me when people come to a golf club, bearing in mind the policy on the website and that it's probably been sent to them on email when they signed up as a visitor, and say 'I don't like your dress code'.

"Well, you knew that before you came. If you don't like it, don't come – as much as we'd be

pleased to see you. Those are the rules of our house and we'd ask you to respect them."

He added: "As it is with everything we do, and not just in our industry, communication is key. Tell people that this is your dress code. And I always use the word code, never dress rules or anything like this.

"We do take a pragmatic view to it, even here. Somebody might be in breach of the dress code but. if they are smart, you might say 'thank you for coming, please be

aware that this is our dress code. What you're currently wearing doesn't comply but you're very smart so we are very happy that, this time, we turn a blind eye. But next time you come can you please abide by it'.

"It's just how you handle it. Sure, if someone comes in a pair of jeans with all the slashes across them then you are going to turn round and say 'very sorry, but that's not acceptable. Either you change or I'm afraid we are going to have to ask you to leave."

"I don't say to you 'why do you have that silly rule?' I just say 'I respect that that's your choice." - Richard Penley-Martin



## PRINCIPLES OF GOLF CLUB MANAGEMENT

This training course is designed for either newcomers to the profession of golf club management, or an existing manager, secretary or assistant, who wants to bring themselves up-to-date with current management practices.

The course content is relevant for both private members and proprietary clubs.

The course is delivered by industry experts and serving managers, and topics include:

- » Membership & Club Management Systems
- » Food & Beverage Operations
- » Marketing and Membership Schemes
- » Running Golf Competitions
- » Golf Club Governance
- » Course Ratings and Handicaps
- » Accounting Principles
- » Health & Safety
- » Employment Law
- » Golf Club Law

#### **UPCOMING DATES**

21 – 23 January 2018: Harrogate, Yorkshire BTME condensed course

BTWE Condensed Course

12 – 16 March 2018: Newbury, Berkshire

10 – 14 September 2018: Henley-in-Arden, Warwickshire

19 - 23 November 2018: Wyboston, Bedfordshire

#### COSTS

The cost of the course is £995 (VAT exempt; January course £360+VAT). This includes all course materials, accommodation (except Harrogate) and food throughout.







TO BOOK OR FOR MORE INFORMATION

Visit gcma.org.uk/education, or contact GCMA education coordinator Niki Hunter: niki@gcma.org.uk or 01275 391153

## From the **HELPDESK**

This month: Corporate memberships and... examining holiday issues



A corporate deal should be agreed for the mutual benefit of the club and company. Ensure the deal is put in writing with no ambiguities regarding playing, or other rights. The application of VAT is correct as all corporate dealings are subject to VAT. This HMRC extract explains: At paragraph 3.4.1 of VAT Notice 701/45: Sport an 'individual' is defined as a person who actually takes part in the sporting activity but this can include corporate persons and unincorporated associations, provided that...'the true beneficiaries (of the services) are individuals taking part in sport'. HMRC considers that where a corporate body purchases a golf day or similar for its own purposes such as to entertain its staff or guests, this is a not a supply made to individuals but a supply to the corporate body for its own benefit and the corporate body is the true beneficiary of the sporting services. Such supplies by nonprofit making members' golf clubs or members' sports clubs do not qualify for the exemption and are

standard-rated for VAT purposes.

Our course manager was on sick leave for five months following a foot operation. He was on full pay up until he returned. He has not taken his 20 days unused holiday. Our assistant greenkeeper has been diagnosed with incurable cancer and has been off for eight months. He had been on full pay for six months (December) and had 21 days' holiday still to take. In January, the club agreed to pay him his holiday as opposed to changing to half pay. Have we treated our course manager unfairly, who believes he should have been paid for his 20 days' unused holiday?

Workers must take at least four weeks of statutory leave during the year, they may be able to carry over any remaining time off if their employer agrees. Workers who receive statutory leave don't have an automatic right to carry leave over to the next holiday year, but employers may agree to it. Workers who are entitled to contractual leave may be able to carry over time off if the employer agrees, this agreement may be written into the terms and conditions of employment. For example, if an employee gets



may allow them to carry over up to 10 days as part of the terms of employment. When workers are unable to take their leave entitlement because they're already taking time off for different reasons, such as maternity or sick leave, they can carry over some or all of the untaken leave into the next leave year. An employer must allow a worker to carry over a maximum of four weeks if the worker is off sick and unable to take their leave. In the Employment Appeal Tribunal case of Plumb v Duncan Print Group Ltd 2015, the Tribunal held where an employee chooses not to take statutory annual leave during sick leave, they can carry forward the untaken leave for up to 18 months from the end of the leave year in which the leave arises This means if a leave year ends on December 31 the worker would have 18 months after that date in which to take the annual leave for that year. If the 18 months have not yet passed for the head greenkeeper you should make every effort to get him to take the holidays, otherwise he is not entitled to be paid in lieu. In my opinion he has not been treated unfairly as the employer can treat each case according to the circumstances as long as you do not break employment law.

## Meet the **MANAGER**



With Richard Jagger, general manager of Malton & Norton, in North Yorkshire...



ow did you get into golf club manage-I've always had an interest in golf my father was a professional golfer so I played from an early age. When I graduated from university, I ended up getting into the health and fitness industry and worked in, and managed, health clubs. I worked for David Lloyd for about 10 years.

It was the natural progression to get into golf. The leisure and golf industry have a lot of similarities and it was something that attracted me. I could take some of the skills I'd picked up in the leisure industry and transfer them into the golf industry. The job became available at Malton & Norton and the rest is history.

What's the best thing about your job?

Meeting so many different people that are passionate about what they do and have that real sense of ownership about their club. Being able to affect their experience, and make it a good one, is something that I really enjoy. At heart, I am a people person. I enjoy being around people, whether it's staff, members or visitors, and I really enjoy that side of things.

What are the challenges?

It's going back to managing people and managing the different dynamics in a golf club – your volunteers, on the committee and board, staff, you've got franchisees and sub-contractors. You've got a real mix of different types of people on site so it is a real challenge to manage those dynamics – as well as the demands from the members It is a challenging role. A lot of people think 'what do you do as a golf club manager?' but it is a role that is evolving. Members and visitors demand excellence and that's what we are striving for.

#### What's the best piece of advice you've been given?

Good question. If anything, it was 'you can't please everybody'particularly in a golf club, and as general manager. You have to make decisions that sometimes people won't like. But you've got to be fair and you've got to be open and communicate those decisions. All the decisions we make are for the benefit of the members and the club.

### Do you play as much as you'd

I've hardly played this year - about five or six times. I'm quite lucky in that the times I have played have been at Moortown, The Belfry and Alwoodley.

I've played at some really good courses. But with work and a young family – and I also manage a football team on a weekend – it's difficult.

#### What's your favourite golfing memory?

I played in the St Andrews' Boys Championship when I was about 13.1 travelled up there in the back of an old car with John Wells and Richard Finch The three of us went up and had a week in Scotland.

"I've scored a goal in the FA Cup, for Immingham Town against Rossington, but you won't find it in any records"



It was absolutely fantastic - the Home of Golf. I didn't do any good but I really enjoyed that.

#### How do you feel about the state of the game at the moment?

There are challenges around slow play, time constraints and I think there are a lot of things we can take from my background in

the leisure industry – particularly from David Lloyd - about family offerings, where families come together and all their activities are at the golf club. There's definitely a market to get more families involved – whether it be kids having lessons and, at the same time, parents can play a 9-hole competition. I'm probably your typical challenging golf club member. I've got two young children and I work long hours. How do I find the time to play golf? I think that's the biggest challenge. Is it 9-hole golf, 6-hole, Ready Golf? There's a few things to consider there. I don't think we should just write off that demographic and say 'come back and play when your kids have grown up.'

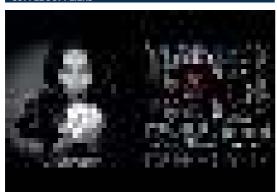
#### Tell us something we don't know about you?

I've scored a goal in the FA Cup. When I was 18.1 scored for Immingham Town against Rossington in the first preliminary round. You won't find it in any records because, midway through the season, the team I played for folded and the results were scratched off. I've looked through endless records on the internet to try and find it and show my son but all the results have been wiped off 🔯

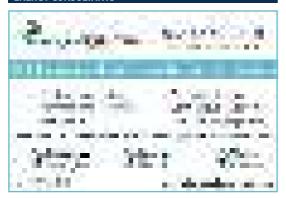
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### **Marketing Services**

**Sports Publications** are, above all else, a company of golfers. The three directors, Will Shucksmith, Tom Irwin and Dan Murphy play off handicaps of +2, scratch and 3 respectively.

Will is a PwC trained chartered accountant with a decade of experience working with SME's, Tom has a commercial background spanning 20 years in customer facing industries and Dan Murphy is steeped in golf with approaching 15 years at the helm of the UK's highest circulating golf magazine.

Between us we have a century's worth of golfing experience.

#### WE HAVE A PROVEN REPUTATION AS MEDIA PROFESSIONALS.

In recent years, the company have worked closely with governing bodies, like the Ladies' Golf Union and England Golf, tourist boards, such as Visit Scotland and Visit Wales, major equipment manufacturers, including TaylorMade, Callaway and Ping, and produced several course rankings lists.

Along with unparalleled knowledge of, and familiarity with, the golfing world comes a contacts books built up over several years.

From Cornwall to Cape Wrath, we understand golf clubs, their members, visitors and their communities.

We can help you maximise your clubs full potential, tapping into your latent asset base. If you are looking for help in any of the areas listed below, please get in touch:

- · Course photography
- Corporate video creation
- Social Media
- Drone Footage
- Email newsletters
- Governance & structure
- PR advice
- · Member engagement
- Marketing







# From the **REGIONS**

#### **YORKSHIRE**

September 26 and October 27 Autumn meeting at Scarcroft and business meeting at STRI

Regional manager Cameron Dawson was pleased to see more than 40 members in attendance at the autumn meeting before new members – Nigel Cooper, at Easingwold, Wakefield's Adrian Jackson and Beverley's Chris Marsden – were welcomed.

Club Systems gave a presentation on social media - concentrating on Facebook and Twitter. They gave the specific example of Leigh GC. They paid for a £10 advert targeted at 'sport', 'age group 30-40 categories;'living within a 25-mile radius of the club' and containing the world 'deal'.

Manager Sam Poole reported more than £1,000 in revenue was gained directly from the advert.

They gave ideas on how to use social media, adding that users' interests will fall on what's on their home feeds at the time they are online.

Junier Browne, of JBEL Environmental Services, talked about water management. He raised several questions about how the use of water is managed on courses and in the clubhouse in a period of climate change and the big swings of drought and flood now being experienced.

GCMA President JR Jones gave the final presentation on the proposed changes to the Rules of Golf. A month later, the business meeting was hosted at the STRI facility at Bingley St Ives, one of the best renowned turf research establishments in the world.

A wide selection of members and guests attended, including members from other regions such as Wales, North West and Northern. Having split into three groups, there was a tour and visitors were shown the various test beds in use at the moment.

Much was made of the removal of curative fungicides for fusarium patch and wormcast preventative treatments (all now banned in the UK), along with the likely banning of all fungicides in the not too distant future. The groups then rotated round seminars on bunker construction and maintenance, general agronomy and ecology.

Adam Newton, who does the detailed readings at The Open, revealed the speed The R&A requested for the greens at Royal Troon in 2016. It was 9ft 8in, which surprised some members about how slow that was. Other aids to speed of play and environmentally managed rough were also discussed. The last seminar, on bunker construction and maintenance, was of specific interest to certain members who were either going through or, about to start, a bunker refurbishment program.

Many ideas on construction and materials to use were given and discussed in detail.

#### **Regional Managers**

Full details at gcma.org.uk/regions

#### **Chiltern & Home Counties**

Martin Bennet

#### **East Anglia**

Gary Smith

#### **East Midlands**

Rod Savage

#### **London & Home Counties**

Maureen Brooker

#### Midland

Rob Wormstone

#### Norfolk

John Barnard

**North West** Neil Annandale

#### Northern

Terry Minett

#### Northern Ireland

Jim Cullen

#### Scotland

Bernard Flockhart

#### **South East**

John Edgington

#### **South West**

Karen Drake

#### Southern

Joan Raffety

#### Wales

Mike Rees

#### Wessex

Alex Taylor

#### Yorkshire

Cameron Dawson



# THE GCMA SALES PROGRAMME.

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# A week in the life of... CLAIRE RIDDELL

#### We meet the assistant manager of Royal Dornoch

pectacular is the first word that comes to mind when you think about Royal Dornoch – where golf has been played for more than 400 years. Claire Riddell says she has been lucky to be the assistant manager at the famous Highlands course.

She has worked there, in one guise or another, since 1989. Having begun work in the professional shop after leaving

school, she then moved into administration and worked her way through the ranks.

"The club has got a lot of history and Americans love it because of the Donald Ross connection. It's very much part of the history of golf in Scotland," she said.

"We're quite a traditional club. We're a very welcoming and open and hospitable club and what excites us – as employees – when we go into the club is other people's reactions."



#### Monday

I try to get into the office before 8.30am – not particularly early but I've got a family life at home as well. I make sure the kids are kicked out to school and then I head up to the club. 8.30am is a good time to start. The professional shop is manned earlier than that and I come into the office and make sure the admin staff have got everything they need for the day. Monday's a particularly busy day. I don't work every weekend so Monday morning can be a catch up on what has happened over the weekend. Have we had a tournament on? Is there any work from that which needs catching up? We also still pay everybody weekly, so payroll is Monday. We have some members of staff who are salaried on a monthly basis but the majority of our staff are weekly.

Although I don't personally now do the payroll, I am very much there with my staff in a supportive role for that. On a Monday morning, we'll also go round all the departments, check the rotas, the timesheets, and things like that, and then I'll pass it on to one of the team who will do the paperwork. I do have a life-work balance, which is great. It tends to be that the end of my days are longer, potentially. I do try to start at the same time every morning for that continuity at home. Evenings can see lot of committee meetings. I attend monthly management meetings that tend to be on a Monday night, once a month.

#### Tuesday

Every day is catch up with emails. The things that have changed in the time I have been in the job is the speed that everyone expects to be replied to. When I took the job 20-plus years ago, a letter would land on my desk, it might sit in my in-tray for a couple of days and it was a five-day, at least, turnaround. So I am keeping up with correspondence. I do a lot of liaising. It might be different on a Monday or a Tuesday but I'll speak to the ladies' committee or the staff in different departments. I deal with the membership enquiries, but there's no specific day for that. We have over 2.000 members and most are nonresident. We have more members live in America than live in Dornoch. It's quite a unique set-up at the club.

#### Wednesday

It tends to be Ladies' Day. We have quite a strong ladies section, relative to the size of the town. They play on a



Wednesday morning and Wednesday is also our managers' meeting day but we only meet every fortnight. That tends to take most of the morning. We've got all the leaders of each of the departments - greens, professional shop, bar/catering, myself and the general manager. We look at what's happened over the last couple of weeks, what we going to look forward to in the next two weeks and what we can put in place.

#### **Thursday**

Through the main part of the season, we're very visitor orientated. There are obviously member times on the course but there are not a lot of member events through the week. Thursday, typically, would be members in the morning, visitors in the middle and towards the end of the day and

members in the evening again. You are engaging with different people all the time. The members know in advance what times of day they can play. If they are travelling from overseas, they book up months - if not a year - in advance.

Our tee sheet is very full, very early, and there's not a lot of movement in the days before.

#### **Friday**

It's very much planning - especially if I am not in over the weekend. There's tournaments potentially on a Saturday or a Sunday so a lot of work will go in to setting up the event, making sure we check handicap databases. If we've got 100 competitors coming, that are non-members or a mixture of both, my girls in the office will check everybody's handicap the day

before to make sure they're active and haven't lapsed. There's also the admin and accounts side. The financial side, dealing with accounts, importing of invoices and checking statements - that happens all the time but, if it's towards the end of the month, Friday might be a good day to catch up with that, make sure suppliers are up to date and bank statements are reconciled.

#### Weekend

The professional shop will be geared up and they will have all the information they need on a Friday night if we're not in the office. The general manager tends to be a bit more hands on over the weekend and he will pop into the club. He's not necessarily officially on duty but he has an idea of what's happening.

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